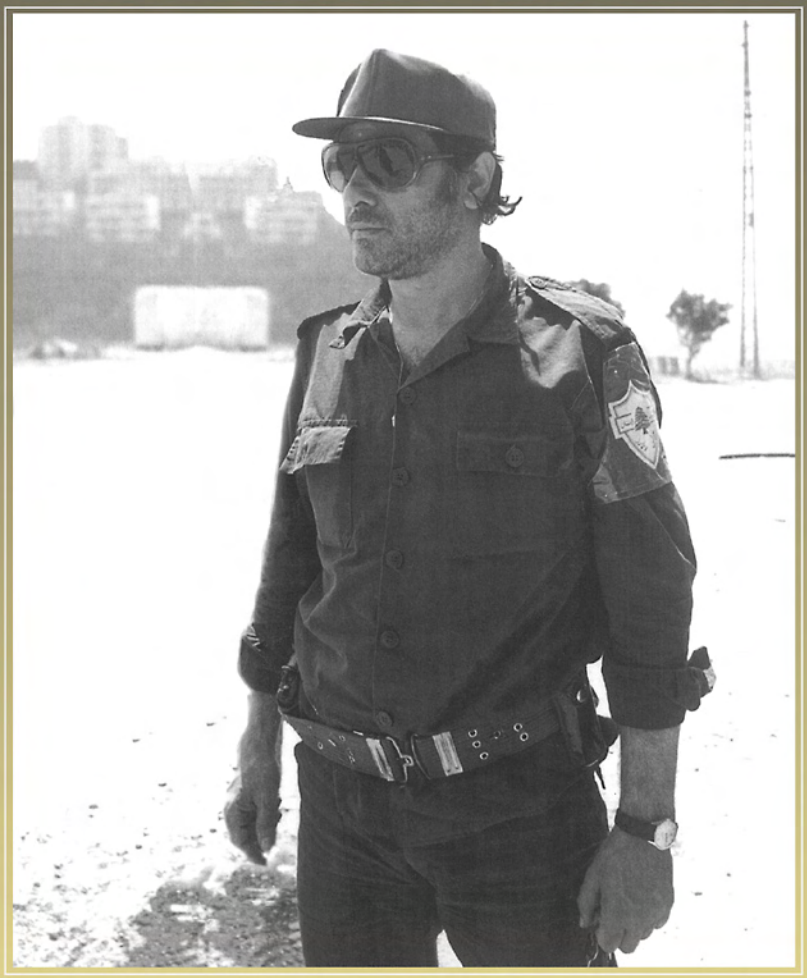
The Conscience of Lebanon

A Political Biography of Etienne Sakr (Abu-Arz)



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THE CONSCIENCE OF LEBANON

‘During the Syrian takeover of Lebanon starting in 1975 and ending in 2000, a dark time of civil war, brutality, and betrayal, few Lebanese managed to maintain a reputation for morality, much less devotion to a set of principles. Etienne Sakr numbered among the rare exceptions, and his place in Lebanon’s history is well documented and rightly applauded by Mordechai Nisan in his exemplary and important biography.’ Dr Daniel Pipes, Middle East Forum, Philadelphia

‘Through the exceptional personality of Etienne Sakr, Mordechai Nisan—a scholar on non-Muslim communities in the Middle East—has brilliantly sensed the vibrant spirit of the Lebanese people, their inextinguishable love of freedom, their resolve in spite of adversity, their faith in human dignity and liberty, even while being betrayed by their friends. A masterly description of a unique human and historical drama that deserves a better understanding.’ Bat Ye’or, author of *Islam and Dhimmitude* (2002).

THE CONSCIENCE of LEBANON

A Political Biography of Etienne Sakr (Abu-Arz)

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The Bible is a source of praise of Lebanon, for its beauty and fertility, its sanctity and grandeur. The imagery of the land's fragrance, the plentiful waters, the depth of its roots—the lily, the olive tree, and the vine—grace the country. The cedar tree is the crown of the fortitude and dignity of Mount Lebanon and its people. While the iniquitous have acted treacherously and conquered Lebanon, salvation will come and justice be exacted from the enemy.

The trees of the Lord have their fill, the cedars of Lebanon which He has planted.

(Psalms 104, 16)

A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

(Song of Songs 4, 15)

For the violence done to Lebanon covers you and the destruction of beasts which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city, and to all that dwell therein—Thou [God] did march through the land in indignation and dost thresh the nations in anger.

(Havakuk 2, 17 and 3, 12)

The righteous man shall flourish like a palm-tree, he grows like a cedar in Lebanon.

(Psalms 92, 13)

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Names and Abbreviations

Abu-Arz—Etienne Sakr
Al-Sham—historic Arabic term for (Greater) Syria
Amal—(Shiite) Movement of the Dispossessed
Arab Deterrent Force—ADF
AFL—Army for a Free Lebanon, led by Major Saad Haddad
Baath Party—Arab National Renaissance, ruling in Syria (and Iraq)
Dhimmis—non-Muslims tolerated and dominated by Islam
Fatah—Palestinian National Liberation Movement
Guardians of the Cedars Party *(Herraas Al-Arz)*
Hizbullah—Shiite Party of Allah
Israel Defense Forces—IDF
Lebanese Forces—LF
Lebanese Front
Lebanese National Movement—LNM
Maradas—militia of the Franjiyyeh family
Member of the Knesset—MK
Mukhtar—traditional village chief
National Liberal Party *(Ahrar)*—Tigers militia of the Chamoun family
Palestine Liberation Organization—PLO
Parti Populaire Syrièn—PPS [French name for the SSNP]
Phalangist Party—*Kata'eb* of the Gemayel family
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—PFLP
Progressive Socialist Party—PSP—of the Junblatt family
Saiqa—Syrian-affiliated Palestinian movement
Southern Lebanese Army—SLA
Syrian Social National Party—SSNP [English name for the PPS]
Tanzim—Adouane militia
United Arab Republic—UAR
Za'im—traditional leader of political clients

Preface

For a period of one year, from July 2000 through July 2001 I conducted numerous interviews and conversations with Etienne Sakr, known by his popular *nom de guerre* Abu-Arz, in the course of researching his life and involvement in Lebanese national affairs. He had made his special mark on the ideological, political and military events during the struggle for a free Lebanon, and his public role since the mid-1970s and the outbreak of the war in Lebanon was integral to the shaping of his country's painful modern experience. But he was, it seemed, in the background or on the margin of events; some would say he was the light in the shadows of turmoil. In Lebanon, the name of Abu-Arz was well known and his principles and exploits acquired a certain reputation, even though the names of Gemayel, Chamoun and Franjiyyeh headed the list of major Lebanese leaders. Outside Lebanon, the name of Abu-Arz was rarely recorded or mentioned in the general and rather extensive literature and reportage on Lebanon that covered the years 1975–90. This was so despite the fact that he had been present in the arena of political decision-making and the extensive fighting in Beirut and beyond. But being almost unknown outside Lebanon, and often defamed by opponents, rivals and enemies within Lebanon, though loved and admired by others, made Etienne Sakr a particularly intriguing subject of inquiry.

His fascinating personal story set within the context of the national political narrative of Lebanon offered a portrait of the man and the times that assumed the proportions of a document of particular historical value. First impressions of Abu-Arz revealed a man of charm and polish, intelligence and political acumen, amicability and generosity. Talking with AbuArz disclosed a coherent philosophy on Lebanon and an insider's testimony on the internal machinations of its political councils. He was at one and the same time a participant in history and a witness to its evolution. A man of culture and sophistication, profoundly Lebanese in identity and worldly in knowledge, Etienne Sakr was most cooperative in giving me access to his world-view and personal history. Abu-Arz became a window through which I could unearth the complexity of Lebanon through the prism of his own insight and familiarity with his country.

The subtleties of the Lebanese mind and character were lost in the striking transformation of Lebanon into a Syrian protectorate, consolidated in the years

1988–90, which sealed the fate of major Lebanese leaders and freedom fighters. For the most part, their fate was either death, exile, imprisonment, or collaboration. After 1975 and between the years 1990–2000 in particular, Etienne Sakr was fortunate in avoiding all of these. He had survived the war in all its terrible manifestations, and later went to south Lebanon from Beirut and set up his lone post in the area of Jezzine at Sabbah, thanks to the protection of the Southern Lebanese Army and under the military umbrella of the Israel Defense Forces. In this respect, Sakr remained in the homeland, in that small patch of Lebanon free from Syrian/Iranian domination, where he could make his voice heard and try to nurture hope for a Lebanon liberated from foreign rule. He held his ground amid the enfeeblement and destruction in his country that had neither national independence nor a stable, legitimate political order.

The withdrawal of the Israeli Army from south Lebanon in May 2000, and with it the disgraceful abandonment of its SLA ally, led to a human flood of Lebanese into Israel. Among the Lebanese was Etienne Sakr. On 24 May, holding up in his house at Deir Mimas, he tried to get Israel to close the gates so that the Lebanese would remain steadfast, ready to fight. He himself considered remaining in his beloved Lebanon despite all the potential ramifications. On at least three occasions Abu-Arz was sentenced *in abstentia* by Beirut courts on charges of 'collaboration with the Zionist enemy'.

The Maronite Bishop in Jerusalem, Paul Sayah, pleaded with him in a tense telephone conversation to run to the gates and not fall into the hands of Hizbullah and the Syrian-controlled Lebanese authorities. In spite of his determination, Abu-Arz eventually recognized that to remain would be suicidal, and he crossed reluctantly into Israel at Metulla.

The succeeding period was one of trauma, humiliation and depression for Etienne Sakr, who had befriended Israel in the mid-1970s, only to be cast off and abandoned by his erstwhile ally. He blamed the Barak government for this betrayal. In the initial period of displacement and grief, Abu-Arz found it genuinely difficult to begin the process of verbalizing his past, but he later found renewed strength to tell his story in many long conversations we held in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. Recording the past had now become for Etienne a matter of personal importance and national responsibility. Perhaps the harsh realities that befell him brought home the difficulty of shaping the future, and so he resolved to remember the past.

Through Internet sources, I was fortunate to be able to acquire information from a number of Lebanese concerning their experiences in Lebanon, reminiscences of Abu-Arz, or of their own activities in connection with his Guardians of the Cedars Party *(Herraas Al-Arz).* In the Orwellian political reality of Lebanon, patriots are condemned as traitors and collaborators esteemed as leaders. The Syrians were in control, and they defined the political domain of what was permitted and forbidden. In their universe of intellectual and moral inversion, it was a crime to advocate a free Lebanon, and therefore silence or doublespeak filled the public arena. People's true thoughts remained unspoken in

their hearts. But modern technology has salvaged freedom of speech for those politically denied it.

In addition, a number of Lebanese in Israel, party members and intimately associated with Abu-Arz, were available and willing to contribute to my research dealing with Lebanon. I was fortunate moreover to converse with influential Lebanese personalities in France, the United States and Canada. The Lebanese who through me shared with the public their recollections and thoughts on Abu-Arz and the party are people of impressive courage. It is my hope that their valuable contributions to the book are not seen as evidence of self-incrimination in the eyes of the oppressive Syriancontrolled regime in Lebanon.

A number of Israelis, most of whom had been on official security-related missions in Lebanon, and who knew Abu-Arz from Beirut and the days of war in the 1970s and 1980s, offered their recollections. They were generally circumspect in their remarks, but willing nonetheless to throw some light on the man and his role in Lebanon. The relationship between Israel and Abu-Arz was naturally the focus of most of their comments.

My deep appreciation is extended to all those who assisted me in drawing a human and political portrait of Etienne Sakr. Most of all, I thank Abu-Arz himself. This biographical study has been completed, but the story of his life is still unfolding.

Prologue

In 1920, with the Great War over and Britain and France contending for imperial acquisitions in the Fertile Crescent, the political and security situation in Upper Galilee and southern Lebanon was deteriorating. PanArabism was a sweeping ideological banner galvanizing the Hashemite aspirant, Faisal bin Hussein, to rule all of Greater Syria. He was in Damascus, thanks to British support, and considered himself to be king of that country. At the same time, the French imposed military occupation on Lebanon, and later on Syria as well. Borders were as yet undefined and anarchy reigned in the hinterland. In March, Bedouin brigands overran the Jewish settlement of Tel-Hai and murdered its defenders, including the legendary Joseph Trumpeldor.

In Jabal 'Amil, from the coast of Sidon and Tyre south to Tibnin and Taibeh, the Matawila Shiites expressed their Arab sympathies and desire that southern Lebanon be annexed to the new Syrian entity. Meetings were held in Nabatiyeh under the leadership of the local feudal *za'im,* Kamel el-Assa'ad. The French, the traditional European patrons of the Maronite community in Lebanon, armed their Christian co-religionists while repressing their Muslim neighbors. The very idea of an independent Lebanon, one separate from Muslim-Arab Syria, was in fact the dream of the Maronites who relied upon French intervention to bring this to fruition. In short, foreigners in south Lebanon fomented the political lines of a sectarian conflict.

While Shiite rebels roamed the countryside, their leaders feared that their impoverished and backward community would come under European rule and Christian domination. The end of Turkish rule would be followed by rule by a non-Muslim foreign power, rather than by freedom and independence. The French, conveying a concern for the welfare of the Christians in south Lebanon, maintained military forces in Marj'ayoun and Rmeish, among other posts. But their real goal was to govern unhindered all of *Le Grand Liban* according to the League of Nations mandate that Paris acquired, while assuring an acceptable boundary line with British-mandate Palestine to the south.

In May, Shiites from neighboring Bint Jbeil and possibly also Bedouins attacked the Christian village of Ayn Ebel. Over 40 Christians were murdered in this wanton pogrom. According to Muhammad Jabir al-Safa in his book *Ta'rikh Jabal 'Amil,* the younger generations of Bint Jbeil and ayn Ebel had long enjoyed

brotherly relations prior to this episode, which tarnished the friendship between the religious communities. The French, however, having provoked the violence and clearly escalating local tensions, had stood on the sidelines and neglected their governmental responsibility to keep the peace in southern Lebanon. Later, following the plunder of Ayn Ebel, French cannons bombarded Bint Jbeil.

Etienne Sakr's description of the sequence of events that culminated in the massacre of May 1920 is both general and personal:

> Before the attack, the Shi'a, led by Kamel El-Assa'ad from Taibe, demanded protection money from the Christians. But the people of Ayn Ebel, Rmeish and Debel refused. The Christians got weapons from the French at Tyre. Local Shi'a and Baalbek Shi'a attacked the Christians while they were gathering the harvest in the fields. Surrounded, my father Caesar and others fought but ultimately were unable to withstand the assault effectively, and they opened a gap for people to flee southward to Rmeish. His mother—my grandmother—was among those killed. The names of the dead were later immortalized on a plaque near the Maronite church in the village. Ayn Ebel was plundered and burnt down. Then the French came, and after shelling Bint Jbeil invited the people of our village to go and take whatever they wanted from there. People went, my father among them, burning down houses in Bint Jbeil. But he took nothing from Bint Jbeil and swore that he would never go there again. And indeed he never did. He was a special man.

Noel, Etienne's brother and principal of the College des Frères in Jerusalem, commented that following these events people from Ayn Ebel began to visit the market of Bint Jbeil as in the past. However, 'not our father; he wouldn't even look in the direction of Bint Jbeil. He was too proud to do otherwise. Etienne is like our father.'

For Etienne Sakr, like the Muslim historian cited above, the lesson of the Ayn Ebel massacre in 1920 is not that Christians and Shiites could not live in peace together. It is rather, that outside interference undermined the traditional pattern of coexistence and charged the atmosphere with a violent potential. The French and Arabs were guilty of this in 1920, as the Iranians and the Syrians, and the Israelis, aggravated communal relations decades later in southern Lebanon. The events transpiring 80 years later, culminating in May 2000, brought the matter to a head. In the aftermath of Israel's military withdrawal from south Lebanon and the collapse of the South Lebanese Army (SLA), Christian inhabitants of Ayn Ebel fled for safety into Israel in the face of menacing Hizbullah fighters and their supporters. Thereafter, Hizbullah installed *katyusha* rocket-launchers near the houses and stalked the village, many of whose men and families had fled into Israel. The Islamists then tried to put pressure on the nuns at the local Christian school to permit Muslim girls to wear the Islamic veil in the classroom. In this and other ways Iran, projecting its Islamic fundamentalist and terrorist profile

into the southern reaches of Lebanon, employed Hizbullah as a substitute army against Christian neighbors, and the Jewish state.

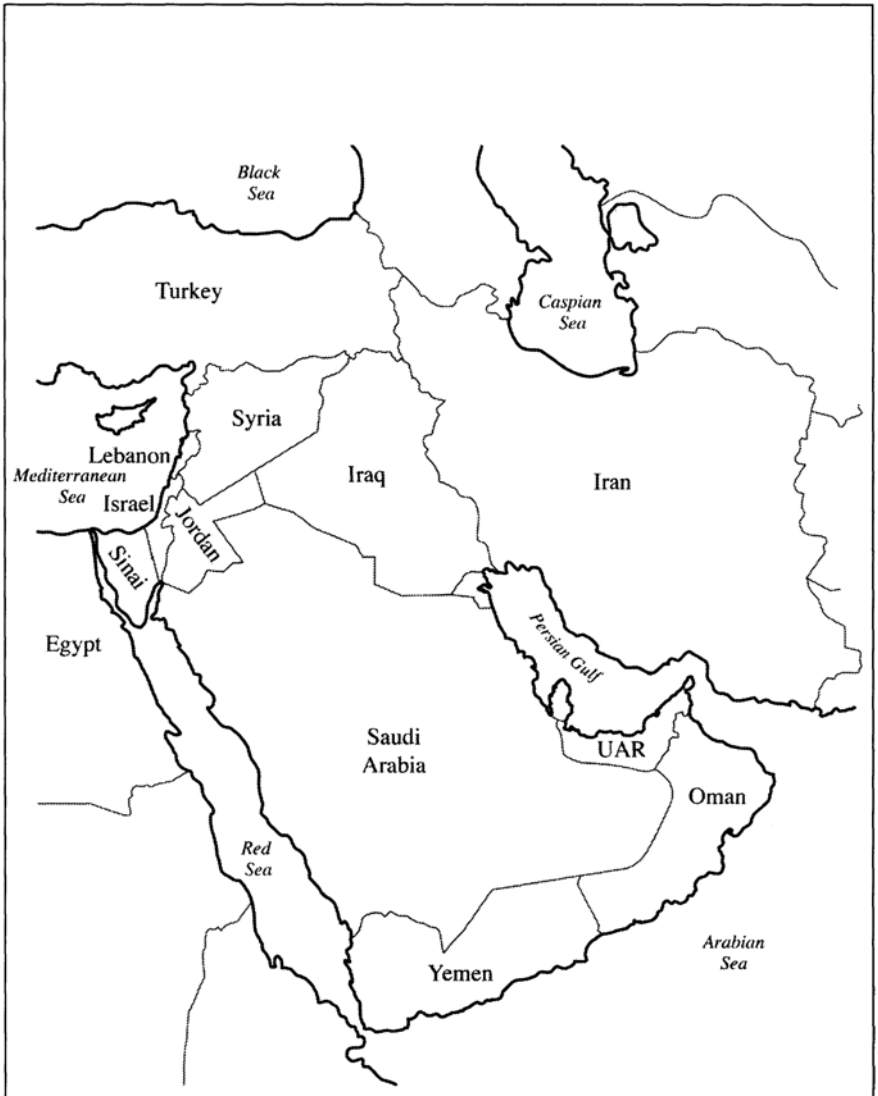
For Etienne Sakr, 'Hizbullah is not a Shiite movement; the Hizbullah people are not Shiites, but Iranian proxies. The real Shiites are those who served in the South Lebanese Army, some of whom came into Israel in May 2000.' His unwavering conviction, rooted deep in the soul of the true Lebanese people, postulates that all inhabitants are considered Lebanese who are first and foremost dedicated to the country's independence. Those Shiites in 1920 who wanted south Lebanon annexed to Syria, and those in 2000 who conceived of Lebanon as a Syrian satellite state and an Iranian proxy, do not qualify as true Lebanese. But patriotic Shiites and patriotic Christians, along with all other like Lebanese, qualify as fellow brothers and sisters in a common homeland. This belief is at the cornerstone of Sakr's national ideology which presupposes a shared trans-communal common denominator of Lebanese identity and peoplehood.

On 2 May 1942, Caesar Sakr addressed the following letter from Haifa to his Lebanese countrymen on the occasion of the Feast of the Martyrs commemorating the twenty-second anniversary of the Ayn Ebel massacre in his home village. We quote the remarkable letter in full:

> Dear Citizens and Countrymen,
>
> This twenty-second commemoration gathers us in spirit, and we see after twenty-two years how great was the action that we did. We see how great were the sacrifices that we made to preserve our freedom and principles. Because freedom and principles can only be purchased with a lot of blood. And no one can buy them except through the honor of our souls who hate misery and oppression *(maskanata wa-zulm)* [which is the Koranic punishment for *dhimmi* Christians].
>
> Did we agree to bow to illegitimate force? Did we accept that they [the enemies] deal with us when we are weak and that we stand humiliated before those who threaten us? The answer is No. But the man, the woman, the boy, the old man, the weak man, the sick man, all screamed—let us die, but let our dignity *(karama)* live. So forty men, women, the old, the weak and the sick, died and our dignity will live for centuries and generations.
>
> Our dignity will live glorified in the graves of the martyrs. Our dignity which we bought with blood will be eternalized in the grave and engraved on the rock. And be it the goal of each inhabitant of Ayn Ebel that his dignity be a beacon and the light in the darkness of the nights.
>
> For dignity was the pillow for the head [of the martyrs] and the shrouds for their sacred body.

In this powerful epistle the words of the father, Caesar, would later acquire a living incarnation in the heart and actions of his son Etienne. Written in Arabic on a small piece of paper, Abu-Arz kept his father's letter as a special treasure

and sacred trust. In addition, the document reveals clearly the extent to which he was so extraordinarily similar in spirit to his father.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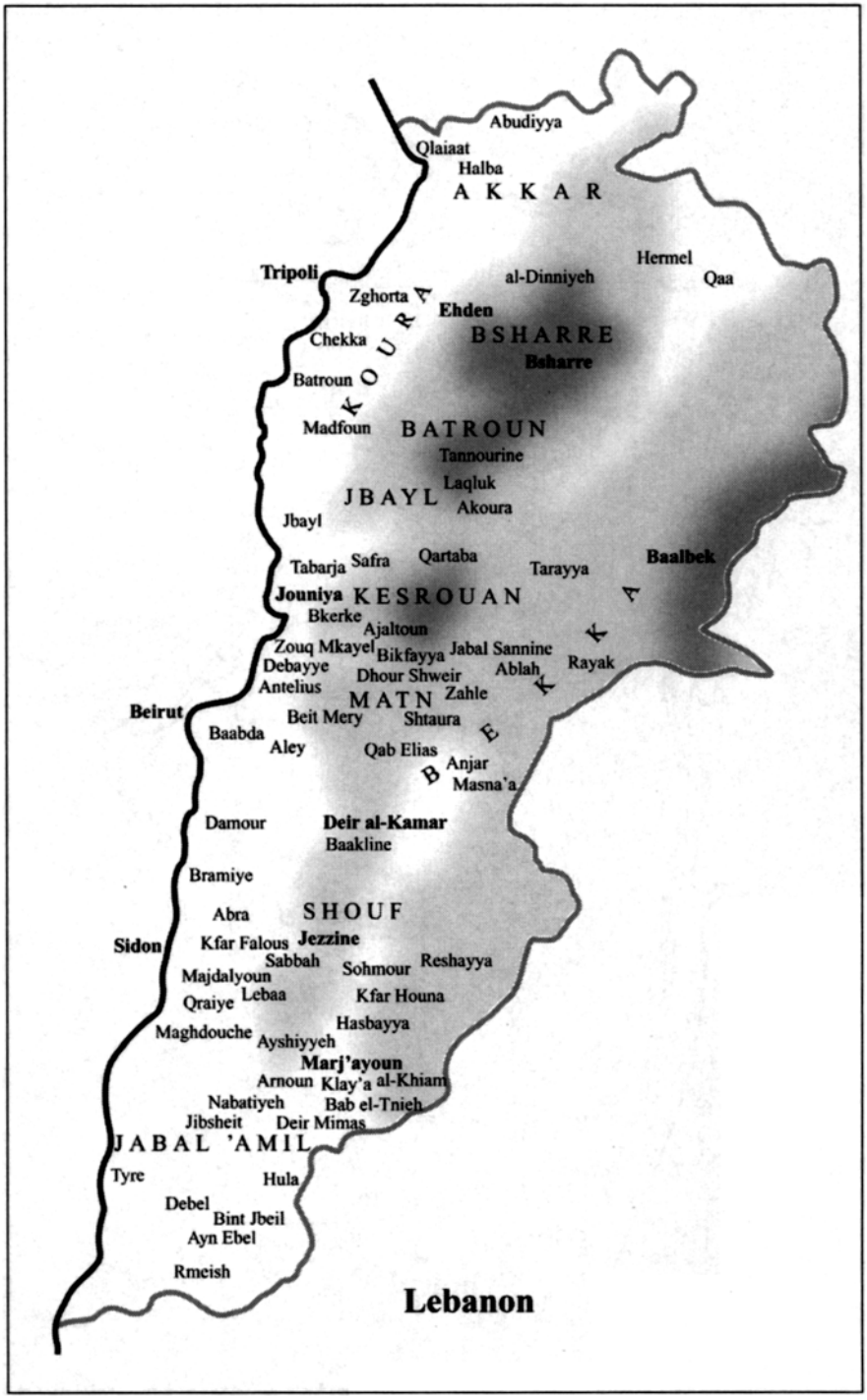
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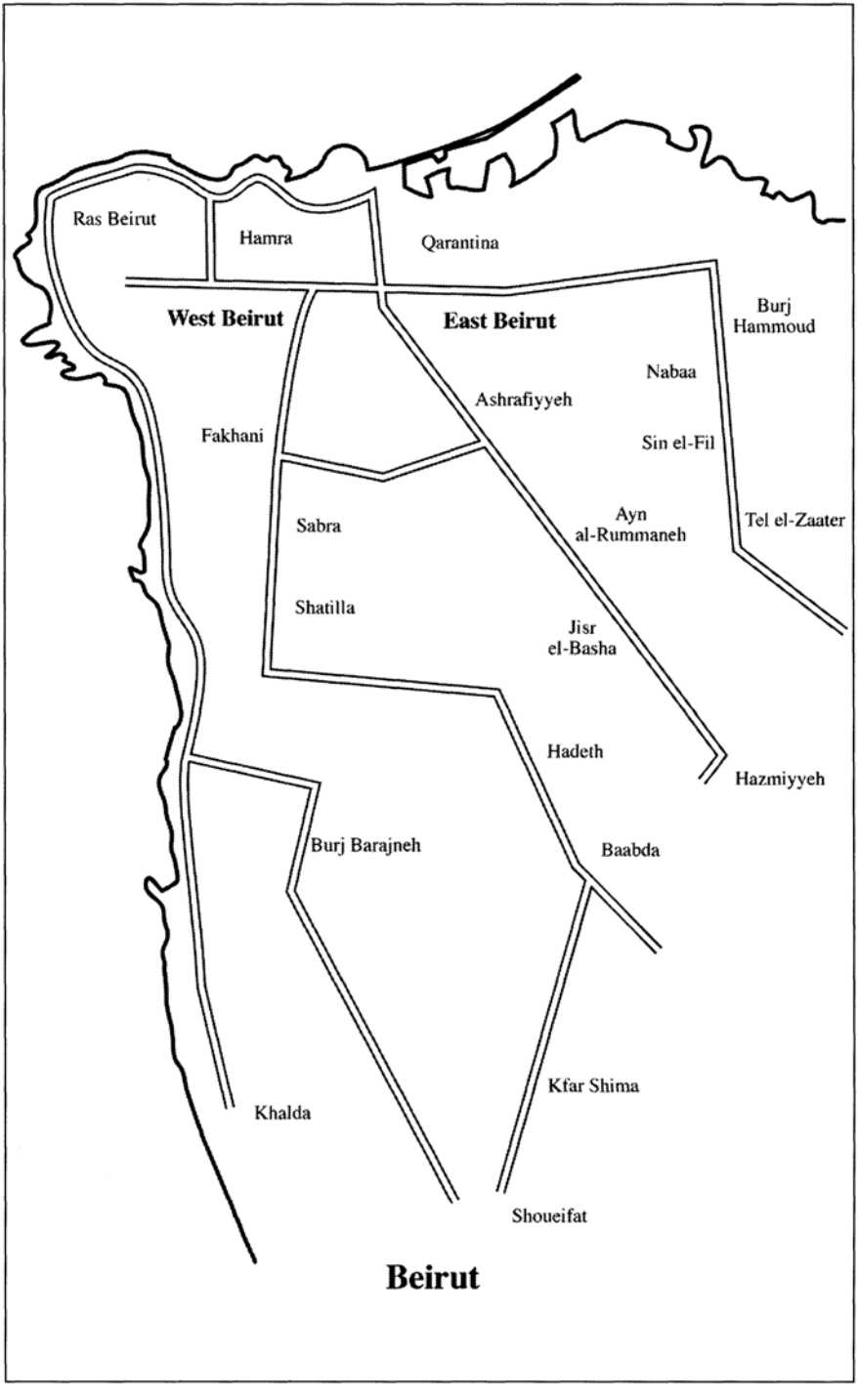
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Introduction
The Mystique of Lebanon

Lebanon holds a very special place as a country which shines in the history of the ancient world. The Bible praises it as the land of high cedars and running waters. The prophets of Israel regale its beauty, and its name is synonymous in Jewish lore with the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. The Gilgamesh Epic depicts its hero traveling from Mesopotamia to the land of the cedars, to 'Hermon and Lebanon'. Homer in the *Iliad* refers to Sidon, and Herodotus in *The Histories* relates that he visited a temple dedicated to Heracles, known as Melkart in ancient Phoenicia, in Tyre. Phoenicians of millennia ago inhabited the mountains and the coast of Lebanon while fashioning a written alphabet. Archeological remains of houses and temples, statues and inscriptions, suggest their role in ancient architecture and religion. While of Phoenician descent, Thales was considered the founder of science in Europe. The daring and inventive Phoenicians settled in Carthage and circumnavigated the African continent, sailed to Brazil and Newfoundland, and acquired fame as sailors, traders and warriors. A center of Hellenic philosophy and Roman law, Lebanon appeared later as an appendage of Europe while in fact it provided Oriental origins for Western civilization.

The country absorbed a stream of religious influences over the centuries. Baalbek housed pagan worship and Adonis, symbolizing resurrection and hope, was a nature god in Jbayl. This coastal site was known also as Byblos and for the Greeks served as the root-name for the Bible. The Qadeesha valley was the home of early Maronite monks and hermits, Shiites settled in the Bekka and Druzes in Wadi Taym. Lebanon became a religious refuge in particular for small individualistic communities, while contending with imperial conquering powers that sought its integration within broader regional states.

The topography of Lebanon is probably the most critical factor in assuring the country's independence in history. Two mountain ranges, Mount Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon, separated the country from Syria and the desert further east. The Lebanese historian Jawad Boulos considered that the eastern range saved Lebanon from the Syrian-Arab threat and preserved the people's distinct identity.

The search for a Lebanese nation that transcends the disparate minority groups is an intricate question of definition and reality. Without common origins and

religious affiliations, it would seem that Lebanon is not more than a pluralistic society that, perhaps awkwardly and precariously, blends the colorful ethnic mosaic into a single political entity. At times, this society is the battlefield for clashes among the different confessions. Yet, if the variety of communities feels a similar antagonism toward the non-Lebanese, or a like alienation from the external powers, in particular Syria, then negative inclinations can help shape a shared common collective vision. It is possible to see Lebanon as an emerging nation in history, or perhaps an unfolding political nation, without however constituting a single ethnic community. Love of fatherland and a common language, Fichte argued, could cement a nation as an organic entity in history. In this respect, the different Lebanese communities residing in their special homeland, and speaking their particular Arabic Lebanese dialect with its Aramaic roots, could become the human rudiments of an organic nation. However, this conception of nationhood was only one among various alternatives or conceptions available.

The spirit of Lebanon found an outlet for its dilemma of self-definition in giving birth to a particular national myth. It revolves around a small people's valiant struggle to assure its freedom and identity, in particular in the mountains of Bsharre, Batroun, Jbayl and Kesrouan, which became the territorial patrimony of a people with unique attributes and achievements. While the Lebanese coast at Tyre and Sidon became an early center of Christianity and pushed aside the worship of Astarte, known as Aphrodite by the Greeks, the mountain remained pagan as at the famous temple of Jupiter at Baalbek (Heliopolis). The fundamental religious change took place in the mountain with the arrival of Yuhanna Marun and his disciples, apparently in the late seventh-century. The Christian faith was institutionalized and began to acquire a growing native presence. The inhabitants adopted the Maronite rite and established the enduring ideological and spiritual bond between Lebanon and Maronitism. The mountain as the site of pride and identity was a source of religious emotion, admittedly both pagan and Christian. The grandeur of Lebanon and the courage of its people became bathed in the mystery of the sacred mountain. Typically, in modern times, Christian families that moved to Beirut retained their traditional home in the mountain.

The heroic legends of Lebanon tell of the successful *Marada* or Mardaite-Maronite defense against the Arabs of Syria, and how Umayyad caliphs, Mu'awiya and later Abd al-Malik, actually paid tribute to stop the menacing highlanders.[1] We learn about Maronite religious indepen dence from both Rome and Byzantium; we hear of a tiny village in Bsharre which never succumbed to the Islamic prohibition enumerated in the *dhimma* restrictions imposed on non-Muslims, that forbade the ringing of church bells in Muslim-ruled lands. The Maronite Patriarchs cultivated the spiritual life in the valleys of Wadi Qannubin, and the patriarchal headquarters only moved to Bkerke above Jouniya in 1820. In 1292, the Maronites defeated the Mamluks, but Kesrouan succumbed and was ravaged in 1305. However, Maronites never knelt in submission before the

Ottoman Turkish sultans who conquered the areas of Syria in 1517, and never requested confirmation of their patriarch's ecclesiastical position. The Christians of Mount Lebanon maintained their independence and avoided paying taxes or providing soldiers to the Muslim Empire with its capital in Constantinople/ Istanbul.

The Lebanese narrative records the military and political exploits of the Druze leader Fakhr al-Din II (1572–1635), who grew up in a Maronite environment and acquired an education under the tutelage of Abi-Sakra el-Khazin. Blessed with leadership qualities, he became a forerunner of Mount Lebanon's struggle for independence in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, while also initiating European-style modernization projects in the areas of agriculture, construction and the arts. With only 4,000 fighters facing 12,000 Ottoman troops from Damascus, Fakhr al-Din routed the enemy and was recognized as ruling from 'Aleppo to Egypt'. He preferred, it was said, to declare his rule in particular in Mount Lebanon, Sidon and the Galilee. It is with a dexterous and subtle Maronite interpretation that Fakhr al-Din is seen not primarily as a Druze sectarian, because that would signify Christian subordination, but as a forerunner of Lebanese nationalism that, once posited, cannot but carry a Christian stamp.

In the nineteenth century, as travel and exploration increased, European visitors to the Orient often put Lebanon on their itinerary of exotic places and religious sites. Lamartine, the French poet and political personality, was no doubt more exceptionally enthralled with Lebanon and Palestine (the Holy Land of Israel) than his fellow-countrymen, Chateaubriand who preceded him and de Nerval who visited later. With a profound interest in the Bible and a spiritual soul, Lamartine traveled to Beirut and the mountain in 1832. His recorded impressions in *Voyage en Orient* (1835) include the following poetic panegyric:

> The cedars of Lebanon are the relics of the past centuries and of nature and are the most famous monuments in the world. They know the history of the earth better than history itself. In the shade of the cedars one feels as if in a temple. And what a beautiful temple! What altar closer to heaven! What dais is more majestic than the smallest plateau of Lebanon—Here countless generations have pronounced the name of God in different ways but with the same fervor.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Turkish authorities formally recognized the autonomy of Mount Lebanon as essentially a Christian entity. Then, in the early part of the twentieth century the French promoted the establishment of *Le Grand Liban*—only 210 kilometers in length and not more than just 90 kilometers in width—that appended the Akkar north, the eastern Bekka, the predominantly Shiite south and the Sunni coast, to the core Christian mountain heartland. This independent Lebanese republic, a mere 10,452 square kilometers in size, emerged in the 1920s with the *raison d'être* of serving as a Christian homeland in the Arab-Muslim Orient, but with the constitutional apparatus of a multi-

confessional entity under the banner of the National Pact in 1943. Here, then, were two different conceptions of Lebanese peoplehood—as a Christian homeland and a multiconfessional state—at once overlapping and yet at odds with each other.[2]

The reality of a pluralistic country paralleled the primacy of the Maronites in the Lebanese narrative. They were the Lebanese *par excellence* due to the length of their history in the land, their national(ist) character and patriotic spirit, proven cultural and economic skills, and no less their political shrewdness in the very promotion of a sovereign Lebanon separate from Syria after World War I. By contrast, the Druzes lacked a coherent national or territorial consciousness, the Shiites were bereft of political awareness, while the Sunnis considered their identity a part of the broader Arab-Muslim expanse. The Greek Orthodox Christians were typically a denominational community with sectoral concerns, but without independent political aspirations.

While referring to a graduation address by Rector Selim Abou of St Joseph's University in Beirut in 1999, Bishop Sayah of Jerusalem and the Holy Land explained that 'we [Christian Maronites] carry Lebanon on our shoulders. The Muslims benefit, but do little. This is not fair…we are the mother of the baby. We speak out and fight for everyone.' There is much truth in the bishop's remarks. Despite initial opposition by Sunnis and Shiites to the inclusion of their areas of inhabitation within the borders of Greater Lebanon in 1920, they would hardly want to turn the clock back and live within the borders of the politically repressive and economically impoverished Syrian state. But the burden of the struggle for a Lebanon free from Syria has always been seen as the primary responsibility of the nationalist, some would say separatist, Maronites. This said, privileges and status are the legitimate rewards accruing to the elder sons of the land.

The tough mettle of Maronite character traditionally precluded any feeling of inferiority toward Arabs and Islam. It is for this fundamental reason that, without the Maronites, Lebanon would never have existed as an independent entity in the region. The old-stock Maronites considered themselves Lebanon's roots as the original inhabitants, no less of Phoenician ancestry, in the country.

The most stirring evocation of the special Lebanese vocation by Charles Corm in his poetic tract *La Montagne Inspirée* in 1934 cannot conceivably be second to any other passionate expression of love for Lebanon, either before or since its publication.[3] This book served as the most uplifting exposition of Lebanese nationalism in the twentieth century. Giving voice to a profound national pride, Corm never once mentions Arabism or Islam as components of Lebanon's identity. Rather, he turns back to the Phoenician roots of the country and people: the alphabet and writing, monotheism before the appearance of Judaism, navigation through the Mediterranean Sea to Sicily, Iberia and Africa, moreover scholarship, authorship and diplomacy—and of course the majestic and noble cedars. Corm enthuses that Lebanon is awakening with its liberation and independence since 1920, yet agonizes over the humiliation of the remaining

French mandatory presence. His language is harsh in referring to the scoundrels who rule, the cadavers piled up and the crucifixes broken. The most essential part of the book is dedicated to the memory of Lebanon's noble history, cultural achievements, worldly role and mystical attraction. But he laments the loss of the Syriac tongue that 'our grandmothers spoke at Ghazir' as he suffers the shame of writing in a foreign language, presumably French. Before the oppressor came to the land, the Lebanese spoke Phoenician and then Syriac.

Corm the Maronite, addressing his Muslim brother, proudly declares that *'Je suis le vrai Liban'*. The Christians carry Lebanon in their heart and are the historic native dwellers of the country. The mission of Lebanon is to recover and maintain, and certainly embellish, her special character and consciousness. All this has absolutely nothing to do with the Islamic religion, the Arabic language, or Arab nationalism. Lebanon is a historical, national and territorial entity separate from its contemporary regional environment.

Accordingly, the institutional make-up of the Lebanese political system since 1943, and even before, recognized the essential fact of national specificity and established the post of president as a Maronite office, while granting the inferior position of prime minister to the Sunnis and the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies to the Shiites. It was quite an exceptional development in the 1970s that, even after the Christians were no longer the majority population and the Shiites in particular began to acquire increasing public standing, it remained an accepted political norm that a Maronite still occupy the office of president. No less a Shiite religious personality than Musa al-Sadr declared that a Christian should continue being the president of Lebanon.[4] The 1989 Taif Accord, imposed by Syria and Saudi Arabia on a faltering Christian Lebanon, reduced the authority of the president in relation to the two other senior office-holders, though the position continued to be reserved for the Maronite community.

The founding of Lebanon in 1920 afforded the Maronites domination of the state apparatus and social levers of power. They filled the senior officer echelons of the army which was always commanded by a Maronite. They maintained an elite position in the bureaucracy where, in the 1950s for example, they held 40 per cent of the high administrative posts while their proportion of the total population was approximately 30 per cent. Maronites played a prominent role in the cultural, academic and media domains where their linguistic skills, elevated educational standards, and overall flair for modernity made them the leading group. Sunnis and Greek Orthodox elements were prominent in commercial and banking circles, but the Maronites were also part of these economic elite sectors.

Lebanese society was multi-confessional based on the primacy of Maronites in the social hierarchy. Their communal elite, with a very prominent place therein for the Maronite Church, the Order of the Monks and the Kaslik University, considered Lebanon the unique homeland of the Maronite people. Put differently, Lebanon is primarily the Maronites' homeland. They are the 'special people' and it is their Promised Land.

For a long time the Maronites were far more than ‘first among equals’ in their own self-image and in the perceptions of others. Their clergy enjoyed special privileges in Mount Lebanon under the Ottoman Empire and contributed to Christian solidarity in facing others. The French played a significant role in strengthening Maronite pride of place, providing diplomatic and strategic protection, while the Maronites’ Catholic connection with the Church of Rome promoted an array of educational and religious facilities. While other Oriental Christians generally lived with fear and behaved cautiously in keeping with their inferior status under Islam, the Maronites were largely free from such inhibitions. Indeed, while Christians elsewhere converted to Islam to escape their *dhimmi* predicament, as in Egypt for example, it was not uncommon for non-Christians to adopt the Maronite rite in Lebanon. Famous instances included the Shihab Muslims beginning in 1756 one of whose descendants, Fouad Shihab, became Lebanon’s Maronite president in 1958. Other earlier converts were the Abillamah Druze Emirs and Harfush Shiites. Of the Fakhr al-Din emirs, Kamal Junblatt wrote that ‘they were born Druzes, lived as Christians and died as Muslims’.[5] That the emirs *lived* as Christians would seem to symbolize the Maronite linkage.

The Maronites were the political axis for certain Lebanese groups and families and served as a senior ‘minority’ patron—while historically being a large majority in Mount Lebanon itself—in a land of minority sects. This was significant when considering two very important points: one, that the harsh Islamic prohibition of apostasy whose punishment is death did not deter some Muslims from converting to the Maronite denomination; and two, that the Maronite Patriarchate and priesthood, seeing themselves as the guardians of a special indigenous and therefore closed community, did not in principle favor or encourage converts to its church.

It is interesting to note the somewhat unusual and contrasting case of Shakib Arslan, the prominent Druze political figure in late Ottoman and post-World War I Arab nationalist times. As a young boy he studied in a Maronite school in Beirut, but in his adult years declared himself a Muslim.

Our focus on the Maronite component of Lebanese social demography does not itself resolve the question regarding a possibly broader and evolving nationality for all Lebanese groups together. The existence of separate religious confessions did not necessarily induce hatred or hostility on religious grounds. It may be suggested that the various communities were not passionately observant of their faiths, which served especially as the focus of their identities. This judgment would fit the character of the Druze community in as much as the religious doctrine accepts irreligiosity as a legitimate personal choice. The Shiites of Lebanon were called Matawilas and hardly ranked as conventional Muslim believers. The Sunnis, part of political Islam as a governing institution, did not have to demonstrate exceptional religiosity to assert their identity. As for the Maronites, sectarian affiliation regardless of the extent of individual piety was the mark of a special group consciousness.

It may therefore seem ironic that the diverse Lebanese, though divided by religion, could nevertheless transcend these divisions and coexist over many centuries with a minimum of friction and fighting. We begin to sense one of the mysteries of Lebanon. Something about the mystique of this land, its beauty and charm, ruggedness and simplicity, can envelop all those who truly love her. This is not especially activated through the prism of political patriotism, but through the medium of pan-communal territorial bonding over many generations.

Most groups historically shared a common antipathy toward threatening foreign powers and chose Lebanon, geographically marginal from urban-based empires in Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo, as a safe refuge. This was certainly true for Christians, Druzes and Shiites. Perhaps the most telling case of generally positive interconfessional relations concerns Maronites and Druzes in Mount Lebanon, especially in the Shouf region. They lived amicably together, fought against non-Lebanese enemies (usually emanating from Damascus), and felt religiously compatible. In 1444, Druzes accompanied Maronite delegates to Rome on a friendly mission. In the late nineteenth century, Shaikh Najm explained that his Druze community dwells 'among the rocks in the arid mountains, enduring poverty and hardship…in order to safeguard our honor, possessions and lives from attack by the Muslims. The Muhammadan Law requires them to treat us with such harshness.' He then commented that 'the presence of Christians among us is to our benefit, for many advantages accrue to us from their being here'. Shaikh Najm implored his Druzes to 'be like a single family with the Christians'.[6]

The horrific events of 1860 ostensibly disprove this sanguine interpretation of Maronite-Druze fraternity. Sectarian warfare from the Matn to Jezzine and Reshayya revealed the barbarism of communal strife with the Druzes getting the upper hand over their Maronite adversaries. However, behind the slaughter of Christians in Deir al-Kamar, Zahle and Hasbayya stood European intervention and Turkish venality. French consuls and agents in particular armed, guided and goaded the Maronites to seek territorial and demographic victories against the Druzes. The Ottomans, for their part, provoked Muslim fanaticism by officially proposing reforms on behalf of non-Muslim denizens within the realm, and Ottoman garrisons were more than lax in allowing the Druzes to run wild against their Maronite rivals.

The American missionary Calhoun wrote at the time that the civil war in Lebanon was not truly a religious war and that, in fact, earlier history presented a chronicle of intra-Druze and intra-Christian factiousness more than of interconfessional violence. But since the Druzes 'have regarded the English as their protectors, and the Maronites in like manner have looked to the French government', the warfare assumed a religious aspect.[7]

We have stressed that the common political platform for trans-communal co-existence was rejection of foreign intervention in Lebanese affairs. Both Maronites and Druzes were historically active and militant in their determination to keep alien troops and avaricious tax collectors out of their traditional feudal and community domains. The infamous governor of Sidon, Ahmad al-Jazzar,

who was appointed in 1776, was able with great difficulty to win the allegiance of the proud mountain warriors. Ottoman use of foreign Maghrebi (North African) and Albanian troops no doubt exacerbated the animosity felt by the native Lebanese toward the Turkish Muslim Empire and its local officialdom.[8]

The national idea or nationalism as a popular movement can emerge in different ways. It can express a positive identity and collective selfaffirmation for actualizing very specific national values. This form of nationalism grows from a coherent definition of the collective 'I'. Alternatively, nationalism can express a proud negative impulse in the face of foreign threat or interference against an indigenous population, which then rises in rebellion in the name of national freedom. This form of nationalism surfaces with a formidable denial of the 'Other'. We have seen signs of both nationalist forms in Lebanese history. The major challenge for the Lebanese, as in the past so too in the contemporary period, is to consolidate a single national identity and binding sentiment in order, among other reasons, to repel foreign intervention and assure the independence of their country.

1
The Early Years, 1937–61

The village of Ayn Ebel in south Lebanon never integrally belonged to the broader geographic and ethnic surroundings. The core of the Maronite heartland in Mount Lebanon stretched from Bsharre in the north down to the area of Jezzine, thus isolating Ayn Ebel, situated still further south, from immediate contact with the vital religious-national Christian entity. At the same time, southern Lebanon was the home of an overwhelming Shiite majority population with no Maronite legislative representation from the Sidon, Nabatiyeh and Hasbayya areas and south of them. In the 1930s, the Shiites and Palestinian infiltrators, along with assorted marauding and terrorist Arab elements, dominated southern Lebanon in which the few Christian villages, such as Debel and Rmeish, Klay'a and Marj'ayoun, dwelled in precarious circumstances. It was therefore not without cause that the Maronites in these villages actually sought formal ties with Israel in 1948–49, even offering to serve in the Israel Defense Forces and perhaps be politically incorporated within the emerging map of the state of Israel in the course of the War of Independence.[1] To live with the Jews in Upper Galilee seemed a better option than contending with the Shiites in Jabal 'Amil.

The Sakr family, like the Maronite population generally in south Lebanon, was not historically native to the region and probably came from Jbayl in the mountain, possibly from the village of Qartaba or Bentayel. Another possibility is that the family hails from Dou'waar in the Matn. Etienne Sakr confesses that it is not known with certainty where the family originally came from, but it is likely that their move was part of the considerable migration dating from approximately the sixteenth century intended to extend Maronite settlement and influence south of Mount Lebanon itself. This goal was only very partially achieved both because southern Lebanon remained a peripheral Shiite-dominated region, and one markedly undeveloped in comparison with other parts of the country.

Etienne Sakr was born in 1937 in Ayn Ebel, one of 11 children of whom eight were boys and three were girls. Caesar, the father, was French-educated and, when the French commander General Gouraud once visited the village after World War I, the only resident who was able to address the French commander in his native language was Etienne's father. He had been educated at the Catholic

Ecole des Pères Lazaristes in Jerusalem, not so much intending to become a priest, but rather to acquire a French education. With these qualifications, Caesar Sakr was appointed director of the Sale-sian Italian School in Haifa where the family lived during the school-term, in the city's German Colony overlooking the sea for a number of years. All but two of the children were born in Ayn Ebel.

Caesar and Sa'da Sakr were people of principle and morality in the ethical education they gave to their large brood of children. Noel, Etienne's brother, recalled that their father taught them that there is right and wrong, truth and falsehood. Their mother would not tolerate a lie. As school director, Caesar Sakr was a disciplinarian and Etienne remembered that, when his father passed by the pupils during recess, they would stop in their tracks.

The ethical standards of the Sakrs were perhaps not really seen as the norm in Lebanese culture. Noel recalls laughingly that when in later years the family lived in Beirut and had acquired a reputation for straight talk and honesty, people would ask wryly 'are you people Lebanese?' Etienne himself added that, 'when a Lebanese says he'll do something, it doesn't mean he will. After all, he's Lebanese.' While one would refrain from attributing to the Lebanese any particular moral obtuseness, it is worth quoting in this regard the highly insightful moral portrait of the Lebanese drawn by Khalil Hawi, a Greek Orthodox Christian from Mount Lebanon:

> The free air of the mountain, and the dignity of the Mountain itself, leave their impression on their spirit and physique, while a primitive kind of ideal morality is manifested in their conduct. Nevertheless, after their youth is over, the repeated shocks and frustrations which they are fated to receive from the evils inherent in their surroundings, the realization of the tragedies and the futilities in the history of their country, and the practical wisdom which their parents try to teach them…all these combine to keep them [the Lebanese] from believing in any great cause such as public welfare or the advancement of the nation. Petty egoism and indiscriminating opportunism seem indispensable qualities if they are to adapt themselves to their environment.[2]

In the case of Etienne, and undoubtedly for the other Sakr children, the good qualities inculcated by their parents in their youth remained central to their mature character thereafter. Etienne's brother Noel added, however, that in his later public career Etienne showed a certain naiveté in that, at times, he trusted people too much. Sakr goodness could be a baneful quality.

Odette Sakr, Etienne's sister, was the youngest of the 11 Sakr children. As a 7-year-old, she recalled, Etienne offered to help her in mathematics after learning that she copied her homework from a friend in her class. She felt guilty about not doing her own lessons and was happy that her older brother was going to teach her the subject: 'Every morning at dawn he got up to teach me mathematics. Because of his tutoring I learned to love math. I also loved Etienne.' Odette

added: ‘As long as he was up anyway, after tutoring he would prepare breakfast for the whole Sakr family.’

Caesar Sakr died in 1944 of a liver infection, perhaps from drinking polluted water from the village well, and left the impoverished family in dire financial straits. To life’s inscrutable vagaries was added the absence of a father (Etienne’s mother passed away much later in 1988). Etienne was 6 or 7 years old at the time of his father’s death, and the family decided to move to the northern city of Tripoli where one of his older brothers worked at the Iraq Petroleum Company. Etienne, in keeping with the Maronite custom, received a French education at the Carmelite School and at the College Des Frères High School. Later, the family moved to Beirut as some of his brothers were already living there, and he completed his *baccalaureat-deuxième partie* at the Frères School in the capital. At the age of 17 Etienne Sakr would then go out to work.

Although he had not yet reached the required employment age, Etienne was hired to work for the *Sûreté Générale* (General Security) in 1958, when President Camille Chamoun was completing his term as president of the republic. Lebanon was under Syrian pressure and penetrated by pan-Arab nationalist propaganda emanating from Egypt. In that year Gamal Abdul Nasser launched the United Arab Republic (UAR) composed of Egypt and Syria which, anti-imperialist and anti-Western in rhetoric and policy, considered Lebanon a weak link in the American sphere of influence in the Middle East. In May 1958, a civil war erupted in Lebanon that threatened Christian political dominance and the country’s pro-Western orientation. In July, US President Eisenhower sent 11,000 American marines to support the Chamoun government and prevent a leftist, Nasserite and pro-Soviet takeover.

Etienne’s first mission in the *Sûreté Générale* took him to the southern Lebanese border at Bab al-Tnieh, just opposite the Israeli town of Metulla, but where he was responsible for demonstrating his country’s sovereignty against Syria. Damascus, after all, had never recognized Lebanon’s independence and considered the historic notion of Greater Syria *(Suriya al-Kubra)* inclusive of Lebanon as a permanent and legitimate goal. A near-by road at Bab al-Tnieh led to Kuneitra in the Golan Heights, which was then Syrian territory, and it was Sakr’s job to supervise traffic at the border between Lebanon and Syria. The Shiites in the south opposed President Camille Chamoun and sided with Syrian predatory objectives against Lebanon. Gun smuggling and infiltrations across the borders were common in this area where the national Lebanese authorities had only a weak presence.

The Beirut government traditionally lacked the interest and resources to integrate south Lebanon into the fabric of national life. This hinterland area, with its Shiite majority and marginal Christian presence, required the will of young Etienne Sakr, and he proved himself worthy of the task. His family’s southern background could only help steel his determination. The army with a base at al-Khiam was able to send Christians from Klay’a, fearful of Nasserism and armed with Israeli weapons, to support his actions. Indeed, Etienne single-handedly

arrested 20 Shiites for smuggling weapons from Syria. His first experience in security work ended successfully in 1959, when he was sent on his next mission.

From the far south, Etienne was posted to Abudiyya in the Akkar region near the Syrian border in northern Lebanon. While a fellow-worker was regularly drunk, young Sakr was committed to properly administering the border crossing between Lebanon and Syria at a bridge over the *Nahr al-Kabir.* While responsible for security, the other seven or eight persons operating the post were in charge of customs, the gendarmerie and the railroad line that ran from the Lebanese border north to Aleppo in Syria. The Nasserites were intent on undermining Lebanon and blew up the station's building. Etienne remembered that not only did they initially not even have a telephone, 'but we had no place to sleep. The authorities sent us tents which the wind blew down. They then sent us train cabins to sleep in. We wanted to stop the Syrians, hundreds in number, who used to freely cross into Lebanon without any authorization to seek work.' Virtually alone but strengthened by his patriotic convictions, Sakr set out to establish that the political deed of Lebanon's statehood across the porous border with Syria should become a visible, physical fact. He recounted the events in a way which might appear almost comical, were it not that they touched upon the fundamental question of Lebanese sovereignty:

> I sent a messenger to warn the Syrian trespassers to return to Syrian territory and to warn other Syrians not to try to cross the border. The Syrian officer in charge at the border was Captain Adnan. He was a mean person and laughed a lot. I had a small pistol. I sent one of our people, a civilian from Rayak, to convey my last warning. Captain Adnan laughed again and the Syrians, about 10–15 in number, came again to the post in a bus planning to enter Lebanon. I took my pistol and threatened Adnan, while taking the Syrians' IDs.
>
> I then called the Commissioner of Security in Tripoli who happened to be a Muslim. He was upset at me: 'why are you making trouble?' He called to Beirut and spoke with the Director-General of Security, who was a Christian from the Jalbut family in al-Khiam who had been appointed by President Fouad Shihab. The Director-General said that he would send the Army to support me.

Etienne continued the story by vividly recalling events and the individuals involved in them 40 years earlier:

> A Lebanese Shiite officer with the family name Salloum, a friend of mine from Halba in the Akkar region, served in the village gendarmerie corps. In the evening he sent a tank and ten soldiers to my Abudiyya station. I felt confident then. I told Syrians who were returning to Syrian territory to tell people that 'Etienne Sakr beat the Syrians and that it is forbidden to go from Syria to Tripoli'.

> My Syrian interlocutors now said that they wanted to reconcile with me. I refused. Some Syrians had gone to Tripoli from the coast but not through my post. I told them: 'the Syrians have to apologize'. I was only about twenty years old. I just sat on my chair [Etienne motioned proudly, crossed his arms, like he was the boss.] Captain Adnan and his soldiers came and I told them: 'do not cross the border'. I established Lebanese sovereignty. I hated the Syrians.

Noel Sakr summarized Etienne's exploits in Abudiyya succinctly: 'People used to cross the border between Syria and Lebanon as if there was no border. Etienne stood there and said: "this is Lebanon and this is Syria". He had a stamp for documents. Thanks to him, Lebanon made it a border crossing.'

Etienne Sakr lived in Abudiyya for 18 months, in a wet train cabin: 'I wrote to my Director to rebuild the post. However, without awaiting his consent, I hired a contractor to build it. The Director later came to us and he was satisfied. He saw the work had been done and agreed to pay for it.'

Sakr's term of duty in the north extended from 1959–60 during the course of which the young Lebanese official demonstrated leadership abilities, tactical agility in game-theory style negotiations, and a penchant for seeking big gains with little resources. In Abudiyya he won despite meager resources, but Salloum did after all send the tank.

In 1960, the *Sûreté Générale* posted Etienne Sakr to Masna'a, near Anjar, in the eastern Bekka valley on the road leading to Damascus. It was at Anjar in 1622 that the legendary Fakhr al-Din II had defeated the Ottoman Empire's Damascene forces who tried to repress Lebanese independence in the seventeenth century. It was now Sakr's responsibility, in administrative and security though not in military terms, to control the border against Arab interference in the twentieth century.

Wealthy Arabs from Syria and the Persian Gulf used to spend their summer vacation in the cool refreshing air of the Lebanese mountains. They would line up to cross the border in the heat of the valley. Etienne related the following incidents:

> A Saudi or Kuwaiti traveler threw his passport down with money tucked inside. He had no patience to wait his turn in line. I took the man by the neck and hit him. He shouted like a woman. I saw he had a diplomatic passport, and later I learned that he complained about my treatment of him to the authorities in Beirut.
>
> Another traveler also tried to bribe us in order to speed up his border crossing into Lebanon and avoid the uncomfortable heat of the irking summer weather. I beat him too, and he yelled claiming he was a Syrian officer. So I beat him more. This tells you how much I hated Syrians.

Etienne had by now touched the four corners of his beloved land. Having lived in Beirut on the coast, he had already served on the southern, northern and eastern borders of Lebanon. His tours of duty allowed him the opportunity to see the physical contours of his ancestral homeland to which he felt so emotionally and spiritually bound.

In 1961, Sakr was transferred to Shtaura, which served as the headquarters of the *Sûreté Générale* in the Bekka. Ten people—'lazy people' he pointed out—served under him in his new posting. He decided to clean up the valley of criminal and politically related offenders of the law. He took charge of the gendarmerie forces. The same year, the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP), also known by its French name *le Parti Populaire Syrien* (PPS), tried unsuccessfully to carry out a *coup d'état* in Lebanon. This party was ideologically committed to Greater Syria within which Lebanon would disappear as a separate national entity. This envisaged Damascus ruling all of Lebanon. The party attracted many Greek Orthodox members who resented Maronite seniority among the Christian sects within Lebanese politics, and many Shiites who resented Sunni primacy between these two Muslim communities. The SSNP was a violent underground movement which used assassination against the Prime Minister of Lebanon Riyad al-Sulh in 1951, and Baathist Colonel Adnan al-Maliki in Syria in 1955, as a political method of struggle. The party constituted a real threat to public order and to the integrity of Lebanon's fragile independent existence. Etienne Sakr was determined to contend directly with the SSNP:

> During the *coup manqué* in late December 1961, the SSNP [in which there was Syrian involvement] kidnapped senior Army officers. Among them was the Chief-of-Staff himself. Later they were all released. The SSNP was subsequently outlawed in Lebanon and I was ordered to arrest the party members.
>
> I arrested PPS outlaws from Baalbek to Hermel further north in the Bekka. Further south, in the Shiite village of Sohmour, west of Rashayya, two-thirds of the people were affiliated with the PPS. I went there to arrest party members. I met Najib Khishin who was the *mukhtar,* some of whose family members were in the party and some of whom were not.
>
> I then went to the village square and positioned four men at each side of it. I ordered all males over 15-years of age to come to the square. They already knew my name, and it aroused fear in Sohmour.
>
> PPS members came out and I arrested 20–30 of them. Women tried to block my way and prevent the arrests, so I pushed them off. I then took the arrested men to Shtaura and the army was surprised at my success. The next day, the army went to Sohmour to confiscate weapons from the PPS.
>
> They came with tanks, but got nothing from the local population which was not intimidated. Then I went to Sohmour and got the weapons. I asked the *mukhtar* who had weapons, but received no answer. So I blindfolded him and told ten soldiers to cock their rifles. When the *mukhtar* heard the

> noise, he thought he was about to die. He screamed 'okay okay'! He took me to his house and with a shovel dug up the ground and gave me his hidden gun. Then I did the same with another resident of the village: my men loaded their rifles and cocked the trigger—and again, the man yelled 'okay okay'. I took all the weapons that I collected to the security station at Ablah north of Zahle. I also arrested people in the Bekka who had false identity papers.
>
> I really cleaned up the valley. In Beirut, the military court said that I did half the work of Lebanon. And this same military court would, many years later, sentence me for treasonous activities! [In the 1990s.]

Furthermore:

> There is a Shi'a village called Tarayya west of Baalbek. The *mukhtar,* a friend of mine, was from the Hamia family. A family member named Sabah Hamia was a member of the PPS and had fled to the mountains in an effort to escape my security net. The army could not find him. I went to Tarayya and told the *mukhtar:* 'I want Sabah.' First, he gave me a meal. I was alone there among those Shi'a warriors. I told the *mukhtar* that I would help Sabah.
>
> Sabah came, bearded and armed with guns and grenades. I took his weapons and we drove together to Shtaura. At Ablah, they didn't believe that I had Sabah. [When the war began in 1975, 50 Shiite members from the Hamia family had joined Etienne Sakr's party, the Guardians of the Cedars.]

During four years of dangerous and often solitary security work in the field, young Etienne Sakr had demonstrated a mental capacity and physical courage befitting an older, more experienced man. He had a moral character that countenanced no compromise or halfway measures in realizing his objectives. His personal presence projected that special quality that could impress and even overwhelm people. In adversity he was brave and daring, and for his country's security and dignity he would assume risks above and beyond the normal call of duty.

Great men, Nietzsche wrote, cannot be soft, but great men also suffer greatly. Etienne Sakr's destiny was to evolve in this special fashion.

2

The Interval Years, 1962–1975

The presidency of Fouad Shihab weathered the threat of the PPS coup, but called for strengthening the Lebanese security services to protect the republic and its vulnerable independence. The collapse of Nasser's United Arab Republic in 1961 did not eliminate Arab Nationalism and its interventionist impulse, with its radical socialist and pro-Soviet components, from the regional agenda. Lebanon had to be on its guard if it was to weather future political storms.

In 1962, Fouad Shihab called Etienne Sakr to the presidential palace at Zouq Mkayel south of Jouniya. He was appointed to work in security and protocol matters, an appointment which continued through Charles Helou's term as president between 1964 and 1970. Helou moved the palace to the Beirut suburb of Sin el-Fil before it came to Baabda south of the city, where it was to remain. Having served on the geographical fringes of the country, Sakr now had an opportunity to see power exercised at the center of national affairs.

The founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 and the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War in 1967 precipitated changes in the Middle East, and in Lebanon specifically, that would alter Etienne Sakr's life. Within Lebanon, a Palestinian refugee population of approximately one-quarter of a million people, socially unassimilated and ideologically radicalized, would turn the country into a political hotbed for many years. Some Muslims and leftists saw the PLO, and at the same time Nasserism, as allied forces to alter the status quo in Lebanon and turn it against the Maronite community.[1] As the PLO assumed an armed presence in Lebanon and the 'Palestinianization' of Lebanon proceeded apace, the implications for Israel became central to the nexus of relations within Lebanon and along the Israeli-Lebanese border.

Lebanon itself never adopted a virulently adversarial disposition or activist policy strategy against Israel, which was otherwise boycotted, demonized and rejected as an alien Jewish state in the Arab Middle East. The Arab war against Israel left Lebanon unenthusiastic and relatively uninvolved. Until 1967, the border with Lebanon was Israel's calmest frontier in comparison with infiltration that was far more frequent, and shooting far more fatal, emanating from Egypt, Jordan and Syria. In 1964, for example, there were only four Lebanese military actions against Israel, in contrast to 46 emanating from Jordanian territory and 35

from Syria. In 1967 there were 16 actions from Lebanese territory yet 252 from Egypt, 197 from Jordan and 163 from Syria.[2]

In the period of May-June 1967, a cabinet meeting at the Baabda Palace chaired by President Helou addressed the tense situation, which ultimately erupted into war. Etienne Sakr, commenting that 'Lebanon was never hostile to Israel', offered the following recollection of the confessional thicket in Lebanese politics:

> The Defense Minister at the time was a Maronite called Badri, somewhat old and fatigued, from the family of Patriarch Meoushi. He came to my office and I told him what was going on, which I learned from listening to the radio. At the time Elias Sarkis [elected president in 1976] was secretary of the government, and he came to tell me that Syria was asking Lebanon to move its military forces to Israel's northern border. Sarkis told me to go to the parliament [Chamber of Deputies—*al-Majlis al-Nuwwab*] and have it vote against any Lebanese military involvement. I was to speak with three key persons, among them the speaker of the chamber who was a Shiite. In this way it would not appear that the Christian president—Helou—was against fulfilling Syria's request, but rather that it was the chamber with its Muslim members who were opposed. You see that when Lebanon was free, it was not against Israel.

The multi-front Arab threat to Israel in this period evoked great trepidation among the Christians of Lebanon. They sensed that the war against the Jews ('the Saturday people') could evolve into a catastrophe for the Christians ('the Sunday people'). Militant Nasserite Arab nationalism was ideologically committed to completely transforming the political face of the Middle East and eliminating the anomalies of a Jewish Israel and a Christian Lebanon. In Beirut, the Christians feared an Israeli defeat and were relieved it never came. At the same time, Maronites in particular were hoping that the Israeli army, which ended up capturing Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian territories, would seize Lebanon and subsequently extricate the Christians from Syria's persistent intervention in Lebanese affairs, especially security matters. An Israeli entry, Maronites surmised, could also weaken the role of the Muslims in the country and prevent the possibility of a grand Arab take-over of Lebanon.[3]

The days thereafter were hardly comforting or quiet in Lebanon. The PLO felt its status rise in the aftermath of the military defeat suffered by the Arab states in the June War. Guerrilla warfare would be the revolutionary mode of struggle against 'the Zionist entity' and, indeed, the Palestinians began to escalate their terrorist activities against Israel across Lebanon's southern border and against Israeli targets abroad. On 26 December 1968, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked an El Al Israeli plane in Athens, and two days later an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) commando unit retaliated by blowing up 12 Lebanese aircraft on the runway in Beirut. The fact that the PLO and the

PFLP faction were organized in Lebanon and freely recruited fighters from the Palestinian refugee camps in the country dictated the dramatic Israeli response.[4] Lebanese armed forces at the time numbered only some 13,000 men and hardly defended the state's sovereignty in the face of the armed Palestinian presence. Sunni Prime Minister Rashid Karami considered that Lebanon had a national Arab obligation to accommodate the Palestinian guerrillas and, at the very least, to passively cooperate with their war of liberation against Israel.

Etienne Sakr was still working in the presidential palace in 1969 when PLO-Lebanese clashes erupted in 'Fatahland', the name by which the Hermon region in the south eastern part of the country was known. He recalls that these 'were signs that war was coming'. Etienne met with Sa'id Aql 'an intellectual, *polyvalent* in the breadth of knowledge, a genius'—who came to speak with President Helou at Baabda. Aql explained that the two major Christian political parties, the *Kata'eb* (Phalangists) and the *Ahrar* (Liberals), were inadequate to stand up to the challenge facing Lebanon's national integrity and existence. He told Sakr that 'we need a new ideological party'. This led Etienne to organize weekly meetings at the home of May and Alfred Murr in the Ashrafiyyeh neighborhood of Beirut. Intellectuals from all the Lebanese confessions attended these meetings to discuss the gravity of the situation. Sa'id Aql, whom Etienne called 'my mentor', was the mind and spirit behind this political beginning, and he nurtured the thinking and motivated those people who felt the power of his ideas, poetry and belief in Lebanon and freedom.

On 3 November 1969, Lebanese Army Commander Emile Bustani signed the Cairo Agreement with PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat that, as mediated by Egyptian President Nasser, recognized the right of the Palestinian commandos to carry arms in their southern bases and Palestinian refugee camps. The *Kata'eb* under the leadership of Pierre Gemayel had approved the Cairo Agreement as a tolerable evil. Yet Lebanon had capitulated to Arab political interference and armed Palestinian intervention, officially relinquishing its freedom on a dangerous path which could culminate in a loss of its very political existence.

The following year, 1970, witnessed further dramatic developments that affected the national welfare of Lebanon. Thousands of PLO guerrillas were expelled from Jordan and entered Lebanon, as the increasingly intrusive and disruptive Palestinian forces continued to undermine the country of its sovereign authority. Beirut now effectively became the capital of the Palestinian 'state within a state' in Lebanon and was referred to as the 'international terrorist capital of the world'. Ensconced in Lebanon, the PLO played a central role in providing a propaganda base, military training and diplomatic services in the Soviet-directed insurgency against the Western world and American interests. Meanwhile in Syria, Hafez el-Assad came to power and determined to pursue the goal of a Greater Syria that would diminish Lebanon to a satrap of Damascus. Nasser's death in 1970 would facilitate the growing stature of Syria within Arab regional relations. Nasser had acted to erode Lebanon's independence through the Cairo

Agreement of 1969, but Assad, in a contiguous Syria, would deal far heavier blows to a faltering Lebanon.

When Suleiman Franjiyyeh, from Zghorta in the northern part of the mountain, became president of Lebanon in 1970, Etienne Sakr left the palace and —seemingly—the stage of political and national affairs. He decided to go into business and opened an insurance agency, which proved to be a lucrative enterprise. Sakr was talented, as Lebanese are known to be, in a variety of fields. However, his broader Lebanese concerns and involvement did not diminish, but took a different direction. From 1958–62 Etienne had become familiar with domestic security matters throughout the country. He then acquired political experience in the world of the politicians, their dealings and corruption, from 1962–70. He would refine his philosophy of life and his national conception of Lebanon in the early 1970s. These three areas—security, politics and ideology—would fortify and guide him as he entered the fourth domain which was surfacing, and later came to a head in 1975: the military arena of war.

Events continued to evolve in rapid succession. The intellectual parlor discussions at the Murr residence in East Beirut led in 1972 to the decision to establish the Party of Lebanese Renewal *(Hizb Attajaddod al-Lebnani).* Etienne pointed out 'that we were able to get a license for the party within seventy-two hours', quickly and without difficulty. May Murr, a historian of ancient Lebanon, was the sister of Michel Murr of the Greek Orthodox denomination, who was part of the Lebanese political establishment, and had served as a government minister but was distant, then and later, from the kind of thinking catalyzing the Renewal *[le Renouveau]* Party. May once said whimsically: 'My mother was a saint, so how could Michel be my brother?' Sa'id Aql, poet and ideologue, set the doctrinal direction for this new non-confessional party.

Etienne recognized his intellectual mentor's individualistic and creative talents:

> Many people then and later considered Sa'id Aql a wild idiosyncratic man due to his unconventional thinking. He had the daring and con viction to retrace the sources of things Lebanese, to argue in favor of employing the Lebanese dialect as a written language rather than classical Arabic; he even proposed writing the language in Latin characters, which had been influenced by the ancient Phoenician alphabet, rather than write in the characters of the Arabic alphabet.

In a magazine he later published in Beirut, Sa'id Aql offered a prize in each issue to whoever would write the best essay in the Lebanese vernacular language written in Latin characters. He even had the intellectual selfconfidence to propose writing the spoken tongue phonetically exactly as it is spoken, thus altering the mode of spelling itself.

Israeli author Aharon Amir, whose personal connection with Lebanon began in the 1940s and continued into the next century, was well acquainted with Sa'id

Aql's intense Lebanese identity and pride. Aql, who felt a fierce enmity for the Arabic language, added that 'I would cut off my right hand just not to be an Arab.' At the heart of his world-view was the belief in Lebanon as the cradle of culture and the inheritance of ancient Oriental civilization well before the arrival of the Arabs on the historical stage. He had apparently once been attracted to the party of Antun Saade and his philosophy of the Syrian nation, but Saade expelled him from the SSNP because Aql had once written on a Biblical theme ('Jephtah's daughter'). Saade, a Greek Orthodox Christian from Dhour Shweir with a fascination for fascism, excluded the Jews from the Syrian nation while including all other groups and communities in *al-Sham* from time immemorial.

Sa'id Aql developed a powerful doctrine of the authentic and millennial character of Lebanon resonating with an exalted sense of Lebanese dignity. According to Aharon Amir, Aql served as Etienne Sakr's spiritual father. Together they were at the beginning of a new and highly important undertaking. They would have to elucidate the national values of Lebanon anew. Sa'id Aql spoke of the beginners: 'The men of the first hour are *few,* the men of the second hour are *more,* but the followers who come later are the *most.*' Aql understood that it is the fate of powerful and compelling ideas to attract the few until, once popularized, the many are then inclined to take them up. The few carry the weight of the burden, sailing against the winds on the political high seas. Etienne offered his own pithy wisdom in formulating the notion that 'you and the truth are a majority, but all the world and falsehood are a minority'. In Aql's adage, the people in their numbers ultimately accept the message, though in Sakr's the majority triumph may end up as a victory for truth but not manifested in the equation of power.

Etienne recounted the following reminiscence of Sa'id Aql:

> I was with him in Tripoli in 1973 or 1974 when he addressed a mainly Muslim audience. He read his poetry, and when he read one particular poem over and over the audience would not stop applauding. He read the poem about *20 times*! In the poem it sounds as if he is speaking to someone he loves, to a person—presumably a woman. However, he was speaking about Lebanon. Aql wrote poems that he called *khoumassiyyat* as they were composed of only five lines.

Etienne Sakr spoke about this trance-like occasion more than 25 years after the poetry-reading event in Tripoli. Those were days when Lebanon was slipping into national chaos and political oblivion. The Palestinians in particular were not just at the gate, but also inside the walls of the city. Many Christians and a growing number of Muslims were excessively anxious about the country's future.

Etienne easily recalled and recited the poem word-for-word, with great emotion and nostalgia audible in his voice and visible on his face. The English translation of the *khoumassiyyat* cannot capture the incisive power of the native

rendition that aroused such an enthusiastic response. In the original it reads as follows:

Bila ounfouwanin, sakouta	Without dignity, silent
Aradouki, hatta lahaan	This is what they want of you, until
Jamalouki bayn Alhissan	Your beauty was abused among the beautiful women
Biladi ghdabi aw amouta	My country, be angry or I will die
Ana khoubzia lounfouwan	My bread is dignity

At the time Sa'id Aql wrote and read the poem, the Palestinians had already attacked, but the Lebanese Army remained silent. 'Be angry or I will die' said Lebanon. Etienne Sakr was already a very angry young man.

The year 1973 witnessed escalating violence in the two arenas of warfare. Palestinian terrorism against Israeli targets, as at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, had propelled its own cycle of violence, as when an elite Israeli commando unit pursued the perpetrators in a very sophisticated operation to specific Beirut apartment buildings in April 1973. Likewise, Lebanese-Palestinian clashes erupted in May in the area of Sidon and the south. The Lebanese army was small and unreliable, paralyzed by the sectarian split within its ranks. National leadership among the Maronites in particular was in a quandary as to the proper course of action. At this time the government under President Franjiyyeh, who had met with Syrian President Assad at Shtaura, agreed to reconfirm the 1969 Cairo Agreement with the Melkart Annex signed on 18 May. Besides the large refugee and violent Palestinian presence in Lebanon, 300,000 Syrian workers were another humiliating foreign element in the country. Etienne would later muse that in 1973 Sa'id Aql had forecast that war was coming.

The persistent Israeli-Palestinian fighting indicated that the PLO would, from its point of view and concerning the various movements affiliated with the umbrella-organization, continue to see in terrorism the major mode of its military efforts. Attacks against Kiryat Shmona and Ma'alot in the Upper Galilee in 1974 and the Savoy Hotel in Tel-Aviv in March 1975 left many Israelis dead, while serving as dramatic highprofile Palestinian propaganda actions. Syria and Libya were supportive of the smaller, radical Palestinian groups, while the Soviet Union sponsored Arafat's Fatah group in particular.[5] Palestinian border infiltration and Israeli responses were the central aspects of a volatile and violent scenario in which the Lebanese state apparatus played almost no role.

Etienne Sakr had already come to the conclusion that it was necessary to go beyond the intellectual salon, with the elaboration of ideas and the clarification of problems, to the field of action. In the Lebanese context this meant the need for weapons, the training of fighters and preparation for the impending war (which simmered for years). The army, he surmised, would totally collapse.

In 1974, Etienne began to turn to these practical matters:

> I went to Baalbek to buy weapons from the Shi'a using personal money earned from my work in business. My wife hardly knew of my activities, or that I hid weapons in our home. I handed over my business to my wife's brother. I began to recruit some men; in the beginning there were thirteen. Later more joined. When the war broke out in April 1975, we were almost ready.

It was then that Etienne Sakr became the leader of a new party called the Guardians of the Cedars *(Herraas Al-Arz)* which emerged ideologically from the Party of Lebanese Renewal. Shortly thereafter, he was dubbed *Abu-Arz* (father of Arz) as his *nom de guerre.* In fact he did have a son by the name of Arz, the word referring to the famous cedar tree of Lebanon. Sakr now considered himself responsible for guarding Lebanon from its internal and external enemies. Moreover, there would be no small variety and number of enemies: some transparent in their animosity, others deceitful in their maneuverings; some of foreign nationalities but others from among his own people. The struggle for Lebanon's freedom entailed and would merge with Abu-Arz's own struggle to play a leading role in Lebanon's bitter yet noble conflict.

3

The Founding and Ideology of *Herraas Al-Arz,* 1975–82

On 13 April 1975 Palestinian gunmen wantonly opened fire at a Sunday church gathering attended by Pierre Gemayel, head of the Phalange party, in the Ayn al-Rummaneh neighborhood in East Beirut. Three Christians were killed. Later that day Maronite fighters retaliated by attacking a bus killing 28 Palestinians.

The episodes of this day transferred the traditional but regulated Maronite-Muslim confessional tensions and power struggles into the arena of unbridled and barbaric violence between the native sons of Lebanon and Palestinians. Warfare replaced politics as the medium of struggle. Arafat, leader of the PLO since 1968, had repeatedly declared that 'he is an Arab in an Arab country', that is Lebanon, implying that he has every right to wage his battle against Israel from Lebanon. Salah Khalaf, known as Abu Iyyad and second-in-command of Fatah, added that 'the road to Jerusalem *[Quds]* passes through [Maronite] Jouniya and Oyoun es-Simaan' in the Matn region. According to Abu Iyyad, an immediate Palestinian war aim was the conquest of the whole of the Christian north of Lebanon. The earlier Palestinian trail from Amman to Jerusalem had proved fruitless with the events of 'Black September' in Jordan in 1970. King Hussein had prevented the Palestinianization of all of Jordan by crushing the subversive armed Palestinian organizations that had virtually established a 'state within a state' within the Hashemite kingdom.

However, in Lebanon the relationship between regime and armed Palestinian militias turned out to be quite different. Palestinians turned their refugee camps, of which there were 15 primarily between Tyre in the south and Tripoli in the north, into military bastions. From 1969 the Lebanese government, misunderstanding its own national interests and the broad implications of the armed Palestinian presence, actually provided materials to fortify the refugee camps from Israeli aerial attacks. At the same time Lebanon's porous borders facilitated Arab countries, from Saudi Arabia, the smaller Gulf kingdoms and Syria, sending money and weapons to strengthen the Palestinians in their campaign against Israel. The Palestinians arrogated for themselves thereafter the moral right, based on a revolutionary doctrine of liberation, to trample on Lebanese sovereignty and terrorize its people. The prerogatives that the Palestinians demanded were not negotiable and went beyond the letter of earlier accords (Cairo and Melkart): Lebanon was home to a large Palestinian civilian

population and the armed Palestinians from a myriad number of groups and factions would be the spearhead for actually Palestinianizing Lebanon. Thus, the battle lines between the Lebanese and the Palestinians were drawn in what was not a *civil* war, but rather an *inter-communal* war between two peoples.

The forces aligned against the domestic political status quo and in support of the Palestinian national movement coalesced in short order. The radical opposition cadres were organized as the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), headed by the Druze chieftain Kamal Junblatt and his Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), and including Nasserite-Mourabitoun, Baathists, Communists, Shiites and the Syrian Social National Party. These rather foreign-affiliated but local Lebanese groups, who called for constitutional and democratic reform in a renewed sharing of power, joined with Arafat's PLO which aspired to be the virtual source of power in Lebanon. This motley alliance would not stand the test of time when, for example, Shiites would battle Palestinians in West Beirut toward the end of the 1970s. But it was the Palestinian partner in this political equation that introduced a culture of violence and the ambiance of a militarized society into the Lebanese arena. The PLO was armed and trained in rogue and terroristsupporting Arab states like Syria and Iraq, in Communist countries like the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Hungary, and in military states like Algeria and Pakistan. Fighters from Libya and Somalia filled PLO revolutionary Third World ranks.[1]

The PLO, with its appended constituent factions, conducted itself like a band of murderers. In northern Lebanon, three elderly priests were brutally slaughtered at Deir-Ashash and seven Christians were murdered at Beit Mallat in September 1975. In October, 15 people were killed in the village of Tal Abbas and a church was burnt down. Further atrocities against the Lebanese were committed at Kab Elias in the Bekka and at Damour south of Beirut, where 582 people were massacred, in January 1976. Yasir Arafat was in direct control of the onslaught upon the Damour Christians. Naked Palestinian barbarity struck the village of Ayshiyeh south of Jezzine in October 1976 where 54 people, including women and the elderly, were put to death inside a church. The rape of women and the mutilation of bodies were recorded as common Palestinian practice. Palestinian thuggery spread an air of terror in Beirut and Sidon, and virtually wherever Palestinians were present, including perhaps ironically in Muslim-inhabited areas which lacked effective self-defense organizations. Arms were not just a Palestinian status symbol, as they were traditionally for the Phalangists and the Druzes, but the means with which to transform the body politic of Lebanon while simultaneously carrying on an unrelenting cross-border campaign of terror within Israel.

The rapid deterioration of public order and personal security led to a second major development in the form of Syrian intervention in Lebanese affairs. President Assad, concerned with pre-empting a complete PLO takeover or a Christian-initiated partition of the country, first sent Syriancommanded Palestine Liberation Army battalions (*Ayn Jalut* and *Qad-disiyya*), then *Saiqa* Palestinian

units, and ultimately—no longer in disguise or in proxy form—12,000 regular Syrian troops into Lebanon by 1 June 1976. In September, they numbered 25, 000. In the following month, the Riyadh Summit authorized Syrian military occupation of parts of Lebanon by fabricating the Arab Deterrent Force. The Lebanese Army had dwindled to 3,000 troops and their effective value in separating the contending forces, or in affirming national sovereignty, was virtually zero. During the first year after the shots fired in Ayn al-Rummaneh in April 1975, an estimated 10,000 people were killed and perhaps as many as 20, 000 injured, as fighting involving Christian militias, Palestinian and leftist movements, and the Syrian forces spread from Beirut to the northern Akkar, eastern Bekka and the Sidon coastal regions.[2]

The feudal family groups and leaders who had traditionally dominated both the country and their own communal agenda represented the Christian Lebanese population. Special mention should be made of Pierre Gemayel from Bikfayya in the Matn, with his two sons Amin and Bashir, and their *Kata'eb* (Phalange) Party; Camille Chamoun from Deir al-Kamar in the Shouf, with his sons Dany and Dory, and their National Liberal Party *(Ahrar);* and Suleiman Franjiyyeh from Zghorta in the north, with his son Tony and their *Marada* militia, which proudly proclaimed that 'my country is always right'. Raymond Eddé from the Jbayl area and his National Bloc, and Dr Fouad Chemali and his *Tanzim* group, also filled the political roster of Maronite personalities and party organizations. Let it be noted that the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic confessions lacked institutional political frameworks, while the Armenian Orthodox in Beirut sustained an old tradition of ethnic party coherence. The Maronite political elite, typically fractured and militarily unprepared, would be hard pressed contending with the double Palestinian/leftist and Syrian/Arab challengers.

The political record of the Maronite community was in the debit column for many decades. The personality cult practiced by the traditional leaders, and their habits of nepotism and partisanship, seemed higher goals than shaping national sentiments and cohesion. Their appetite for private riches seemed stronger than any moral commitment to the political consolidation of a broad-based patriotic front to repel the hostile forces within Lebanon. The country had lost its independence and was in turmoil. The army was dissolving with the establishment of the rebel Lebanese Arab Army by Lieutenant Khatib and the attempt at a coup by Brigadier Ahdab. Muslim and Christian officers and soldiers joined their respective communal militias and movements. Subversive forces from within and without, and of a myriad of political colorations, undermined the state apparatus.

RELIGION, HOMELAND, NATIONHOOD

The Guardians of the Cedars Party-National Lebanese Movement led by Etienne Sakr was born on the day the war began on 13 April 1975. This political *prise de conscience* (awakening) resulted from the incubation of ideological, spiritual and

educational principles that had reached fruition and maturity. Like the Communists, Nasserites and the SSNP—but unlike the Maronite Christian parties noted above—the Guardians delineated in detailed programmatic fashion the ideas that would guide action. The party was an intellectual endeavor before it was a political enterprise. It sought not personal gain or power as such, but the actualization of a complete vision of Lebanon based on noble ideals. It wanted to move and energize people by teaching and evoking deep, passionate feelings for sacred Lebanon. It would demand a moral life on the individual plane and call for historical justice on behalf of the besieged and bewildered people in the land of the cedars. Would its call be heard?

The philosophy of the Guardians Party begins with the *word* and proceeds to the *sword (al-Kalima…al-Sayf),* not an especially Christian image.[3] At the core is the ideological trinity of 'God, Man, and Lebanon' that places man below God and above other creatures in the hierarchy of existence. Abu-Arz told his fighters that they 'should adore the trinity without being a heretic' (directed at Muslim party members who might confuse the Guardians' 'Trinity' with the Christian notion of the Trinity which Islam categorically rejected). Faith in the Divine Being is a first principle and God is the source, not only of all existence, but also of love, knowledge and liberty. Man is considered capable and obligated to acquire these three qualities and live according to them. Sakr's conception of man reverts back to the aim of constant renewal, individually and collectively, that initially appeared in the Party of Lebanese Renewal *(Attajaddod)* with Sa'id Aql prior to the war. Aql, on his part, had expressed his religiosity in a beautiful line in one *khoumassiyyat:* 'Empty me of myself and fill me from You' *(Rab'i afrighni minni ana wa mla'ani biqa).*

Although Christianity is Etienne Sakr's religion and Christianity was the religious *raison d'être* of Lebanon's founding in 1920, it is nonetheless nowhere mentioned in the party's doctrine. Lebanon is proud of its Phoenician heritage, but not a word is mentioned about its Christian heritage. Guardians member Joseph Khoury Tawk suggested that the very name *Lebanon* means in Phoenician: Heart of God. The sense of Lebanon as God's chosen country is not connected with early or Oriental Christianity, but from a deep feeling of a bond with the land and its primordial population millennia ago. Indeed, pagan polytheistic *Phoenician* Lebanon, symbolized by Melkart the god of Tyre a millennium before the Christian era, is an object of veneration and a focus of identity more than *Christian* Lebanon with the founding of a church by Paul in Tyre on his way back from Greece to Jerusalem in AD 56. This particular conception of Lebanese nationalism leads to a personal conclusion regarding Etienne Sakr himself who, it seems, is more Lebanese than Christian, or primarily Lebanese and then Christian. Moreover, he appears first as a Maronite and then a Christian, if we distinguish between the ethnically abstract and universal religious notion of Christianity as secondary to the nationally substantive Maronite community indigenous to Mount Lebanon.

Lebanon the country was a veritable object of worship that by God's choice approximated the worship of God Himself. A Guardians slogan that hung in Etienne Sakr's East Beirut headquarters read: 'If I had no God, then Lebanon will be my God.' The doctrine transfers and merges the principles of divinity and nature by teaching the Cedar Guardians that this school of thought 'is firmly founded on the faith in God as the cedars are firmly founded on our sacred mountains'.

This Guardians bifurcation between historical Lebanese identity and Christian affiliation prepares the conceptual ground for neutralizing religion as an attribute of nationalism. Lebanon is a meta-historical and suprareligious axis for all the Lebanese, of all confessional groups without distinction. In a large party gathering at Ayn Saadeh in March 1978, at which Amin Gemayel and *Tanzim* leader George Adouane were distinguished guests, Abu-Arz mentioned that some people say 'that Lebanon is a country of co-existing sects, but we say that the Lebanese are one nation'. The people of Lebanon are not the sum of their parts but an integral whole born of a shared bond with this special land. If one looks at Lebanon from within, Abu-Arz taught, then one detects the sinews of national brotherhood. This view differed from that proposed by Charles Malek, Greek Orthodox thinker, foreign minister and diplomat, for whom it was axiomatic that 'you have to be Christian to be Lebanese'. Etienne Sakr disagreed and preferred a formulation which taught his co-religionist adherents 'to be a Christian at home but a Lebanese outside'.

Sectarianism was graphically depicted by Abu-Arz 'as a snake dressed as a mermaid tempting the near and far and ready to kill with its deadly poison'. But according to the Guardians leader, the Lebanese 'are an eternal nation, not separate peoples, and with an integral unity through history. Evil spirits snared some people on behalf of sectarianism,' but the Guardians have a firm political conviction in the victory of truth and faith as in the past. This conviction had impressed Swedish supporter and Guardian activist, Viktor Cederberg, who discovered that here was a party 'with a large mix of people from different faiths and backgrounds'. Over the years the Guardians 'never turned their guns on other Lebanese, but only against the invaders of the country'.[4] Unlike the *Kata'eb* policy, the Guardians were guided by the principle not to harm or kill Lebanese Muslims just because of their religious identity. During the urban fighting in the Beirut area, a Muslim who approached a check-post manned by the Guardians would be properly treated. Indeed, the armed Guardian fighter would take the Muslim's Lebanese identity card and place it on his head to demonstrate respect for his fellow national compatriot. In Beirut everyone knew about the Guardians' practise toward all the Lebanese. This was, however, not how the Guardians treated the armed foreign Palestinians in the country.

The inclusive ideology of the Guardians enabled Abu-Arz to attract members who otherwise would naturally incline to affiliate with very specific and narrow party organizations. Non-Christians would not join the *Kata'eb* and the *Ahrar,* but they could and did join *Herraas Al-Arz.* Even those of a leftist inclination,

who otherwise found themselves inclined towards the Communists, the PSP and the Baath Party, made their way to Guardian ranks. One such member was Elias Mattar who hailed from Ayn Ebel, Etienne's native village.

In 1998, photojournalist Usama Ayoub from the Shiite village of Hula in south Lebanon had the opportunity to meet Abu-Arz. Many aspects of Etienne's personality fascinated him, and he confessed, though having met through his work 'more people than any other person', he had 'never seen someone as transparent, humble and charismatic as Abu-Arz'. One of the things that was particularly impressive 'was that he [Abu-Arz] was living with people coming from different confessions. He was warm and caring with every single one of them. We could never suspect any [confessional] distinction: neither in his attitudes toward them nor among ourselves.' Usama Ayoub added insightfully: 'Lebanon is his religion…his demand for secularism couldn't have come from just a political decision or a strategic point of view, but only from his great love for God, Lebanon and all the Lebanese—He asked me to love Lebanon and dedicate my whole life to her.'[5] This recalls the notion, more subtle than it may at first seem, that many people would never have fallen in love if they had not heard of it. Many Lebanese would never have loved Lebanon if they had not heard Abu-Arz tell them about it. Broadly speaking, we are dealing here with Plato's argument that the great leader imprints his soul on the character of the society. Etienne Sakr internalized the special soul of Lebanon and was then able to inject it into the consciousness of its people who would assimilate it within their collective soul. This is the magnetic magic that elusively but authentically connects a true leader to his people.

Etienne's daughter Carol, one of his three children along with the eldest Pascale and Arz the youngest, was a first-hand witness to this profound turn of consciousness. She explained that the 'love, devotion and security' given by their father was 'equally shared with the fourth child, whose presence has always been felt and difficult for the four of us, including my mother, to admit. Its true identity is LEBANON. It wasn't until later that we accepted this fact.' Carol related the following stories about her father:

> One morning he gathered us in the living room, and without any introduction said to mother and to the three of us: 'Do you know how much I love you? I love Lebanon more because she needs me more.'
>
> One evening I entered his room without knocking. He was there, praying on his knees with open arms, and as soon as he sensed my presence he asked me to kneel next to him and repeat his favorite phrase ever: 'God, protect Lebanon, and please don't make her suffer any longer.'[6]

In later years it seemed that Carol had, despite the childhood experience of apparent paternal deprivation, adored, accepted and was very proud of her father, who had dedicated himself to the national needs.

The image of Etienne Sakr is of a very religious man with a powerful faith in God's rule in history. He became a man of action but without relinquishing the place of divine decision. His faith converged with trust that justice is ultimately done. Etienne is not at all a secularist in the sense of positioning man at the center of the universe: he was a 'secularist' only in respect of trying to forge a non-confessional Lebanon. Faith in God is a source of hope, especially when men disappoint. Etienne grew up in a family full of faith in God, and his own spiritual sensibility nurtured that faith in conjunction with his great faith in Lebanon. His wife Alexandra related that when anyone expressed the view during the long years of war that 'Lebanon was a hopeless case', Abu-Arz would fiercely repudiate this and end all discussion with such a person.

The moral education of the Guardians members/fighters was an essential part of the practical philosophy of the party. Etienne Sakr, a militia and political leader, was also an educator of values and correct behavior. His ideas were of the Stoic quality appropriate to that school of ethics that developed in ancient Hellenized Lebanon, the land of Euclid and Pythagoras among other scholars and thinkers of Phoenicia. Moral uprightness and self-discipline were the hallmarks of the Stoic way of life that developed within the later Maronite ascetic way of life, of self-sacrifice and moral rigor, in the land of Phoenicia and Lebanon. This country absorbed different religious dogmas in its rich and long chronicles but in a manner that, it appears, reflects a consistent spiritual and moral character over time. Lebanon, as a land of beauty, sanctity and wisdom, offers an organic national portrait of a people whose ethical curriculum guided the education of the Guardians as a living link in the chain of history.

Abu-Arz recognized the moral influence of Sa'id Aql on him, with the following stark story providing a telling indication of the man. Aql once went to give a speech and told the audience that Great Britain has legalized marriage, or was considering doing so, between the same sexes. He then turned to the side and spat in disgust. Abu-Arz commented: 'That was his speech. *This is a statement.*'

Abu-Arz developed a rigorous doctrine of personal responsibility as the foundation of national commitment. He preached altruism (for which there is no word in Arabic) in place of selfishness, while criticizing traditional Lebanese leaders who failed in their duties on behalf of their country. Lebanese initiative, renowned throughout the world, must be revived in Lebanon in the name of the collective good of Lebanon, not for personal or tribal acquisition. In order to do well, Etienne Sakr explained the need to overcome the endemic stereotype of Oriental slothfulness and execute obligations with alacrity. In this regard, he told the story of a Turkish naval blockade of a Greek island. The Greek king wanted to send instructions to the island, but could not find one reliable messenger to deliver the letter. Beside himself with frustration, the king began to scream. The story continues:

> Hearing the king's loud screams, a junior officer of the royal guards rushed into the palace and demanded to see the king. Being denied access to the court, he deliberately shouted and tried to force his way through. Having overheard the row, the king summoned the young officer who expressed his regret at his majesty's anger, and offered his prompt departure with the letter, without making any inquiry. Amazed, the king handed him the letter saying, 'Take this letter to Garcia.'
>
> The generals and counselors blamed the king for his rash confidence in an uninformed junior officer who did not know even the name of the island in question, or who Garcia was. The king smiled and said, 'Because he had not troubled me with a single question, as you frequently do, he will definitely find his way to Garcia.' Shortly after this event, the blockade was lifted, relief prevailed, and the people praised the fortitude of the young hero.

The Guardians of the Cedars were to become as valiant, alert, and trustworthy as this young officer. When one of them accepted a mission with immediate readiness and succeeded, Etienne Sakr would say, 'he knows how to deliver a letter to Garcia'.[7] In the Beirut party office there hung a sign with the words of Joseph Conrad that served as a moving motto: 'There is no rest for the messenger until the message is delivered.' This idea found its military expression in the following words by Abu-Arz:

> The war will not end when people are tired,
> The war will end when people win it.

The teachings of the party conceived of the Guardians as born of an elite conception of life and responsibility. Quality was more important than quantity as the one God is superior to the multitudinous among mankind, and men are above the animal and plant kingdoms, and above the grains of sand and earth in the universe. The supremacy of quality, as taught by Porphyrus of Tyre, could be seen as a model of human striving for excellence in character and efficiency of performance within the party. With a hierarchical distribution of status, advancement from one level to a higher level was dependent on the educational proficiency of members. They had to study Lebanon's history and proper principles of conduct. Intellectual and moral criteria were no less important than raw courage in the Guardians' doctrine and program. In fact, one's military rank was fixed by one's ideological level and a member would rise in rank through tests. The levels advanced from *haris* (guard), to *faris* (chevalier), to *safir* (ambassador). The Guardians was an ideological party in as much as the broader philosophy of Etienne Sakr recognized that a positive attribute is the source and catalyst of positive behavior. A prime example is the idea of love that can activate great energy and impel great force for the beloved object. The Guardians recognized that love is not dispelled even in combating an enemy because, in

that situation, 'we are fighting the evil in him'—but not him himself.[8] And, we might add, we take up the fight out of our love for our people, our land and our precious values, which are threatened by the enemy.

Anecdotes about Etienne Sakr's handling of deviant behavior among his party members illustrate the strength of his moral principles. In one instance he discovered that some young men were in possession of drugs, though they had not used them. 'I took the guys and whipped them, and they howled', he recalled. 'After that incident no one ever used drugs. Everyone in Beirut knew that the Guardians was the purist movement. There was no corruption.'

During the fighting in Beirut, anarchy and stealing were rampant, and everyone grabbed what they could whenever they could. The normal standards of law and order had collapsed completely. Noel Sakr said that his brother Etienne told his boys not to plunder. Whoever did would be out of the party. One day a member stole a bicycle and Etienne expelled him from the party. 'My brother was straight like an arrow', Noel commented.[9] Abu-Arz would tell potential recruits to the Guardians that if they were coming for money, they should not come, but if they were coming for ideological reasons, then this was the place for them. Once a member came to hand in his party badge, announcing 'that I am going to steal'. No member of the Guardians would ever steal.

Salam Eid from Klay'a in south Lebanon recalled that, as a child, his father would tell him about the Guardians who were 'honest and clean people'. By contrast, the Phalangists had a bad reputation among the Christians of Lebanon.[10]

Etienne Sakr, a man of strong religious faith and moral rectitude, taught love of Lebanon to his distraught and confused compatriots in the years of the war. Foreign ideologies and opportunist politicians had sullied the minds of the Lebanese. Was Lebanon Eastern or Western in character and orientation? Was it Arab in identity and one among the Muslim peoples? Should it be a sister-state to Syria? Would it be the home of hapless displaced Palestinian refugees and freedom fighters, or the unfortunate victim of Palestinian intrusion and occupation? The Guardians of the Cedars Party gave answers to all these questions and expected its members to speak as straight as they should shoot—or shoot as straight as they should speak the truth. If the word is clear to the fighter, then his fighting will also be straight and clear.

The party doctrine was in its ultimate purpose dedicated to the independence of Lebanon from all foreign forces and alien ideologies. It declared from the start that it distinguished itself from all previous parties with the singular clarity of its unadulterated national vision. In its first press statement on 10 September 1975, *Herraas Al-Arz* referred to the modern Lebanese as the descendants of the historic and heroic *Maradas* and now called upon them to join ranks in the war against the Palestinians. No solution will be acceptable except 'the expulsion of all the foreigners from Lebanon and the recovery of our authority over every inch of Lebanese territory'.[11] Graffiti on the walls of East Beirut appeared with a demand that became a major slogan of the Guardians: *lan yabka filastini 'ala ard*

Lubnan (not one Palestinian should remain on Lebanese soil). Abu-Arz asserted that the Lebanese must go to war based on an understanding that the Palestinians, because of their growing numbers, military presence, terrorist training activities and quest for citizenship, would destroy the country as a free national entity. These troublesome guests, according to the Guardians of the Cedars' communiqué of 10 October 1975, now threatened the Lebanese hosts of the Palestinian refugees who…the hosts…had graciously welcomed into the country in 1948.

The party declared Lebanon to be everlasting and the people's love for her eternal. The second press communiqué from 24 September 1975 referred to the battle for 'every child at Kana and Nabatiyeh [a Shiite village and town in the south], every writer in Yaroun [Shiite village in the south] and Bsharre [Maronite town and region in northern Mount Lebanon]—Tripoli [Sunni city on northern coast]—Baalbek [Shiite city in the Bekka]—Baakline [Druze village in the Shouf]'. The Guardians truly saw itself as the party of all the Lebanese confessions and represented in this respect a radical *démarche* in the thinking and politics of Lebanon. Maronite elites had traditionally and primarily claimed the leadership of only their own confession while Etienne Sakr, himself a Maronite, sought to bind Lebanese of different religions under one common party and leadership banner. He was not committed only to the Christian areas of Lebanon or specifically the Maronite enclave of Mount Lebanon. This Lebanese patriot reached out to Lebanon 'in its entirety and integrity'. Thus, when the Guardians sent a delegation to no less a meeting than a Maronite League Conference in New York in 1980, Etienne Sakr chose a Shiite party member as its head, secondly a Greek Orthodox, and thirdly, a Maronite.

The idea that a Maronite personality can justifiably be the authentic leader of all the Lebanese, despite their discrete confessional faiths, demands that all the truly self-conscious Lebanese citizens identify overwhelmingly with their homeland and nationality above all other identities they may bear. For Etienne Sakr, this was a personal self-realization stamped on his heart. This also requires that the Lebanese as a whole must rise to their Lebanese identity above their confessional ones. For this to happen, there must be a worthy Lebanese leader who will guide all the Lebanese to their national self-recognition. It is therefore a question of education and leadership. Abu-Arz was confident that a worthy and wise leader, with an inclusive approach to the Lebanese communities, could forge such national unity.

In conversation, but not in writing, Etienne Sakr sketched a model of rule that evoked classic notions which are inspired by Biblical and Greek sources, and that outline the hierarchic conception of nature, of the higher and the lower, committed to just ends. Ideas of this kind appeared in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Just as God is above man, and the human soul is to guide the body, so political rule should be lodged in the hands of the most virtuous and knowledgeable of people. The leader's duty is to guide his subjects to fulfill their obligations and enjoy happiness. Marsilio of Padua of the fourteenth century

conceived of the state as a 'living being' composed of parts which perform the necessary functions of life. For Sakr, a'head-and-body' image of Lebanon can be applied to the eminent role of the Christians to lead and show the way for the others. This *noblesse oblige* concept presumes that when the head is healthy, the body will be healthy; but when the head is sick, the body cannot be healthy. He was harshly critical of the leaders of Lebanon, meaning the Maronite presidents and the Maronite patricians of parties/militias, who failed in their responsibilities. The fault for the breakdown of Lebanon is attributed therefore to the Christians, though victims of Palestinian and others' violence, rather than to the non-Christians (Muslims and Druzes) who were the protagonists of the Christians. According to Sakr, a good Maronite leader would have prevented the descent into the pit of anarchy and hatred in the 1970s and 1980s, but the head of the body was sick. The foremost political elite of Lebanon had forfeited its duty in its mad obsession with tribal and partisan passions, blinded by myopia and cupidity. Abu-Arz shaped party ideology to repair the damage:

> In Lebanon, the Maronites did not deal well with anyone—not even with their fellow-Maronites. But things were different for the Guardians. Some Muslim members in the party actually wanted to become Maronites and marry Christian women. The Maronite Church seemed to disfavor the move and so the Muslims adopted the Greek Orthodox rite.

Here nevertheless was an indication of the validity of Etienne Sakr's elite concept of rule. Perhaps a more startling illustration was the story, as told by a priest from Jezzine, of Shiite migrants from Lebanon in West Africa who provided most of the money to build a Maronite church at Freetown in Sierra Leone.

The sense that the Maronites were particularly responsible for Lebanon included the notion, according to Abu-Arz, that the Patriarch of the community was really the Patriarch of Lebanon. People from all confessions, not only Maronites or Christians, recognized his eminent status and came to him with their problems. And he, if he was personally worthy of his esteemed office, spoke in the name of Lebanon rather than in the interest of the Maronite church alone.

The history of the land of Lebanon was a chronicle of national resistance against foreign invaders. The Guardians of the Cedars saw itself pioneering merely a new chapter in the long Lebanese war of defense, and mobilized for it. The list of invaders of Lebanon was etched on a famous plaque on the rocks near the Kalb River, and recorded the Assyrians and Persians in ancient times, the Greeks and the Romans, the Arabs, Byzantines and Mamluks, the Ottomans and the Egyptians, and later the Palestinians and the Syrians. A small nation like Lebanon, or Israel which had been friendly to Lebanon, must never be or appear to be weak because that would lead to its obliteration. Notwithstanding the rationale of this simple proposition, Lebanese politicians have historically not built up the country's military and technological power. They even assumed that

a weak Lebanon, unassuming in its national image and behavior, would secure the country's well-being. But this fails to understand the conditions for survival of a small state like Lebanon, vulnerable and violated by Syria as the representative of the historic Arab assault on Lebanon's existence. The pan-Arab movement is described as 'a three-legged monster' whose characteristics are cowardice, avarice and dishonesty. In comparison, the Guardians party dedicated itself to courage, generosity and truthfulness as daily virtues and national attributes for Lebanon to acquire.

The strength of Lebanon is based on its being alone, while relying on its neighbors—like Syria—represents its weakness. Most fundamental is the axiomatic definition of Lebanon as a non-Arab country and the Lebanese as a non-Arab people. The Lebanese enjoy the attributes of a distinct *culture* and self-conscious *peoplehood,* with their own indigenous *history* and particular *language* of Aramaic/Syriac origin, and a special bond with their exquisitely beautiful *homeland.* Syriac-origin (perhaps Phoenician) pre-Christian and pre-Islamic place-names in Lebanon are a particularly intriguing aspect of the country's pre-Arabic character. The following are three indicators of this point:

1. Ancient pagan themes, as suggested by the word 'moon' for the town of *Deir al-Kamar,* and in the name *Baalbek.*
2. Syriac syntax when the first two letters of a word are consonants, as for the non-Arabic named villages of *Bkassine* or *Bqosta,* including the particular Lebanese pronunciation of certain word-forms.
3. The Syriac form for the word 'village' as in *Kfar* Saroun or *Kfar* Falous, while the Arabic term for village is *Kafr.*

Abu-Arz, drawing upon his profoundly non-Arab and anti-Arab consciousness, charged Lebanon and some of its politicians with lacking ideological consistency and national pride. They should stop coloring its face Arab when its heart is so distinctly Lebanese. Moreover, when the Arabs adopt a political policy against the Lebanese, this exposes the falsehood of the regional Arab doctrine as being inclusive of Lebanon.

The Guardians' doctrine and Abu-Arz' personality fired the spirit of Lebanese youth who joined the ranks of the party, noting the three examples below.

- Joseph Karam, born in Chekka south of Tripoli, attended like other Maronite children the French-language Ecole Notre Dame in the city. Situated in the region of Koura with its large Greek Orthodox population, the SSNP was very popular and strong. In 1976 the Palestinians attacked Chekka's Christians (read: Maronites) massacring 30 people, and the Phalangists, the *Ahrar,* the Guardians and the *Maradas* carried out reprisals. Joseph, then just 15 years old, was attracted by the personal magnetism of Abu-Arz and the party's philosophy, and joined the Guardians. The party order was to kill Palestinians but not Lebanese, meaning not Muslims but Palestinians. Later the party

became strong among the ideologically minded people in the Batroun region to the south of Chekka. Karam, known by his nickname *Alloush,* recalled that many Syrians worked in Chekka before 1975: 'I didn't like them and the Guardians mission and goal was a free Lebanon, against the Palestinians and the Syrians.'[12] *Alloush* went on to become a legendary fighter in the war for a free Lebanon, in Beirut and the south of Lebanon, until being seriously injured in 1999 while commanding the South Lebanese Army (SLA) in the Jezzine enclave.

- Fady Fadel, a Maronite from Ashrafiyyeh in East Beirut, recalled that in 1975 all family members were joining either the Guardians of the Cedars or the *Ahrar:* 'I learnt the ideals of Abu-Arz from my father. The Guardians held that "we are not Arabs", but the *Kata'eb* of Pierre Gemayel espoused that Lebanon is an Arab country and the *Ahrar* believed that Lebanon is a member of the Arab family. The Lebanese Front [a coalition of different Christian militias] said that it favored a Christian Lebanon, and that whoever is not Christian is not Lebanese. But Abu-Arz said that Lebanon is for all the Lebanese.'

  The Guardians party ideology was doctrinaire in its inclusive conception of Lebanese nationalism: while rejecting the Arab definition of Lebanon, it accepted the Lebanese identity of all native groups in the country. Fady pointed out that not only Christians but also Sunnis, Shi'a and Druzes were members of the Guardians. He mentioned in this context Mustapha Geha, a Shiite author, who used to visit Abu-Arz in Beirut; but he was later murdered by Hizbullah terrorists in Ashrafiyyeh. There was also the example of a member of the al-Sulh Sunni family who supported the party. A loyal Lebanese Muslim was preferable to a non-Lebanese Christian, who, coming as a Copt from Egypt or a Chaldean from Iraq, might identify religiously with the Maronites of Lebanon but not with their national struggle. By way of implication, a bridge of solidarity could be built across the chasm that seemed to divide various groups in Lebanon by invoking trans-confessional Lebanese national sentiment.

  Fady Fadel expressed his pride in thousands of years of Lebanese history and identity. When he gave Phoenician names to his two daughters, he was demonstrating how the vibrations from the past evoked in him the cultural affinity with ancient ancestors. He added:

  > True, we began to learn the Arabic language 150 years ago, but we have a Lebanese language. Our *accent* is not Lebanese: our *language* is Lebanese. The more pure Lebanese language can still be heard high up in the mountains of Bsharre. If you stay in the mountain and don't come to Beirut, the old language is preserved—Abu-Arz gives voice to what a lot of Lebanese people feel.[13]

- Arthur Noul, who joined the Guardians when he was a boy of 14, fought in the party's ranks until he was shot in the spine. Ever since, he has been

wheelchair-bound. Abu-Arz helped send him to the United States to get an education and he was able to establish a family and make a productive living. At the age of 40 he was full of praise for Abu-Arz who, he said, 'has been the greatest driving force in my life'. Etienne Sakr was far more than a militia leader and political personality: he was a father and teacher of young people and had a lasting impact on their lives.

THE PARTY SPIRIT

The organizational apparatus of the party emerged, Abu-Arz would say, like a miracle. Somehow, money came in from various sources—'God helped'—and a network of cells was set up in the various regions of the country. There were a few party cells, basically party club houses for recruitment, education and social activities, in East Beirut alone. In certain areas of the country the cells functioned secretly underground. The central command of the Guardians included from 15–20 members who were overwhelmingly men of professional training, like lawyers, professors, engineers. With Etienne Sakr as the party president, the central command members generally each took charge of a major area of responsibility. The party departments included the secretariat, protocol, security, the media, ports, foreign relations, ideological preparation, regional offices, schools and the south. In 1977 the Guardians published three newspapers: *Lubnan, Herraas Al-Arz* and *Melkart.* The organization of the party and the quality of people who ran its affairs constituted a great achievement considering the basic marginality of Abu-Arz in the ambiance of political leadership in Lebanon. 'Our efforts were blessed', he said, 'because our intentions were pure.'

The Lebanese remained under the spell of 'clouds of doubt and black skies', in the words of Fouad Ephrem al-Bustani, until there appeared the 'flawless ideology' of the Guardians of the Cedars.[14] It stood for frank speech and the purity of martyrdom. Civilian and religious leaders preach softness and encourage timidity, but Abu-Arz came to teach the way of strength and hope. In one party assembly Abu-Arz taught his fighting recruits:

> They told you that when they [the enemies] strike you on the cheek, turn the other cheek. But I tell you, that when you are struck on the right cheek, slap the enemy on the left cheek. They told you to go and preach love and peace, but I tell you to preach peace to those who understand the language of peace, but if not, teach the invader by killing him…
>
> I want you [the fighters] to be the fire that burns, the shining light, the sword that cuts, the storm that uproots—I want you to be the dream, a river that echoes, a lion that roars, the hero who takes his revenge.
>
> I want you to be the people who will never be defeated. I want you not to fear destiny—but to create destiny. I want you strong, strong and strong. When every grain of sand of your land is a story of glory, you should irrigate it with the blood of your heart.

Abu-Arz told the people, and specifically his party members and militia fighters, to become 'the crown of flowers' on the forehead of Lebanon's glory. The Guardians adopted a slogan that gave dramatic effect to the historic predicament of Lebanon: 'We are a tragic nation, defiance is our fate and danger is our home.' Etienne Sakr explained that the Lebanese are a tragic people because they are few in number and fighting for survival is their ineluctable destiny. Tragic peoples—including the Jews, Kurds and Armenians—carry sadness in their soul having suffered their unique misfortune in earlier and recent history. The Lebanese must raise their voice and raise their guns—and fight against those whose appetite is to divide and destroy Lebanon. At party meetings and ceremonies, Abu-Arz sought to arouse motivation in the people and a patriotic spirit against the foreigners in the land. 'People began to love Lebanon because of me', he would later recall. Anyone who opposed a free Lebanon, *even the Vatican itself* Abu-Arz would say, would be fought to the end.

Etienne Sakr had ascended the political stage as a powerful, emotive, and very literary personality, a kind of warrior poet in the Lebanese resistance. His speeches and communiques might evoke comparison with Pericles' famous Funeral Oration from 431 BC, where the Athenian had praised his ancestors and their free democratic mind, society of openness and refinement. Pericles pointed out that 'choosing to die resisting rather to live submitting' was a central motif in the greatness of Athenian history. Abu-Arz undoubtedly projected this praiseworthy assessment regarding the dauntless courage of the Lebanese. He had declared that martyrdom—a Phoenician trait—was worthy and necessary in the war for Lebanon's freedom. But he also added a salient and wise comment on the psychology of warfare in addressing his Guardians fighters: 'If you fear not to embrace death, then death will not embrace you.'

The life of Etienne Sakr was increasingly emerging as a testimony to the truth of this grand manifestation of faith.

4

The Fighting and Politics of *Herraas Al-Arz, 1975–1982*

The Guardians of the Cedars Party under the leadership of Abu-Arz had identified the existential national problems of Lebanon concerning Palestinian penetration and Arab imperialism, but without delineating the *modus operandi* of fulfilling the goal of liberation and unity. The call for resistance, sacrifice and martyrdom could serve as an uplifting cry for filling the ranks with brave fighters. But the making of war and the organization of political cohesion within the Lebanese people, especially or even among the Maronite Christians as the spearhead of the struggle, were the practical and as yet unresolved tasks to be addressed.

From the point of view of the Maronite oligarchic elites, Abu-Arz was a political *parvenu* lacking a traditional power base in landed or financial resources, a feudal clientele, or communal standing. He came forward with the 'word and the sword', charisma and rhetoric and the courage of his convictions. But Lebanon's political caste system posited an ascriptive society which values where you come from and whom you know. To win the day you will need more than just the power of your ideas and the integrity of your character. Ruthlessness is also a key instrumentality employed in this arena of interminable domestic machinations.

With the outbreak of the war in April 1975, the senior Maronite leaders and intellectual stalwarts set up the Lebanese Front as a loose political coalition to shape communal policy making on behalf of the Christian vision of the country. Its members included former Lebanese president Camille Chamoun, the presiding President Suleiman Franjiyyeh, and former government minister and founder of the Phalangist Party Pierre Gemayel. Etienne Sakr, with no comparable record of political office-holding or militia ascendancy, was not invited to join the Lebanese Front. The men of ideas in the Front were primarily the historians Jawad Boulos and Fouad Ephrem Bustani, the latter a former president of the Lebanese University, Sharbel Kassis of the Monks Order, Charles Malek and the poet Sa'id Aql. Edouard Honein, former minister and member of the Eddé family's National Bloc, served as secretary-general of the Front. Later Father Boulos Naaman also participated in the group's meetings. All but the Greek Orthodox Malek were Maronite Christians. Weekly meetings were convened every Tuesday under the chairmanship of Franjiyyeh, and the overall

direction of political discussion consisted in elucidating the precarious condition of the Christians of Lebanon.

The Maronite politicians inclined to believe that Syria would resolve the violent and deteriorating internal debacle that had been raging in Lebanon since the spring of 1975. While mortars burst and cannons fired their shells, as snipers filled the neighborhoods of Beirut, the Christian leadership looked for help outside the country. In October the Phalangists, perhaps with Egyptian support, called for the intervention of the Arab League. Pierre Gemayel traveled to converse with President Assad in Damascus in December 1975 as did Camille Chamoun in early 1976. Meanwhile, Lebanese President Suleiman Franjiyyeh also turned to Syria to mediate the Christian-Muslim rivalry for power with the hope, though hardly buttressed by the existing political and military circumstances, that the balance would be maintained or even tilted in favor of the Maronites. In January 1976, as Christian areas south of Beirut and in the Bekka were being overrun and hundreds of Christians killed, Druze leader Kamal Junblatt also traveled to Damascus to demonstrate his accommodation of Syria's hegemonic role in resolving the war in Lebanon. Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam had for some time been active in trying to both arrange a cease-fire to end the fighting and broker reform for a redistribution of power among the Lebanese confessions. The result of this was known as the Constitutional Document and included, among other provisions, a 50:50 Christian/Muslim representation in Parliament (instead of the 6:5 ratio in favor of the Christians), the election of the prime minister by parliament (instead of being a presidential appointment), and maintaining the three highest posts respectively in the hands of the Maronites (president), the Sunnis (prime minister), and the Shiites (speaker of the House).[1] But the political system, equipped with more brakes than a motor, stalled for many years to come.

It was also in January 1976 that the town of Damour, Christian-inhabited and in the sphere of influence of Camille Chamoun, fell to the combined forces of the Lebanese National Movement. Abu-Arz denied that the LNM was either *Lebanese* or *National.* In fact, it consisted of Palestinians from the Fatah, Habash and Hawatmeh movements; from the PLA Ayn Jalout brigade sent from Egypt and the Qadisiyya brigade from Iraq; fighters that Syria and Jordan sent from the ranks of the Yarmouk and Castel units; in addition, foreign terrorist groups training in Lebanon such as Japanese commandos—all participated in the massacre at Damour. There was no Lebanese army in sight. Abu-Arz added that the primary figure behind the vicious tale of destruction in Lebanon was Yasir Arafat.

During this period, the Palestinian/leftist National Movement forces converged on the Maronite-inhabited Matn and toward Kesrouan, as Syria deployed troops —first proxy forces and later visibly Syrian troops—in Beirut and in other parts of the country. The Guardians, with more fighting spirit than military materiel, took to the field of battle. In March, Abu-Arz wanted to send a small number of his men from Beit Mery to Hammana in the lower Matn in order to establish a

presence in the face of Palestinian and other leftist threats. Sharbel Barakat, who was a Lebanese Army officer but also a Guardians member, learned that the operation was delayed due to Amin Gemayel's opposition. While Bashir had agreed and was about to approach Sheikh Pierre on the matter, Amin was apparently wary that non-Phalangist forces would be stationed in his traditional political turf. Before approval was given, the PLO took control of a number of hotels in West Beirut and the Guardian fighters, instead of going to Hammana were sent to Beirut to contend with the Palestinians. Elie Hobeika, *Kata'eb* commander, had been caught in the Palestinian cross-fire and the Guardians helped extricate him to safety. In the end, Barakat recalled, 'we lost Hammana and West Beirut'.[2]

Other Guardian operations proved more successful and helped establish the party as a reputable and important force in the evolving war. A small force went to Qalat Msailha in Batroun, an old Crusader castle, to show a military presence and train new recruits. In the same period of March, a Guardians force commanded by Kayrouz Barakat went to Zaarour above the mountain road toward Zahle and replaced a *Kata'eb* unit for a few weeks. Palestinian shelling created an immediate danger, but the Guardians held their ground. In April Guardian fighters, of whom young Sharbel Barakat was a brave member, defended a line in the area of Hadeth, Kfar Shima and Bsaba south of Beirut against a coalition of Palestinians/Druzes/ PPS. The Phalangists did little to protect the Christian population there. The Army itself, in the person of officer Michel Aoun, had asked the Guardians to assume this military mission. But soon thereafter, Bashir called the Guardians to West Beirut to assist in the fighting, and they went. Sharbel Barakat related that the Guardians did not particularly want to fight in Beirut for the reason that the *Kata'eb* and the *Ahrar* used the occasion of fighting in the capital for the fun of plundering stores. This practise was absolutely intolerable in the eyes of Abu-Arz and forbidden to his Guardians.

In May 1976, Syria militarily supervised the election of Elias Sarkis to replace Franjiyyeh as president of Lebanon, and the way was open for more massive and demonstrative Syrian intervention in Lebanese affairs. Abu-Arz was close enough to the actual political developments to offer this narrative of events:

> Syria made Sarkis the president of Lebanon. Syria told the members of the parliament to vote for him when the election was manipulated in Beirut. The Syrians told Sarkis that 'we will bring you to power and you will provide us a legal cover to come into Lebanon'. In June the Syrian army entered Lebanon under the guise of an invitation from the Lebanese themselves.

After bringing the Guardians of the Cedars into existence through political declarations and party meetings, Abu-Arz impressively developed the fighting capacity and battle-readiness of his young warriors. He had come to the

conclusion that the resistance forces must capture the Tel el-Zaater Palestinian refugee camp, that was built-up like an armed fortress and was a thorn in the side of the Christian neighborhoods on the eastern side of Beirut. Fighting in the area between the Palestinians and the Lebanese had been going on for many months when Abu-Arz went to share his ideas with Camille Chamoun. At first Chamoun argued that the attack should be against the Jisr al-Basha camp, but later he concurred with Abu-Arz. The Phalangists, for their part, were against this plan and according to Abu-Arz were virtually coordinating with the PLO. Pierre Gemayel, who favored the renewal of water supplies to the besieged Tel el-Zaater camp, was in contact with Yasir Arafat and on 18 July an agreement was reached between the two. Phalangist politician Karim Pakradouni reported that Arafat was perturbed by the Guardians graffiti campaign on the walls of East Beirut: 'No to Syria' and 'No to Arabism'—in addition to 'No Palestinian should remain in Lebanon'. The PLO leader sought the friendship of the *Kata'eb* in Lebanon in order not to make the mistake made in Jordan when, as the crunch came in September 1970, the Palestinian commandos lacked the backing of domestic popular support.

The Lebanese resistance siege against Tel el-Zaater began in June 1976 and continued for 52 days until the armed camp, manned by approximately 2,000 Palestinian fighters within a total population that once numbered over 20,000, was captured. There had been attempts by units hailed as 'Arab Peace-Keeping Forces' *(Quwwat al-Salaam al-Arabiyya)* that were already present in Lebanon to end the turmoil and fighting in the country generally, and specifically at Tel el-Zaater. Advance military units of the force, including Egyptians and Libyans, began arriving at Beirut airport by mid-June. On one occasion Amin Gemayel asked Abu-Arz to come see him. Present was one Sudanese officer in particular bewailing the sad spilling of Arab blood in the incessant war. Abu-Arz responded to him: 'We are not Arabs but Lebanese. The Palestinians are our enemies and we want to put them out of Lebanon. We will not stop the battle [at Tel el-Zaater]. As for the Israelis, they didn't do anything against us, but it was the Arabs [Syrians] who invaded Lebanon and they support the Palestinians.' This was vintage Abu-Arz—straight and to the point.

According to Abu-Arz, the battle and ultimate capture of Tel el-Zaater could have taken less time but for a peculiar development. He explained the unfolding events of late July:

> I miraculously got 500 fighters for the battle to match the 500 of Chamoun's Tigers. The *Tanzim* and the Maroun Khoury group also brought some fighters to the battle. Our overall goal was to bring down Tel el-Zaater once and for all, and the Guardians were the *fer de lance* in this effort.
>
> Our men were to set out from the Mar Shayya convent at Brummana to the east. Michel Aoun from the Lebanese Army was with me in the Operations Room. Other army officers were also with us. Charles Akl from Ashrafiyyeh led the Guardian fighters. We began shelling at 4:00 a.m. and,

> according to our plan, the sun would be behind us but in the faces of the Palestinians by five o'clock. The Guardians were to take the main road from Mansuriyyah that sloped toward Tel el-Zaater. But the *Kata'eb* blocked the road! From the Operations Room I ordered my men not to fire on the *Kata'eb.* To work out this matter, I went with Dany Chamoun, Camille's son, and Father Fadel of the Maronite convent, to see Amin Gemayel who commanded the Phalangist forces in the Matn. The discussion cost us two hours and we lost the element of surprise in the attack on the Palestinian camp. I think the *Kata'eb* coordinated with Arafat…
>
> Suleiman Franjiyyeh would say of Pierre Gemayel, Amin's father, that 'he is not even Lebanese, but Egyptian'. Pierre Gemayel was born in Egypt and spoke with that accent all his life.

The PLO rained cannon fire on Ashrafiyyeh, but in the end, after many hard days of fighting, the Guardians planted the party flag on Tallit el-Mir, the hill that overlooked the Tel el-Zaater camp, on 10 August. They were the first party to do so. Tel el-Zaater was a turning point of Lebanese recovery in the war against the entrenched Palestinians. It put Abu-Arz on the political map. He coined the seemingly tautological but menacing phrase regarding this event—and perhaps subsequent battles in the war: 'We don't accept any alternative to Tel el-Zaater except Tel el-Zaater.'

During these very dramatic days, the Palestinians and the Muslims carried out a massacre in the Christian town of Chekka in retaliation for the events at Tel el-Zaater. Abu-Arz was part of the rescue mission: 'I gathered some of my fighters and went north. I saw the murdered people in Chekka and began to bury them with my own hands. The Guardians fought along with the Christian militias of Franjiyyeh and Gemayel [in what author Y.Sayigh described as "a devastating counter-attack"]. We forced Palestinians and Muslims out of Tripoli or from attacking Christians there.' Fouad Ephrem Bustani commented excitedly: 'When I read about the *Maradas* from Lebanon's early history coming down from the mountain to the beach, this is what you [the resistance fighters] did now, recalling the time when the Arabs paid the *jizya* [the *dhimmi* tribute tax traditionally paid by the "protected peoples" to the Islamic powers but here paid in reverse] to the Maronites.'

Guardian slogans scrawled on the walls of East Beirut minced no words in propagating popular animosity against the Palestinians, the Syrians and the Arabs generally. This use of political graffiti aroused a particularly interesting reaction from the then Maronite Patriarch Khoreish. He was, like Etienne, from the southern village of Ayn Ebel and knew the Sakr family well. The Patriarch asked Abu-Arz to visit him at Bkerke because he was disturbed by the militant slogan. The Patriarch scowled at Abu-Arz and remonstrated with him that *he* was causing a disaster in Lebanon with his violent language. 'Your father destroyed Ayn Ebel and you'll destroy Lebanon', he told Etienne, referring to the

provocative role, in the view of the Patriarch, of Caesar Sakr in the tragedy of 1920. Meanwhile Abu-Arz responded and explained: 'The Greeks came to Lebanon but only as soldiers and administrators, and left. So too the Romans. And the Lebanese people survived. So too with other foreign forces that came to Lebanon. But now the Palestinians are here. If they stay, Lebanon will become a Palestinian state and we'll have to leave.' The tense meeting ended with the Patriarch muttering something like 'Go to hell', and Abu-Arz almost raising his hand against him. That was the only time the two men met, and Abu-Arz wondered before and certainly after the meeting why he should have gone to visit Patriarch Koreish at all.

Although Abu-Arz personally acquired a sinister stereotyped reputation in the eyes of some foreign journalists over the years of war, many foreign accounts of the Tel el-Zaater battle nonetheless failed to mention the Guardians at all.[3] But Israelis close to the Lebanese scene knew well enough of the role of Abu-Arz and his fighters in the battle. Oded Zarai related that the Guardians of the Cedars were on the front lines of the fighting at Tel el-Zaater, and Aharon Amir pointed out that they were one of the principal militias against the Palestinians there. It was this daring and tactically effective military operation that provided relief to the Christians of East Beirut. It also contributed significantly to the halo of heroism that the Guardians earned. Official Israeli personnel who were already involved in Lebanon in the 1970s were unanimous in praising the courage and fighting spirit of the Guardians. One of them, Haim 'Arev, drew the direct connection between the sweeping patriotic ideology of the Guardians and the superior battle capacity of their fighters. The party was among the smaller parties in Lebanon's struggle of resistance, but its idealistic men (and women) were of the highest human and fighting quality.[4] Later in southern Lebanon, the Guardians' soldiers had a reputation for being exceptionally motivated and were the toughest fighters in the ranks of the SLA.[5]

The defeat of the PLO at Tel el-Zaater set the Arab world scrambling to provide protection for the Palestinian movement in Lebanon and, at the same time, to take account of Syria's presence and ambitions there. The Riyadh and Cairo summits in the second half of October decided on the creation of the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) whose proposed 30,000 soldiers incorporated about 25, 000 Syrian troops already patrolling, attacking and occupying parts of Lebanon. The ADF was hardly more than a Syrian policing contingent under an Arab facade. The theatrics of the Arabization of the war provided a confirmation of Syria's military grip of Lebanon. Abu-Arz declared himself absolutely opposed to the introduction of the Arab forces into the areas of liberated Lebanon and especially, without necessarily naming them, the Christian areas of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. He understood that the Arab forces would come to serve Palestinian interests and protect their presence in the country. Kamal Junblatt, Abu-Arz pointed out, opposed the entry of the Arab forces which he suspected as being a cover for Syria's existing presence in Lebanon. Other Lebanese leaders, no less Maronite Christians, were less suspicious of Syria.

While, in fact, most leaders quivered and deluded themselves by denying reality, Abu-Arz grasped the gravity of the immediate danger facing Lebanon in the politically and militarily volatile situation evolving from May until November 1976:

> The Chief of the Army, Hanna Sa'id, came to see me at my headquarters. 'We're finished', he said, 'the Syrians are coming. The ADF finalizes this.'
>
> I called Bashir [Gemayel] and Dany [Chamoun] to meet at [President] Sarkis' home in Hazmiyeh. Sarkis said: 'There will be no Palestinians in our areas after Tel el-Zaater. We'll call in Syria [into Beirut?] and there'll be peace.' I said to Sarkis that 'people think that politics is the art of the possible; but that's not true. If it's the art of the possible, it's not an art at all. There is then no problem to resolve. Rather politics is the art of the impossible.' I continued: 'If you sign with Syria, history will cut off your two hands'.
>
> But Sarkis signed [the Lebanese president was authorized by the Arab summits to approve the ADF presence in the country]. I went to [Camille] Chamoun who knew about the Syrians coming into the Maronite areas of Lebanon. His son Dany said that 'the Syrians are coming to flatten the Palestinians'. I said to him: 'You don't know history: to flatten us!'
>
> Then I went with General Sa'id to Pierre Gemayel. I shouted at him. He said the Syrians would have no more than *postes de contrôle;* he lied. We [the Guardians of the Cedars] demonstrated against this situation, but Gemayel opposed what we did.

It was in these circumstances that Abu-Arz initiated the founding of the Lebanese Forces *(al-Quwwat al-Lubnaniyya)* to establish cohesion and cooperation among the diverse militias in the resistance. The battle at Tel el-Zaater was decisive in convincing Abu-Arz of the need for coordinated and planned military action. However, his thinking was not directed only toward the Palestinians, but perhaps even more toward the Syrians. Already back in July, a month after the 'official and public' Syrian military entry into Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel had visited Abu-Arz in his office. Etienne told Bashir that 'we will have to fight Syria which is worse than the Palestinians'. Among the major Lebanese figures, and aside from Abu-Arz himself, who recognized the danger of Syria's intervention in the country, was Raymond Eddé (who later fled to Paris after the Syrians attempted to assassinate him). According to Nicolas Nasr, the representatives of the *Kata'eb,* the Liberal Party, the *Tanzim* and the Guardians of the Cedars convened in Etienne Sakr's party headquarters in Ashrafiyyeh on 30 August 1976.[6]

Abu-Arz struggled to push his proposal forward by employing argument and stratagem:

> A first meeting leading to the establishment of the Lebanese Forces, intended as a military counterpart to the political Lebanese Front, was held in the Printania Hotel in Brummana. I contacted Bashir and asked him to come to my headquarters. He was commanding the *Kata'eb* following the killing of William Hawi. There were numerous clashes already occurring between the *Ahrar* and the *Kata'eb.* I invited Camille Chamoun and his son Dany, and Suleiman Franjiyyeh and his son Tony, along with Pierre Gemayel. Edouard Honein was also there.
>
> All those present wanted Syrian troops in the Christian areas: *the Maronites wanted the Syrians*! I spoke alone; I was enraged and spoke about the enmity between Lebanon and Syria. I strongly protested the drift of opinion, because my father wasn't present there. The sons of the elderly leaders were silent, perhaps intimidated from speaking up in agreement with me, or thinking independently, due to the presence of their fathers.

Abu-Arz proposed that Bashir command the Lebanese Forces. After all, 'at that time already he wanted to become the president of Lebanon, and one step could lead to another'. Etienne's successful initiative may have enhanced his image, but it did not assure that he and Bashir would be in agreement on all matters. Abu-Arz, for example, had no delusions that the war with the Palestinians was over. The Palestinians were armed and dogmatic in their drive to manipulate Lebanon for their political and revolutionary purposes. On one occasion, the various Lebanese Christian leaders were discussing a cease-fire with Abu Hasan Salame representing the Palestinians. Everybody was ready to sign except Abu-Arz. He, no doubt appearing unreasonably stubborn, gave four reasons for his refusal:

1. The Palestinians would not observe the cease-fire (which was perennially true);
2. the whole exercise was one of bluff, because the Lebanese would not keep it either;
3. he was unwilling to put his name beside that of Abu Hasan Salame; and
4. the Palestinians were guests in Lebanon and did not constitute an equal partner with the native Lebanese.

A compromise was worked out whereby Bashir would sign on behalf of Abu-Arz. The flexibility of Abu-Arz, as in this case, was not very typical of his normative behavior, though it does demonstrate his readiness to sometimes play politics.

Years later, in a Guardians communiqué from 30 March 1983, Abu-Arz provided further insight concerning the fateful meeting back in 1976, when he could not dissuade the Maronite elite from accommodating—really capitulating to—Syria's military domination of Lebanon. The oligarchs chose the Syrian option. This was', for Abu-Arz, 'the typical Lebanese policy of patching up and compromising *(taswiyeh),* accepting the facts, and serving others' interests but

not Lebanon's. When they accepted the Syrians, it was like "asking the wolf to protect the lamb".'

The Guardians relentlessly continued their efforts to build up their fighting forces for the days ahead. At the Beit Mery party cell in October, Abu-Arz told his members that 'with the absence of the army and the state, we will be the army and the state'. He commemorated on that occasion the martyrs who had fallen in battle as he explained to new recruits, young men and women in battle-dress, of the eternal glory of Lebanon. He, as always, was direct and explicit mentioning 'our rights and God'. Though the war cost lives, he urged his fighters to be unshakeable in their commitment to Lebanon. For 'you are the guardians of the cedars' and 'you are making history'. The freedom of Lebanon, Abu-Arz said, was dependent on these brave people who just yesterday were children, students, or workers. As founder and commander *(al-Qa'id)* of the Guardians, Etienne Sakr already understood that his influence was more compelling in the popular domain than in the political arena.

Having failed to convince his compatriots of his position, Abu-Arz planned to convene a press conference on 10 November, at the party office at Sabtieh on the road to Antelias. In the morning, however, while Abu-Arz was still working out of Beit Mery, much noise could be heard from the streets. Thousands of Syrian troops bringing tanks and artillery were on their way to occupy the entire city of Beirut. Guardian fighters were out to block the Syrian column, and the officers at its head were arrested and their weapons confiscated. The officers were brought to Abu-Arz as prisoners. However, this symbolic act of resistance dissipated after both the Office of President Sarkis and Pierre Gemayel telephoned to beseech Abu-Arz to free the Syrians. Later that day at noon in Sabtieh, Abu-Arz declared that he would retreat to the mountains as an act of protest against the defeatism of the Lebanese resistance movement and the creeping occupation of the Syrian army. Out of 'respect for the martyrs of the Lebanese nation', Abu-Arz declared that he was not willing to capitulate to foreign rule in his homeland.

The dominant members of the Lebanese Forces (who were actually the Lebanese Front leaders) had come to terms with Syria in the hope that it would stand as a protective shield and fighting force for the Lebanese Christians and against the Palestinians. President Sarkis called upon the Lebanese to greet the Syrians 'in love and brotherhood'. His warm words were perhaps inspired (or dictated) by President Assad's major speech earlier from 20 July where he had stated that 'Syria and Lebanon were one state and one people…hared interests and a common history'. For a Lebanese nationalist like Abu-Arz, this political definition represented the hegemonic claim of Syria to completely incorporate Lebanon under the domination of Damascus.

PROTEST WITHOUT REVOLUTION

The image of the brave guerrilla leader in the mountains appears in the mythic folklore of liberation movements. Ho Chi Minh went to the highlands of Tuyen

Quang in the 1940s and led the Vietminh National Liberation Front against French imperialism in southeast Asia. The FLN *maquis* in Algeria, especially the Kabyle mountain component, fought and defeated French colonialism from 1954–62. Fidel Castro organized his mountain resistance in the Sierra Maestra in the 1950s against the American-supported Batista regime in Cuba. The mountain represents not only a geographic refuge for the weak and the victimized, but the bastion of dogged determination for the guerrillas in the face of superior military-political force centered in the urban capital zone. Could *Herraas Al-Arz* with their fiery leader Abu-Arz make Mount Lebanon the springboard to victory and power like the historical examples noted?

With tens of fighters and their weapons, Abu-Arz went north to Laqluk near Akoura in the territory of Jbayl and set up his post there. On the way he saw the Syrians in his beloved land, and a tear dropped from his eye. The Syrians were not in all parts of the mountain, and therefore the presence of the Guardians was a statement in the name of Lebanese independence. The young men were hardy enough, but the cold weather in the snow-filled mountain was almost unbearable. The group with Abu-Arz at the head later went down to a slightly lower altitude at Tannourine in the Batroun region. There, as elsewhere, the Guardians commander delineated the three steps in the broad program of struggle: steadfastness, attack, liberation. His most effective achievement was steadfastness. But he mobilized new recruits in the Akoura region and called upon his young fighters ‘to love Lebanon and her people from the blood of Tannourine’. From there, with the winter snow high and deep, they moved on to Oyoun Es-Simaan in the eastern part of Kesrouan. Later the small force set up their post in Jabel Sannine, and thereafter in Khinshara in the Matn. They remained there until early 1978. The staged mountain itinerary of Guardian movements hugged closely to the eastern part of Mount Lebanon, clear of Syrian forces and significantly in the Maronite habitat.

This mountain retreat of Abu-Arz from 1976–78 represented a political protest far more than it constituted a military operation. From afar he engaged in a polemical argument with those who called for a ‘New Lebanon’ of Lebanese and Palestinians. Abu-Arz called for a ‘Strong Lebanon’ for the Lebanese alone. His was a rejection of both the old, weak Lebanon from before 1975 and the proposed new Lebanon that would legitimize alien penetration of Lebanon.

It might be argued that Syria chose not to deploy troops in certain areas of Mount Lebanon because the Guardians maintained a preemptive presence. Abu-Arz’ voluntary retreat was a strong display of the ideological principles of the Guardians of the Cedars and conveyed passionate patriotism in the face of foreign intervention and occupation. Journalists from abroad visited Abu-Arz in the mountain, and here was a story with a revolutionary flair: ‘I dared to say “no” to the Syrians’, Abu-Arz proudly declared.

At times, the Guardians’ numbered more than 150 men and it was a constant problem to feed and provide for the group’s basic needs. Abu-Arz reminisced whimsically:

> In the Matn, a Catholic monk in a convent was very gracious in assisting us. There was a statue in the convent of a priest named Abdallah Al-Zakhem from Aleppo from a few centuries ago, who had introduced Arabic printing. This weakened the role of the Syriac language, our native tongue, and this damaged Lebanon. I really wanted to destroy the statue of Zakhem, but how could I do such a thing after the monks had received us so generously…
>
> Overall, the period in the mountain was very difficult. It was hard to reach our locations and difficult to travel from them to other places. I was later in charge of the Akoura region for the Lebanese Forces in facing the Syrian deployment in the region of Baalbek. They had a 5,000man battalion and the Guardians were just a small group. Sometimes I would go to a meeting of the Lebanese Forces in Beirut and my men knew how to avoid the Syrian check-points on the way.

On one occasion in going to East Beirut to attend a meeting of the *Majlis al-Harb* (War Council in Qarantina) with the Lebanese Forces, in order to report on the mountain retreat, Abu-Arz was encouraged by the realism of some of his colleagues:

> The Syrians were bothered by me. I declared defiantly that I opposed them, and defined Syria's presence as an occupation. Jawad Boulos was at the meeting and he spoke up by saying (in French): 'as a historian…the ABC of politics is that two contiguous countries are always enemies, like Germany and France. This is always the case for Syria and Lebanon.'

But naivety and fear had numbed most of the Maronite political elite into submission.

The mountain venture of Abu-Arz did not catalyze the elucidation or mobilization of guerrilla warfare. The 'liberated areas' were under the control of the Guardians more by default than by military design. But regardless of the circumstances, the Guardians did transform the Akoura area into a free zone of Lebanese autonomy, though revolutionary attraction or development did not arise. It is only fair to add that the enemy maintained far larger and better-armed forces, and that the native forces of the Guardians did not share a border with a friendly weapons supplier. The Syrian oppression dug its heels in across Lebanese society, with the closing down of Beirut newspapers and the kidnappings and murders of different elements of the population. Druze chieftain Kamal Junblatt was assassinated by Syrian operatives in 1977 and Shiite Imam Musa al-Sadr strangely disappeared in 1978. The factor of corrosive intimidation definitely made the launching of a major offensive against Syrian forces a dangerous and difficult idea. Indeed, Abu-Arz seems not to have articulated any offensive military doctrine against the Syrians.

While he lacked sufficient power in the urban political core, the Lebanese elite in East Beirut was not tied in an integral and operative fashion to his mountain fastness, while snickering at his (for them) odd multi-confessional party membership, and probably considering him a delusionary adventurer. Nonetheless, Bashir Gemayel came to see Abu-Arz in Akoura a few days after he went there, telling him that 'he was completely right concerning the Syrian seizure (*mainmise* Bashir said in French) of Lebanon'. Camille Chamoun also visited Abu-Arz, listened to the explanation of why opposing Syria's presence and fighting it was the only reasonable alternative available. Chamoun listened and did not argue. But Bashir and Chamoun were unable to plan a workable strategy of action, lacking the vision of Abu-Arz and the daring to act. Had the dominant leadership grasped the potential revolutionary power of the mountain retreat, then it would have transformed Abu-Arz' symbolic act into a stimulus for strong united action. The traditional oligarchs did not study the modes of revolutionary transformation, of the relationship between urban and mountain struggle, and the techniques for the political mobilization of popular sentiments in the name of a social mobilization against the foreign enemies in Lebanon. An armed uprising can carry a very uplifting message despite, or because of, the oppression imposed from without.[7]

In the end, the Maronite elites were imprisoned in their narrow selfconsciousness and personal self-interests, stunted by the weight of their supercilious social status. They no doubt envied Etienne Sakr's daring, and they may have sensed that his revolutionary rhetoric—if it became politically concretized—could not only expel the Syrians and the Palestinians, but sweep them from power as well. It is important to be aware of the class dimension in the Lebanese failure to generate a unified political team to conduct a revolutionary struggle for freedom. In connection with which, therefore, Abu-Arz' mountain retreat was a statement of political conviction but without an operative program delineating the instruments and tactics to be employed for a comprehensive national campaign of liberation. The strongest obstacle in the path of Abu-Arz may have been the Lebanese, even more so than that of the Syrians. Nonetheless the Guardians mountain episode would prove to be a national stimulant for the Lebanese resistance and, directly or indirectly, helped precipitate the war between the Christians and the Syrians in Ashrafiyyeh in 1978, the upshot of which was the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from the Christian area *(Sharqiyya).* Abu-Arz had dared to say 'no' to the Syrians and it was in this spirit that the people would fight and that Bashir Gemayel would later agree to coordinate with the Guardians.

There was an interesting Israeli footnote to the mountain retreat. The Arab Affairs correspondent for the *Haaretz* newspaper in Tel-Aviv, Oded Zarai, by chance saw Abu-Arz giving a foreign television interview. He was wearing dark sunglasses and stood in the midst of a handful of his fighters. Zarai was captivated by the fact 'that here for the first time was a local Lebanese leader who spoke against the PLO and not against Israel. This was a political breath of

fresh air. I spoke to Ehud Ya'ari, who covered Arab Affairs for the Israeli television, and together we watched the full interview that Abu-Arz had given. I wrote everything I heard about him [Abu-Arz].'[8]

THE ISRAELI CONNECTION

The strength of his rejection of the Syrians in Lebanon was only one reason for Abu-Arz to turn to the Israelis as a regional counterweight. He perceived Israel in historical, cultural and ideological terms as a naturally compatible country with Lebanon. Israel represented a considerable 'minority people' success in the Islamic-Arab East. Sa'id Aql had already encouraged Abu-Arz to seek out the Israelis, perhaps through their ambassador in Turkey, for 'only Israel can help us' he said. Fouad Bustani felt that only the ancient Jewish people would understand the millennial struggle of the Lebanese. 'The Europeans are only 1, 000 years old, and America is young. They are like children. But with a national past of many millennia, Israel and Lebanon are almost the same age,' Bustani intuited with a prescient sense of history. The West was cynically disinterested in the Lebanese tragedy and the suffering fate of the Christians.

In 1977 Abu-Arz traveled to Paris to meet Israeli officials which led to a meeting with senior Mossad official David Kimche. The Israeli told AbuArz that 'we want to cooperate with you,' and Abu-Arz responded that he wanted to hear this directly from Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

Israeli-Lebanese contacts and cooperation already existed at this time. The Chamoun and Gemayel families, which had indirect contacts with Israelis many years earlier, established a direct connection with Israel at the latest in 1976, and requested weapons and assistance in military training. In southern Lebanon, local Maronite villagers were beginning to cooperate with the Israeli army in 1975, and Major Saad Haddad soon assumed the command of what became a multi-confessional militia to defend the south from Palestinian terrorists. In 1976 Israel inaugurated the 'Good Fence' policy at Metulla to enable southern Lebanese civilians to receive medical treatment and employment in the northern Galilee.

However, the Israel-Guardians relationship was to become a most exceptional one. It rested on the axiomatic principle of the Jewish and Lebanese peoples as non-Arab in national identity within what otherwise appears as the Arab Middle East. It drew upon the personal role of Etienne Sakr's special individual integrity and public stance, and it grew from the practical utility of the Guardians in contributing to Israel's intelligence and operational needs in Lebanon.[9]

On his meeting with Begin in 1977, Abu-Arz related the following brisk dialogue:

> I came to Jerusalem with Kimche and his staff. I admired Begin and we had a good meeting. I asked him three questions:

Sakr: Do you want something from Lebanon, perhaps territory?
Begin: No. We agree with the international border between Israel and Lebanon.
Sakr: What about water?
Begin: Perhaps later we can make an agreement regarding water.
Sakr: Does Israel want to leave the Palestinians in Lebanon?
Begin: No. They should go to Arab countries, and some could come to Israel. Let's say 20,000 should stay in Lebanon.
Sakr: Okay. We already killed 20,000.

[Later in the Knesset, Begin said that the Palestinians in Lebanon should go to Syria, Libya and Saudi Arabia, and added that 'We [Israel] should help the Christians'.]

Sakr: Why did you allow Syria to enter Lebanon in 1976?
Begin: Syria is our Enemy Number One. We didn't agree that Syria should enter Lebanon. But the Christian leaders in Lebanon welcomed the Syrians. So what could we do? We communicated our 'Red Lines' position that Syria not cross south of the Awali River.
Sakr: I'm the only one who said 'no' to the Syrians.
Begin: We want a weak Syria. We feel for you. Go my friend, fight for Lebanon. The big Christian nations will not feel for you because they were never persecuted. We feel with you because our people more than anyone else has known the taste of persecution.

Abu-Arz recalled that Begin said 'Camille Chamoun asked for cannons. We'll send them.'

The next time Abu-Arz met Begin was in late 1982 in the aftermath of war and disappointment. On that occasion Abu-Arz came to Jerusalem with 14 of his men. With the solidity of ideological commitment in the Israeli-Lebanese alliance, the Guardians as a party and each of its individual members were as committed to the relationship with Israel as was their leader. Israel had true friends in Lebanon, but Israel meriting that friendship would be tested time and again.

THE MARONITE HOUSE DIVIDED

The tactical advantage of being a small party, as compared with the larger ones belonging to the Maronite dynastic elites, distanced and secured the Guardians of the Cedars from the major and violent communal power struggle. Tension and sniping had been an integral part of the Gemayel/ *Kata'eb*-Chamoun/Tigers imbroglio that simmered for years. So too the jockeying for position and influence in the northern mountain between the entrenched Franjiyyeh stronghold in the Zghorta area and the Phalangists who intruded in search of political clients, fighters and economic gain. The traditional Franjiyyeh tie with the Assads in Syria was an ideological thorn in the side of Pierre Gemayel. Of special significance in addition was the role of senior Phalangist commander

Samir Geagea from Bsharre situated near the summer residence of the Franjiyyehs in Ehden.

Clan and village rivalries were etched deep in the memory of the Maronite mountaineers over many centuries. This was the natural state of affairs between the Franjiyyehs and the Douaihys in which there had been violent episodes, or the people of Bsharre and Ehden. Both the Bsharres and the Zghortans had reputations for being fierce fighters, which, if directed against a common non-Lebanese enemy, could serve the mountain well. But when the latter two neighbors skirmished with each other in the mid-1970s, Abu-Arz took his men away from the area to carry out their military training in a more composed environment.

With the largest fighting force, Pierre Gemayel aspired not only to lead the Lebanese resistance but also to dominate all its component groups, if not to eliminate them completely. The meetings of the Lebanese Forces reflected this in as much as the *Kata'eb* ran matters virtually alone, and all the other militias and their leaders were there, in the words of Abu-Arz, 'just for show'.

The great fissure among the parties in the struggle for leadership took place on 13 June 1978, when the Phalangists under Bashir Gemayel and Samir Geagea attacked the summer home of Tony Franjiyyeh, the son of former president Suleiman Franjiyyeh, in Ehden, resulting in an ugly fratri-cidal massacre.

Abu-Arz was able not only to describe what happened, but to explain its historical depth and political significance:

> The *Kata'eb* wanted to prove that it was the largest and strongest militia. In the midst of the fighting Geagea was injured and his men went wild. Cannon-fire broke open the door to the Franjiyyeh home. A total of 33 people were killed from the Franjiyyeh clan during the fighting inside the village between the *Kata'eb* and the people of Ehden, who may have thought the invaders were Muslims. Among the dead was Tony, his wife Vera and their little daughter Jihan—all killed in cold blood. The stench of revenge was in the air.
>
> Bsharre and Zghorta (and Ehden) were always in a state of hostilities. Like Rumeish and Ayn Ebel in the south, or Bikfayya which adhered to the *Kata'eb* and Dhour Shweir where the PPS was popular in the Matn. People from neighboring villages always fight…
>
> Later, Bashir asked me to go to Suleiman Franjiyyeh to make a *sulha* (reconciliation), but Franjiyyeh couldn't agree after 33 people, among them his eldest son, had been murdered. I said to Pierre and Bashir: 'this [massacre] is something that we should never do. You sent the Bsharre people to Ehden and Zghorta: this is like fomenting a war by sending Dhour Shweir people to Bikfayya [the Gemayel village]. These are old feuds. I told Sheikh Pierre that what he did was wrong. Geagea is from Bsharre: this is the root of the reason for the carnage. Pierre did not admit that 'we did it', and I told Bashir what his father said—He replied that

> Franjiyyeh should state his conditions for reconciliation and then Bashir would be ready to declare his responsibility in a press conference.
>
> The Chekka cement industry and the imposition of an arbitrary protection tax upon it was the focus of the *Kata'eb*-Franjiyyeh rivalry. The *Kata'eb* wanted the money embezzled from the racket at Chekka. The whole thing started in Chekka on the coast and got to Ehden in the mountain.

Joseph Karam *(Alloush)* from Chekka, who had joined the Guardians as a young boy as related earlier, noted that following these events Franjiyyeh's *Maradas* actually allied with the PPS, the Communists and the Muslims of Tripoli to attack the *Kata'eb.*

Abu-Arz added that after the massacre, the Syrians invaded the north at Madfoun between Jbayl and Batroun on the coast. 'When the war had begun [in 1975] the entire region was Christian. When the Syrians came [in 1978], it ended up being just half-Christian. The Bsharre-Ehden incident put the first nail in the coffin of the Christian community.'

Abu-Arz offered a historical footnote regarding the name *Madfoun,* meaning 'a burial place'. This is where the Syrian forces entered into Batroun and Bsharre in Mount Lebanon:

> Fakhr al-Din [the Druze hero] wanted to unite all of the Lebanese, but the Maronites didn't cooperate with him. His mother had sent him when he was still very young to be educated by the Maronite Abu Nadra el-Khazin in Ballouni/Ajaltoun in Kesrouan. Fakhr al-Din then returned to his birthplace in the Shouf and became the Emir. Now he wanted to unite the entire mountain against *Al-Sham,* meaning Damascus. The Maronites refused, however, to unite with the Druzes.
>
> Abu Nadra el-Khazin invited Maronite leaders to meet with him, put up a tent, and gave them all a sumptuous meal. He called them *madfoun* (buried) [the site was to acquire the name Madfoun] unless they agreed to join with Fakhr al-Din. And they did join. The Christians and the Druzes together fought and defeated the Syrians at Anjar. Then Fakhr made Lebanon independent and powerful, from Aleppo to Acre. In later centuries Turkey recognized Lebanon as a free country. It was the only free country in the Ottoman Empire.

Abu-Arz was a strong believer in the capacity of a united Lebanese people to repel and defeat foreign invaders. But Maronite infighting was a great obstacle to cementing unity. One of the inspiring Guardian slogans declared that 'the Lebanese must never use weapons against Lebanese', but Abu-Arz' own confessional community was failing to adhere to his basic prescription.

In mid and late June 1978, just days after the Ehden massacre, the Syrians bombarded the Christian towns of Deir al-Ahmar in the Bekka and Qaa in the

Hermel region. While the Gemayels greedily wanted to seize the Lebanese Maronite throne by murder and barbarities, the Syrians took over the mountain and valley of the country through alien armed intervention. The Maronite house was divided in a fit of suicidal madness. It may be that violence was seen by the *Kata'eb* as the necessary condition for unity; therefore the end justifies the means, because the good end is the unification of the particularist Maronite tendencies and parties that would enable the Lebanese to overwhelm the Syrian enemy. But with the Ehden incident the opposite transpired: the very flawed attempt at Maronite unity weakened the possibility over time to effectively face the Syrians.

Before the month of June ended a Syrian-Lebanese Forces front opened up in Beirut. An incident at the Fayadiyyah Army barracks on the BeirutDamascus highway was occasioned by the Syrians provoking the Lebanese by setting up a road-block. This led to an eruption of fighting with the Syrians initiating a barrage of artillery, mortar and cannon attacks against the East Beirut Christian neighborhood of Ashrafiyyeh. The Guardians, who had actually sent RPG rockets smuggled in ambulances to the besieged army troops at Fayadiyyah, fought alongside the army, killing over 30 Syrian soldiers. What became known as 'the 100 Days War' was to last until early October. During five days at the beginning of July alone, 60 civilians were killed and over 300 injured. Though many fled the neighborhood, the Christians as a community stood their ground. Abu-Arz recalled the enormous error of the *Kata'eb* and the *Ahrar* who, in manifest self-delusion, had actually assisted the Syrians in setting up military positions in East Beirut buildings in the previous Syrian campaign against the Palestinians. From the beginning Abu-Arz had suspected that the Syrians would ultimately direct their military fire toward the Lebanese Christians:

> These were most difficult times for us with Syria threatening our very presence in Beirut. I left Ashrafiyyeh and directed Guardians fighting in that period from Beit Mery. The Syrians fired rockets to destroy Ashrafiyyeh and the results were catastrophic in terms of loss of human life, suffering and flight, and the destruction to homes and buildings in the neighborhood. We kept up the fire at the Syrian forces while their dead lay in buildings. Our shooting prevented them from burying their dead. The *Kata'eb* wanted to give water to the Syrians in Ashrafiyyeh, but we didn't let them. For all this and more I was on the 'hit list' of the *Kata'eb.*

In fact, four members of the Guardians were murdered in the Batroun region by *Kata'eb* assassins.

Clearly, the collapse of East Beirut would have meant the loss of the urban core of the Christian resistance. East Beirut provided not only a symbol of the struggle, but the route north to Jouniya and Mount Lebanon. It became increasingly clear to the traditional elites that they had erred in welcoming Syria's entry into Lebanon in 1976. The US Ambassador to Lebanon, Richard

B.Parker, recalled that once in 1978, 'I found [President] Sarkis in tears because of his inability to stop the Syrians from shelling Beirut.'[10]

Abu-Arz never gave up, always looking for routes to victory:

> I called Major Saad Haddad, the commander of the South Lebanese Army, and asked him to shell Sidon in order to divert the Syrians from their aggressive offensive against us in East Beirut. He did. *He was a man!*
>
> Ashrafiyyeh was partly destroyed but surviving, and we could annex it to Free Lebanon in order to liberate all of Lebanon. For the Syrians had virtually surrendered and fled to (Muslim) West Beirut, leaving the Christian zone. East Beirut was now clear and clean of Palestinians and Syrians.

The Syrian withdrawal had been worked out in a complex agreement drawn up in October between Sarkis, the Syrians and the foreign ministers of four other Arab countries—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait. This Beit-Eddin Accord included a clause that insisted the Christians of Lebanon no longer be permitted to deal with Israel. But the Lebanese militiamen mocked the accord and 'spray-painted the Star of David on the walls of the damaged apartment blocks in Ashrafiyyeh, inking the word "Israel" onto their khaki shirts and green dungarees'.[11] At least 700 civilians had died in the '100 Days War' in Syria's indiscriminate bombardment. But the Lebanese definitely had won a victory in this battle.

The war continued throughout the country. In the south, abandoned by the national army and the government, Saad Haddad declared a 'free Lebanon' along the Israeli border. In Beirut, Abu-Arz persisted in his cry that all Palestinians must leave Lebanon and that the struggle would continue until victory was complete. He provided strong motivation for the Lebanese resistance, but the Phalangists had other ideas of victory in mind.

On 7 July 1980, Bashir's forces attacked the home and base of Dany Chamoun at Safra north of Jouniya, and killed 100 members of the Tigers. This brutal measure, part of a broader campaign against the Chamounist forces, cost the lives of an estimated 600 people, as the Gemayel family affirmed its undisputed leadership of the Christian Lebanese community. Dany Chamoun left Beirut for exile in London. Abu-Arz believed, or perhaps was informed, that Pierre Gemayel now wanted Bashir to kill him. 'I kept a low profile', Abu-Arz commented, and added, 'the Mafia could learn something from these Lebanese.'

It was this crucible of violence that enabled the Lebanese Forces to actually function in a rather unified fashion. Everything now was under Pierre Gemayel's control. Before that only the Lebanese Front, as the political body, functioned in some reasonable way. One Chamounist unit remained under the command of Elias Hannouche, essentially hiding in West Beirut with Syrian and Palestinian assistance. Bashir forced the *Herraas Al-Arz,* the *Tanzim,* and the *Ahrar* into the Lebanese Forces. Abu-Arz did not oppose the principle or the necessity of a

unified military resistance and, in fact, pointed out in a press conference of the Lebanese Forces on 10 July, that military unity in the liberated regions was a step in the right direction. However, he distinguished this from political pluralism which was the legitimate counterpart to military unity. At root the Guardians had in effect lost much of their separate operational existence as an independent militia. Abu-Arz explained:

> Everything was virtually in the hands of the *Kata'eb.* They had caused intra-Christian warfare despite their promise to the contrary. They declared themselves in favor of a Christian Lebanon, which provoked antagonism from all other confessions. In reality, Christians were against Christians and Christians would be, and already were, pitted against non-Christians. This was the unfortunate work of the Lebanese Forces in *Kata'eb* hands.

TOWARD THE 1982 WAR

The dynamic of escalating hostilities proceeded apace on all fronts throughout the country. In addition to Lebanese-Palestinian skirmishing, the fighting that continued between the Lebanese and the Syrians, the Israelis and the Syrians, and the Israelis and the Palestinians, supplied more than adequate explosive potential for an even more extensive eruption of warfare. The military crescendo, with its concomitant political opportunity, would be reached in June 1982.

The fighting in and over Zahle, a city known for its historic Greek Catholic population in the Bekka valley, subjected the Christians to incessant Syrian bombardment during 1980–81. It was in February 1981 that Syrian agents attempted to assassinate the community's patriarch, Maximos V Hakim, in Bhamdoun, to the west on the Beirut-Damascus road. The Lebanese Forces made an impressive showing in holding their ground in Zahle and Mount Sannine in Kesrouan to the northwest, until the Syrians began pounding them with helicopter gunfire. Bashir Gemayel beseeched Israel for help and, indeed, Prime Minister Begin authorized the air force on 28 April 1981 to shoot down two Syrian helicopters in the fighting zone. The Lebanese had eked out another victory against the Syrians.

Abu-Arz was able to send over 100 eager Guardian fighters commanded by Kayrouz Barakat to Zahle alongside the *Kata'eb* force. He remarked that 'his men were on the front lines against the Syrians and succeeded in burning their tanks. Later Bashir's forces did the same. After the battle, the Syrians couldn't enter Zahle at all.' The battle-lines were being drawn. The Syrians responded to their defeat in the Zahle area by introducing Soviet SAM missile batteries into the Bekka to counter Israeli air-force surveillance flights or possible aerial attacks on Syrian ground forces in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation fermented on different fronts. The PLO executed cross-border and *katyusha* shelling attacks into the Upper Galilee that resulted in 26 deaths and 264 injured between July 1981 and June

1982. The AFL, as Israel's ally in southern Lebanon, fought courageously against Palestinian terrorists. With its terrorist empire ensconced in West Beirut, the PLO operated a network of close cooperation with a variety of insurrectionist movements. These included the Italian Red Brigades, the IRA and volunteers from a variety of Asian and African countries. The Soviet Union and other East European communist regimes armed and trained the PLO. In Beirut, the Soviet embassy and the PLO headquarters—known as the Fakhani Republic—trampled on any slim sign of Lebanon's sovereignty, while jointly conducting global activities against Israel and the West. The PLO was as insistent in overwhelming and eradicating Israel as it was to obliterating Lebanon.[12] By 1982, the PLO was looking forward to the establishment of its own conventional army far beyond the infrastructure of its historic and notorious guerrilla/ terrorist apparatus.

PLO attacks against Israeli diplomats and missions abroad had a long history. The near-assassination of Israeli ambassador Shlomo Argov in London on 3 June 1982 was the last such attack when, three days later, Israel initiated the 'War for the Peace of Galilee' operation against the PLO in Lebanon. There were some that had sensed that the war was coming. Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon had apparently apprised the United States Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, in the spring about an impending major military operation against the PLO. Abu-Arz adds his own testimony regarding the approaching campaign:

> I met with a high-ranking security official in Tel-Aviv in January 1982. He informed me that Israel was planning to go to war. 'Tell our friends in Lebanon not to mess it up; there won't be another opportunity', he said pointedly. 'When?' I asked. 'June or July' was the answer.
>
> I went to tell Bashir. He was very skeptical concerning Israel's intention to go to war.
>
> On 4 June, while we were attending a meeting of the Lebanese Forces with Bashir, the Israeli air force bombed PLO targets at *Madinat Iradiya* (Sports City) in Beirut. In order to please the Muslims, he called this 'a savage action'. He wanted their votes for his campaign to be elected president. I kicked him under the table. I took Phalangist commander Jean Nader aside telling him not to criticize Israel. If Bashir will show strength, then the Muslims will vote for him. But Nader didn't agree with me. A member of the *Tanzim* present commented that Israel shouldn't be trusted.
>
> The next day Amin, who had his own *Kata'eb* troops in the Matn, held a parade as a show of strength with 10,000 fighters. This was a manifestation of the Bashir-Amin tension and rivalry.
>
> Then, shortly after on 6 June, Israel *invaded* Lebanon. In reality, Israel *liberated* Lebanon.

Alloush of the Guardians remembered that Abu-Arz stood facing a large map in his headquarters and received communications. Then he would stick pins into the

map, apparently to identify the advance of the Israeli army through southern Lebanon on the way toward Beirut. Abu-Arz continued the narrative:

> I wanted Bashir to be in touch with Saad Haddad in the south. I was the only one in Beirut in contact with him by radio communication. I understood from Haddad that the Israeli operation would be a big one. But Bashir hated Haddad [perhaps because he was a Greek Catholic, not a Maronite, and bore a peasant's image inferior to the sophisticated Beirut high society that was the Phalangists' ambiance] and claimed that only he [Bashir] gives the orders.
>
> Meanwhile the IDF arrived at Damour and then to Beirut, asking for cooperation from the Lebanese Forces [i.e. the *Kata'eb*]. But Bashir did nothing.

The Gemayels were a central factor affecting the political fortunes of Etienne Sakr. His memories from earlier days, filled with both hope and frustration, were rather gloomy:

> I remember the weekly meetings of the Lebanese Forces command council. It was the hardest thing for me. The weekly meetings were not serious. I often didn't even speak. Decisions were taken before the big meeting convened. When I think of how I felt then, it was like a boy who doesn't want to go to school.
>
> These people didn't think big. You know, we say that you should dream, but only if it's a big dream. Our party had a slogan: 'the dream is the reality of the future'.

In Abu-Arz' conversation from January 1982 with an Israeli security official, the Israeli had referred to 'our [Israel's, and Abu-Arz'?] friends in Beirut who shouldn't "mess it up'". Which friends, we may ask? Of first importance in the power equation, and far above all others, were the Gemayels: Pierre and his two sons, Bashir and Amin. They were truly at the political crux of the Israeli-Lebanese relationship. Israel's wager in Lebanon was riveted to the hopes it pinned on this family—Bashir in particular. In 1981, Prime Minister Menachem Begin had wanted to learn more about Bashir Gemayel, the charismatic commander of the Lebanese Forces, and called in liaison officer Shmuel Evyatar who was in close contact with him. Evyatar told Begin in the presence of Yitzhak Hofi, who headed the Mossad, that Bashir wanted Baabda (the presidential palace south of Beirut). Begin's stunned response was: '*I thought he was a freedom fighter.* In the end, he won't have either Baabda or independence.' Begin then lapsed into a lengthy and intriguing discourse on his own underground revolutionary struggle, as leader of the Irgun movement, in pre-state Israeli history.[13]

The question of Israel's friends and Abu-Arz' friends looms large on the canvas of Lebanese history. What was not in question, however, was the firm

friendship of Abu-Arz with the state of Israel and its people. But Israel's recognition of his abilities and qualities, and the extent of support given him, would remain in question.

5
Lebanon's Missed Opportunities, 1982–90: Abu-Arz Faces Rivals and Enemies

The Israeli 'Peace for Galilee' military operation provided the political opportunity for Lebanon to recover its sovereignty and for the Maronites to reconsolidate their dominant position in the hierarchy of power. The Syrian forces were forced out of Beirut and suffered a severe beating in aerial and ground fighting with Israeli forces. Israel downed approximately 120 Syrian warplanes while losing only two of its own aircraft. About 9,000 PLO terrorists including Yasir Arafat were expelled from Beirut by Israel's policy of compellence in laying siege to the capital city. It seemed that the Christians of Lebanon would now achieve their confessional and national ambition thanks not to the historic French or more contemporary American patron, but to the determined Jews of Israel.

All Lebanese communities without exception were relieved to see the Israelis rolling into south Lebanon on their way to Beirut. The Shiites were enthusiastic to see the Israelis chasing the Palestinians away, as Amal militiamen began ordering Palestinians to leave and opened fire on them east of Tyre. In the Bekka, Shiites erased anti-Israeli slogans and wanted the Lebanese Forces to enter the region as allies of Israel. But the Gemayels said 'no'. In Christian East Beirut the Israelis were received as liberators and Christian women waved joyously at the conquering Israeli troops. The Sunnis did not regard the Israelis as their enemies. In West Beirut only a small number of people had ever supported the Palestinian cause.[1]

Beyond the reaction at the popular level, no one more than Abu-Arz at the political level awaited Israel's arrival in Beirut with greater expectations:

> Only my group said 'welcome' to the Israelis. We opened our homes and offices to the Israelis. Ehud Ya'ari, Oded Zarai and Shlomo Ganor were among the Israeli journalists who visited me at home and at my headquarters in Ashrafiyyeh. Bashir was against meeting the Israelis; he was against an alliance with Israel. He was going to convene a press conference and his spokesman, Naoum Farah, prohibited Israeli journalists from attending.
>
> Bashir came and I stood near him. He didn't even mention the Israeli invasion—15 days after it began! But the journalists were interested in

> hardly anything except the Israeli invasion and pressed Bashir to know his reaction. His evasive response was that 'the Israelis didn't come for my blue eyes'.
>
> This is the historical moment that we lost. From then on…down, down… until today. I tried to get the *Kata'eb* to speak in favor of the Israeli operation. It was risky for me to do this. Bashir's aides perhaps suspected me of setting my sights on the presidential palace.
>
> Defense Minister Ariel Sharon came to the home of Charles Malek, and complained to him that Bashir was not cooperating with the Israelis. Sharon drove to look for Bashir at Lebanese Forces headquarters, but he wasn't there. He continued to Bikfayya, but he wasn't there. Bashir avoided the Israelis, including Sharon, who had met secretly in January with Sheikh Pierre at Bikfayya, having come initially to Jouniya to get a first-hand impression of the Phalangist leadership and their military preparedness.

There were Lebanese, like May Murr and Sa'id Aql, both of whom were close to Abu-Arz, who were willing to visit Israel in the aftermath of the war. In the end Aql never went to Jerusalem, while Bashir told Abu-Arz not to get himself too involved with the Israelis. This attitude carried severe implications in terms of the role of the Israelis in determining the next president of Lebanon. George Freiha, an assistant to Bashir and also a close friend to Abu-Arz, suggested to Bashir that it would be wise to be on good terms with the Israelis—'because maybe they'll choose someone else and not him for president: maybe Abu-Arz'. Etienne Sakr recalled: 'At one meeting in fact I actually felt that Bashir was going to kill me; grabbing the presidency was of prime importance for him.'

With the end of Elias Sarkis' presidential term, the highest office of the republic was available for Bashir Gemayel, the young commander of the Lebanese Forces. Israelis close to the events confirmed that, from both the Lebanese and Israeli points of view, all talk was about Bashir, the Gemayels and the *Kata'eb.* 'We were all politically drunk with enthusiasm and optimism regarding Bashir, though Abu-Arz warned us to be cautious', Oded Zarai would later recall, 'but our euphoria did not allow us to hear and heed his warnings'. There was little discussion about Abu-Arz. His party was small and the major Lebanese leaders seemed not to accord him much importance.[2] The official Israeli position recognized the value of the Guardians of the Cedars as a semi-underground organization, intelligence-gathering outfit, and effective operational unit. Rafik Barakat headed the latter security department to conduct covert activities in coordination with Israel and against Syria. In addition to intelligence personnel that had already been active in Lebanon, Israel now sent its first foreign ministry official to get acquainted with local leaders and parties for the purpose of normalizing relations and trying to advance them to the point of official contacts. Being the most publicly pro-Israeli organization, the Guardians opened up their party headquarters and homes to the Israeli representative who

benefited from the advice, friendship and security provided by the party. For Abu-Arz, the relationship between Lebanon and Israel was grounded in ancient history and political realism. But the prevailing judgment or perhaps prejudice was that, while a loyal friend and publicly supportive of the Israeli alliance, 'Abu-Arz could not politically deliver the goods'.

Abu-Arz, for his part, felt that the Israeli military operation was misconstrued from the start. The war against the PLO in south Lebanon never led Israel to 'bypass the tail and go for the head'. The strategic goal of Israel in invading Lebanon, Abu-Arz contended, should be in confronting the Syrian enemy on its own turf. Israeli-Syrian confrontation evolved in the Bekka and on the Beirut-Damascus road, and the results were highly positive in Israel's favor. But Israel never set out to expel Syrian forces completely from Lebanon or to strike directly at Damascus. This left Syrian hegemony over Lebanon intact, even though it might have seemed somewhat dormant during the immediate period of the war. Israel, for her part, was more than a little disappointed and upset about the deficient performance of the Lebanese during the days of the operation.

In July, Abu-Arz left Lebanon, passing through Nakoura, and drove his Mercedes 450 SL for a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem. Israel wanted Abu-Arz to speak out against the Arab propaganda campaign that highlighted alleged Israeli war atrocities against civilians in Lebanon. He traveled willingly to the United States to speak on behalf of the 'Peace for Galilee' operation as a justified act of Israeli self-defense against PLO terrorism, while informing audiences of the truly massive atrocities, as at Damour and Ayshiyyeh, Ashrafiyyeh and Zahle, committed by the Palestinians and the Syrians. Abu-Arz appeared more than 40 times on American television and radio and visited six states in conveying the message that 'Israel's war was Lebanon's salvation'. He met with the pro-Israel 'Jewish lobby' in America and developed acquaintanceships that continued over the years.

In late August the Chamber of Deputies elected Bashir Gemayel, who was 'Israel's man' in a certain tacit way, president-elect of the Lebanese Republic. Earlier, in a noteworthy meeting with Prime Minister Begin in Nahariya, Bashir had said he would consider a formal agreement or treaty with Israel, but only after becoming president. He required a broad Christian-Muslim consensus to take that major step. In the 23 August vote nonetheless, in an election in which there was only the one Gemayel candidacy, it seemed that Israel and Lebanon were one step closer to the treaty that Begin wanted. Abu-Arz himself had in April already formulated a defense treaty for the two countries, but neither his version nor any other would ultimately materialize.

An insider like Abu-Arz was aware that, in his words, 'Amin and Bashir hated each other. Bashir had said to me more than once: "I'm going to do a 7–7 on him", hinting crudely at the massacre by the Phalangists of the Tigers on 7 July 1980.' Perhaps Amin was actually sad when Bashir was elected.

Bashir asked Abu-Arz to return to Lebanon following his August election. They met at the Gemayel home in Bikfayya in the Matn. Bashir repeated to Abu-

Arz that he should not be too involved with the Israelis. The president-elect added that 'we have to think in terms of 12 years' [Bashir aspired to two consecutive terms in office in contravention of the constitutional rules]. As Abu-Arz saw the situation, 'Bashir merely tolerated the Guardians, not more than that. He was furious because I gave interviews on behalf of Israel. His political plans were a bad omen, but events overtook them.'

A day prior to the assassination of Bashir Gemayel on 14 September, he had told Abu-Arz that he would visit him at his Ashrafiyyeh headquarters. This would be a few days before Bashir was formally to enter the office of president on 23 September. Abu-Arz recalls: 'I told him that a visit to me might be risky because he was an imminent target for the Syrians and the PLO. Fortunately [for Abu-Arz] Bashir wasn't killed at my headquarters.'

A few hours before his assassination, Bashir gave what turned out to be his political testament in a strong, uplifting speech in the Lebanese language. He referred to Lebanon as 'a homeland for the Christians' and the eight-year resistance struggle as 'exclusively Christian'. Bashir railed against the condition of Christians living in *dhimmitude,* inferior to the Muslims, and he therefore proudly evoked political Maronitism in 'raising our [Christian] heads high'. Speaking against the Syrians and the Palestinians, he refrained from any reference to the Israelis whose invasion had enabled Bashir to raise his head high.

Alas, not for long. In the afternoon, an explosives blast burst the *Kata'eb* headquarters in Ashrafiyyeh where Bashir was chairing a party meeting. Abu-Arz recalls:

> This was 4:10 p.m. and he was supposed to come see me at 4:30. Ten Israelis including Aharon Amir came to my office at 4:00. I sent Kayrouz Barakat and other party members to see if they could locate Bashir. Barakat then called me to say that the bomb scene was in a state of havoc. My people were able to identify Bashir's dead body. I then informed the Israelis that Bashir was dead.
>
> I went to the funeral at Bikfayya. Sheikh Pierre didn't shed a tear. He liked Amin, not Bashir who didn't always obey his father. Amin tried to cry. The ground floor of the family home is where people conventionally discussed politics. Amin spoke at the funeral but did not eulogize his brother Bashir. He only almost mentioned his brother. He spoke about politics and about getting himself elected to the presidency. Political sheets on behalf of Amin were distributed.

This consummately surrealistic description of things contains a deeper and more sinister significance when accounting for the ineluctable intraMaronite power struggle. Abu-Arz recalled his own personal feeling at the time:

> The *Kata'eb* would not tolerate my candidacy for the presidency. In the aftermath of Bashir's assassination Pierre came to the Lebanese Forces

headquarters, and asked the officers to put their berets on the table. He ordered everybody to obey Amin. He would absolutely reject any other candidate for the presidency.

I spoke with Camille Chamoun and Charles Malek about this. I said, 'there must be a solution without violence in this matter'. Pierre made it very clear: only Amin.

Camille Chamoun, who had suggested his own candidacy for president, said that he would withdraw if Pierre—not Amin—would be the Gemayel to become president. After all, Amin was the age of Camille's son, and it was dishonorable for Camille to cede to Amin. But Pierre held his ground and made it clear that Amin must be the next president.

The Mossad then came to see me at my house at Baabdat south of Bikfayya to say that they supported Amin for president. I warned them: 'don't trust his promises. He'll ruin you [Israel] and us [Lebanese Christians]'. But the Israelis trusted Amin who assured them that 'he would give them more than his brother Bashir would have'.

I tried to convince the Israelis, but did not succeed. I went to see Camille Chamoun. He was eating at the time. The Israelis came by then. I remember what Chamoun said, speaking in French: *'Je m'en fous'* ('I couldn't give a damn'). He withdrew his candidacy and chastised the Israelis for favoring Amin.

In summary, ultimately no one dared go against the candidacies of Bashir in August and Amin in September. Once elected on 16 September, Amin stopped talking and meeting with the Israelis.

OBSTACLES ON THE LEBANESE-ISRAELI PATH

The domestic political ramifications of these dramatic events, beginning with the Israeli invasion and later regarding the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, were most significant.[3] The United Nations Security Council had passed Resolution 509 on the very day the war began on 6 June calling for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory. But that was followed on 4 July with Resolution 517 that broadened the scope of concern in the name of the 'sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence' of Lebanon. This implied the need for the retreat of all foreign elements, including Syrian and not only Israeli, which infringed on Lebanon's territorial integrity. Encouraged by the military and diplomatic developments, the Beirut government decided on 27 July not to renew the mandate of the Arab Deterrent Force that since 1976 had been a transparent fig leaf for Syria's occupation army in Lebanon.

Bashir's murder on 14 September, along with 26 others, traumatized the entire Lebanese nation and the *Kata'eb*-Lebanese Forces more than anybody else. The impulse for revenge was instinctive and immediate. The Phalangist slaughter of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatilla camps in West Beirut was not long in coming. Although other senior LF officers participated, it seems that one of the

primary commanders of the invading Christian force was Elie Hobeika, of whom two points were pertinent: one, his fiancée was among the Lebanese women butchered by the Palestinians in the Damour massacre in 1976; and two, he became a Syrian collaborator, though when is not clear. In order to incriminate Israel, it was later rumored that Hobeika scrawled the words *Jeish Lubnan al-Hurr* (AFL—Army For A Free Lebanon) on the LF tanks that entered the Palestinian camps. This was designed to foist the responsibility for the operation on Major Saad Haddad and his IDF-supported militia in southern Lebanon.

Two days later on 17 September, UN Security Council Resolution 520 took note 'of the determination of Lebanon to ensure the withdrawal of all non-Lebanese forces from Lebanon'. On the previous day, Beirut's ambassador to the United Nations, Ghassan Tuéni, had set the tone for the recovery of national sovereignty when he declared that 'Lebanon should be left to the Lebanese, and the Lebanese alone'. It is worth noting that earlier in August the Habib Plan sponsored by the United States had also promoted the evacuation of all non-Lebanese forces from the warstricken country.

There were two new foreign forces in 1982, in addition to the veteran Palestinian and Syrian interlopers that the United Nations, the United States and the Lebanese government sought to see removed from Lebanon. One was the Israeli army following the June invasion. The other was Iran, which had sent over 500 special troops to missionize and radicalize the Shiites in the spirit of Ayatollah Khoumeini's fundamentalist doctrine, while training them in the arts of low-intensity insurgent warfare. Iranian kindergarten teachers were indoctrinating Shiite toddlers to be martyrs. In the words of Tabitha Petran: 'Hizbullah [the Shiite party] was founded, financed, trained and armed by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, some of whom had settled in the Bekka.'[4] By 1983, Iranian flags were hanging from mosques in Baalbek and the Hizbullah fighters wore head bands portraying the Dome of the Rock with *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) written beside it. Green flags of Islam were being flown, not the cedar flag of Lebanon. In fact, there were even Hizbullah leaders who burned the flag of Lebanon while declaring that they were not Lebanese Muslims, but Muslims of the world. In Jibsheit in southern Lebanon a giant metal cutout portrait of Khoumeini graced the village central square.[5] These Shiites, mobilized for Islam's war against Israel, were hardly Lebanese in their religious sensibility, military ethos and political goals; Iran had metamorphosed them into willing proxies in its regional and global program of militant struggle against the West, Christianity and Zionism. Hizbullah was the avant-garde of Iran in the Levant and a front-line member of the Islamic 'comintern', more than it was part of the social, religious and political fabric of Lebanese life.

Later, in October 1983, these extremists blew up the US Marine Compound in Beirut, which was a central component of an international pacification and rehabilitation effort in war-torn Lebanon. The Shiite suicide-bomber killed 241 American servicemen. Abu-Arz mockingly commented:

> Sheikh Tufaylie [some say Sheikh Fadallah] gave the keys to Paradise to the Hizbullah members to blow up both the US and French military bases of the Multinational Force that arrived in Lebanon to pacify the situation. Each suicide martyr was promised 40 virgins for his pleasure; and even after sexual relations the girls would still remain virgins. But if it is so good to go to Paradise, then why don't Tufaylie, Fadallah and Nasrallah [all Hizbullah leaders] want to go there. No one asks them this question.

In December 1982, Abu-Arz was invited to Israel to meet for the second time with Prime Minister Begin. Their initial discussion was in 1977. Abu-Arz told him that Lebanon needs a defense treaty with Israel to which the Prime Minister replied: 'then let your government ask for it'. Over Israeli media the Lebanese leader thanked Israel for 'her humanitarianism' and for freeing Lebanon from 'the nightmare of Palestinian terrorism and Syrian occupation'. In addressing foreign and local reporters at a Jerusalem press conference, Abu-Arz explained that the Sabra and Shatilla events were a Lebanese reaction to the assassination of Bashir, and that Israel need not assume responsibility for this. During this visit Abu-Arz also met with Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. Concerning Israeli-Lebanese negotiations for a treaty promoting normalization, if not full peace, Sharon remarked that if Amin would refuse to sign such an agreement, then he would be the president of the palace in Baabda but not the president of Lebanon.

A little over a year later, in early 1984, Abu-Arz was again in Israel on a visit to Yitzhak Shamir who had succeeded Menachem Begin as Prime Minister. In these years the Guardians of the Cedars, far more than the Chamounists and the Phalangists, demonstrated an absolute identity of interests with Israel. The party was built on a foundation of intimate cooperation with Israeli military and security services, and received arms and training through the IDF. But this exchange did not include the proviso that Abu-Arz would benefit personally and politically from his ties with Israel. Even his suggestion to Shamir that Israel support a powerful radio station that could broadcast all the way to Beirut was never followed up. Abu-Arz understood better than most that the war of ideas in Lebanon is no less critical than the war of guns, missiles and airplanes.

An example of Guardians-IDF cooperation surfaces in the following story related by Abu-Arz drawn from the exuberant and positive days after the Israeli invasion in June:

> My men went out to blow up statues of Nasser [the father of Arab Nationalism] in West Beirut. They also blew up a big one of him in Baalbek. All this to laugh in the faces of the Syrians and their proxies. I had about 60 Muslim Guardians in Beirut when the Israeli army came in 1982. They were the ones who blew up the Nasser statues. They also led the Israelis to the storehouses where the PLO had hidden its weaponry.
>
> Once my men brought me a Palestinian colonel for interrogation. They tried to extract intelligence information from him, but he wouldn't speak.

> He had been trained in the Soviet Union to sustain this ordeal. This Palestinian had massacred Christians. I told my men to tie his hands, leave him and not to speak to him at all—Then he spoke. He told me that he had been in the dinghy that once tried to land at Nahariya [to murder Israelis].
>
> I opposed killing him or anybody else in cold blood. So I contacted the Israelis in Debayye where their *bureau de liaison* was stationed. They came, interrogated him, and left—assuming that we would kill him. I told my bodyguard to hand over the Palestinian to the Lebanese Forces [that is the *Kata'eb*] to decide his fate.

Abu-Arz drew two important lessons from this short episode:

1. If there is a good Christian leader, Muslims will follow him. The Guardians of the Cedars as a multi-confessional party was proof of this.
2. Muslims who joined the party and stood against the Arab forces took upon themselves great risks. A.S., one of the Muslim members of the Guardians [who was later with Abu-Arz in Jezzine], adopted an antiArab position when Arafat was in the Fakhani quarter of Beirut. Some time after the Syrians came into West Beirut in 1990, they murdered most of the Muslim members of the Guardians of the Cedars.

Four additional lessons from the Christian-Muslim brotherhood manifested in party ranks could be added to these:

1. There are Muslims who identify as Lebanese and not as Arabs.
2. Abu-Arz had an insightful understanding of the power of political symbols and therefore the value of destroying the Nasser statues.
3. The Guardians contributed important intelligence information for Israel's effective campaign against the PLO in Lebanon generally and in Beirut specifically.
4. An image of the sordid Phalangists was current in Lebanese Christian circles.

In 1983, Israel pursued its goal of signing a formal treaty with Lebanon that would be a second peace agreement for the Jewish State after the Camp David Accords with Egypt in 1979. Negotiations between Israeli and Lebanese delegations took place over many months in Kiryat Shmona in the Upper Galilee and at Khalde south of Beirut. An agreement was signed on 17 May that included security provisions and a promise of normalization. Nevertheless, it fell short of being a definitive peace treaty and was basically an understanding to terminate the war. In mid-June the Lebanese parliament overwhelmingly voted in favor of the 17 May Agreement with the following outstanding results: 64 were in favor (that included 40 Christians and 24 Muslims), *only two* were opposed, while four abstained. The Agreement was a way of expressing support for normal relations

with Israel while at the same time bringing about the withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Lebanon. It was also hoped that an Israeli withdrawal would shortly be followed, as Sunni Prime Minister Shafiq Wazzan implied, by a Syrian withdrawal. Many deputies who lived in Syrian-controlled parts of the country had been unable to attend the parliamentary session. Meanwhile, Damascus radio announced that the Lebanese parliamentary deputies had 'sold their country to the devil'.

The parliamentary support, both active and tacit we might infer, for the Agreement demonstrated the validity of two fundamental principles in the thinking of Abu-Arz. Lebanon was interested in normalization with Israel, and this was, after all, the historic and strategic axis of his outlook and political alliance. In addition, the Muslims of Lebanon were as ready to have relations with Israel as were the Christians. It had been customary thinking in Israeli establishment circles that the Christians lean toward Israel, but the Muslims tend toward the Arab world. Yet Israel was considerably short-sighted in failing to grasp that the Muslim population was not, as a rule, hostile to Israel, and that this disposition was the fruit of their Lebanese—and not Arab—consciousness. This too confirmed the conception of Lebanese peoplehood that was central to Abu-Arz' national ideology.

Israel's chief negotiator, David Kimche, the Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, had a relationship with Abu-Arz that went back a number of years. He valued the fact 'that his [Abu-Arz'] friendship to Israel was much stronger than that of the others in Lebanon and that in itself was of great importance'.[6] During the negotiations on the 17 May Agreement, Amin Gemayel distanced himself from Israel and then stalled in exercising his authority as president in ratifying the document. Of a different opinion was Fady Frem, the commander of the Lebanese Forces, who publicly came out in support of a peace treaty with Israel.[7]

Abu-Arz understood the political situation and was not deluded by the opportunity at hand:

> Dave Kimche would often come to see me in Beirut during the period of negotiations at Khalde. He was very optimistic about the outcome and the consummation of the deal, but I told him that Amin would never sign even after the agreement was finalized. I told him later that Amin wouldn't sign even though all but two of the deputies were ultimately in favor. Although Parliament was in favor, and the Muslims were in favor, I still knew Amin would not sign. I kept repeating this to Kimche. We [Kimche and Abu-Arz] went to the Hotel al-Bustan in Beit Mery and slept there, while my bodyguards protected him.
>
> The Lebanese were decidedly for Israel. Saeb Salam, a major Muslim political figure, traveled to the United States and the Persian Gulf to convince leaders that the 17 May Agreement was a positive development for Lebanon.

> The president of Lebanon had 60 days to sign an international agreement and, if not, the agreement would be nullified. During those 60 days I went to Amin at the Baabda Palace four times to try to convince him to sign. Every time he gave me a different excuse for not doing so:

Amin: Israel only wants the agreement because it is in debt [and will get money from the United States], and Saudi Arabia will give Lebanon $10 billion if it doesn't sign.
Abu-Arz: In the end you'll lose both: the agreement with Israel and the money from the Saudis.
Amin: America doesn't want the agreement.
Abu-Arz: But US diplomat Morris Draper already signed the agreement on behalf of his country.
Amin: Israel agreed to withdraw but only on condition that Syria must withdraw as well from Lebanese territory.
Abu-Arz: Good.
Amin: Israel doesn't really want the agreement.
Abu-Arz: So let Israel say 'no'.

Abu-Arz considered Amin Gemayel irrevocably bound to a pro-Arab view of Lebanon in the Middle East that was connected, among other motives, to his financial interests. It is also true that Syria threatened Amin to prevent him from signing. The Syrians, who had managed the assassination of his brother Bashir by employing Habib Shartuni from the PPS, further intimidated Amin to choose personal prudence over any political principle that might have coaxed him to sign.[8] Amin never signed the 17 May Agreement. In the spring of 1984, the Lebanese parliament would officially abrogate the agreement. According to Abu-Arz, David Kimche would later admit to him that he—Etienne—had been right all along in evaluating the situation.

During the same period, the Israeli official, Uri Lubrani, visited Abu-Arz in his Beirut office. Abu-Arz explained to the Israeli that Amin's not signing the Agreement was a very bad development. Lubrani, almost apologetic toward the Lebanese president, remarked that 'We all make mistakes', and added, 'both sides [the Israeli and the Lebanese] made mistakes. You [Lebanese] asked too much of us.' Abu-Arz wanted to transcend the immediate difficulties in the friendship and alliance between the two sides, and pointed out that it was important that each fulfill his obligations to the benefit of both countries. Lubrani, however, adopted a more vindictive and narrow approach, by stating that what were in his eyes former mistakes, like Israel's reliance on the Maronites, should not be repeated.

This conversation contained a more than subtle and sufficient hint that Israel, to the extent that Lubrani would influence policy making, would not promote any major political undertaking again with the Lebanese Christians who proved to be disloyal or ineffective on behalf of common Israeli and Lebanese interests. Thus,

Israel would not return to make the same mistakes of 1982–83. Abu-Arz was of a different opinion: the events of 1982–83 did not falter due to a fundamental political error but because of a misjudgment of people. The direction of Israeli policy in Lebanon was correct, but the choice of specific allies was flawed. Had Israel collaborated with a Lebanese partner of integrity and loyalty, then mistakes and failures would have been avoided. It was the view of Abu-Arz that Israel should pursue its fundamental strategic objectives again with a different Christian connection, while Lubrani would promote a Shiite connection to serve Israeli interests in Lebanon. The policy proposal of Lubrani would fail and totally collapse years later.

The political debacle over the 17 May Agreement constituted a certain watershed of miscalculations and bad faith between the Israelis and the Lebanese. While Amin's behavior, though shortsighted or venal, is explicable, Israel's decisions were sometimes much less so. When Israel was trying to close the deal, President Amin Gemayel approached Colonel Sami Shidyak, of the Lebanese Army and also the south Lebanese Haddad militia, with a very interesting offer. Shidyak was at that time known as an 'Israeli' for certain personal reasons, though he was a Beirut-born Lebanese patriot. Amin proposed that Shidyak command the Lebanese Army in the south, on a line from Jezzine to Sidon, and he agreed. But before proceeding with the matter, Shidyak asked the Israelis—Yitzhak Lior and David Kimche—their thinking on the matter. They conferred with senior security and perhaps military officials, and came back with an answer that Israel opposed his appointment as Army commander in the south. Part of the bargain for Amin agreeing to Shidyak was that Israel concede some point in the 17 May Agreement still being negotiated, and perhaps Israel's refusal to Shidyak is connected with this point. But it still seemed incongruous that Israel would pass up the opportunity that the commander of the Lebanese Army in the south would be someone so identified with Israel for many years. Shidyak himself could not fathom why Israel rejected the proposal.[9]

Two other developments of military consequence were connected to the 17 May Agreement fiasco. Under domestic pressure at home, Israel was intent upon withdrawing southward from Aley and the Shouf areas to the Awali river line. Israel began to withdraw in September after Amin refused to sign the May Agreement. At the same time, intense fighting erupted between Christians and Druzes in this southern mountain zone and the results on the battlefield proved to be a re-play of the 1860 mountain war when the Druzes got by far the better of the Christians. In both the 1860 and 1983 cases, the Maronites initiated confrontations which they ended up sorely losing. By late 1983, with the IDF out of the region, the Druzes devastated 60 villages and cleared large numbers of Christians from the Shouf. Israel, while intervening to prevent a massacre of the Christians in Deir al-Kamar, had yet abandoned the *Kata'eb* Christians at a time when the Syrians supported Walid Junblatt's Lebanese National Movement Druzes warriors.

Abu-Arz was totally opposed to the inter-sectarian mountain war and considered it both avoidable and damaging. He denounced the deviant turn from the *national* war to a *sectarian* war between neighbors and Lebanese brothers. The expulsion and flight of Christians from their homes severed the historical tie between the Christian people and the northern part of the Shouf mountain.[10] Responsibility, according to Abu-Arz, lay squarely with a certain family:

> I lay the blame on the Phalangists and, in particular, on Pierre Gemayel who wanted to weaken Camille Chamoun in his fiefdom in the northern Shouf area. The entire destruction of Lebanon was due to intra-Maronite rivalry. Moreover, we [the Christians] had no reason at all to fight the Druzes.
>
> Israel was angry that Amin was not signing the 17 May Agreement. The Maronites lost Israel as an ally. Yet the Maronites set out to fight the Druzes who were assisted by both Palestinians and the Syrians. But the Maronites were alone.
>
> Why did the Druzes win in the mountain war? They are wiser and more united than the Maronites.

The Christian community under the leadership of the *Kata'eb* had failed to foster good relations with Israel while in no way ingratiating itself with the Syrian occupiers of the country. Meanwhile, the balance of power among the confessional groups was turning against the Christians. On the one hand, the Druzes had consolidated their traditional domination of their mountain domain in the Shouf and Aley, while the Shiites in Beirut, the Bekka, and the south were strengthening their military and political standing through both the Amal and Hizbullah parties/militias. But the Maronites were fractionalized between the Gemayel presidency and the Lebanese Forces, and witnessing losses on multiple fronts.

Abu-Arz considered the Israeli withdrawal from Beirut in 1983 a major blow to the possibility of Lebanon rehabilitating its national sovereignty. Amin Gemayel was relying on the precarious Americans, British, French and Italians in the Multinational Force, rather than on the Israelis. Only an Israeli presence could balance, and perhaps ultimately negate, the Syrian occupying presence in the Bekka and south of the Beirut-Damascus road. This Syrian-Israeli presence in Lebanon would not at all resemble the German-Russian partition of Poland in September 1939. Syria had grand hegemonic aspirations in Lebanon while Israel had only limited security interests. For Abu-Arz, Syria was a historic enemy of Lebanon while Israel had the potential of being a very helpful friend. It was, after all, Israel's very existence since 1948 which prevented a more comprehensive take-over of Lebanon in the 1950s and 1960s when the political tide of pan-Arab unity ran very high. Israel served as a partial guarantor for Lebanon because Syria had to consider Israel's possible reaction to any conquering move by Damascus against Beirut. But an IDF pullback from

Lebanese soil in 1983 conveyed a message that Israel did not stand in the way of Syrian rule over Lebanon.

Israel's army was withdrawing in the latter part of 1983 and its diplomatic delegation was leaving its offices in the town of Debayye, north of Beirut on the coastal route to Jouniya, in early 1984. Abu-Arz asked the Israelis to stay but, when Amin removed the Lebanese Army from the compound, the issue was closed. The Israelis countered by declaring that if the Lebanese Forces provides security, then they would remain. Fady Frem, the LF commander, felt that if the Israelis want to leave, that was their decision. 'Fady Frem', said Abu-Arz, 'just didn't understand this at all.'

Yitzhak Lior, senior Foreign Ministry official, was in charge of the departing diplomatic mission at Debayye. His eloquent, detailed and personal recollections from the beginning of his tour of duty in Lebanon are quoted here at length:

> We arrived in Beirut in August 1982 and members of Abu-Arz' Guardians of the Cedars, who lived near us in Baabda, contacted us immediately. They took us to his office that became our second home.
>
> Abu-Arz was a natural friend. He stood out with his leadership capability which rested upon an ideology of Lebanon as democratic, free and independent. The natural partner for this image of Lebanon is Israel. The natural enemy is Syria. Abu-Arz believed in this without any compromises and with a profound motivation that was backed by a willingness to fight for his views and principles. He dreamed of an Israel that would project her values onto Lebanon. He dreamed of a Lebanon that would distinguish between a dangerous and primitive neighbor that employs a policy of force and intimidation from Damascus, and an enlightened peace-seeking neighbor [Israel].
>
> Abu-Arz adopted the Israeli representatives without hesitation—in seeking ways to assist Israel in its activities against the Syrians and their allies in Lebanon—Even Dany Chamoun's people, who visited Israel very frequently, nonetheless maintained contacts with the Syrians. So too with the *Kata'eb.* Abu-Arz was unique in the singular choice he made. He put all his cards on Israel in sharp and clear opposition to the Syrians. The people who surrounded Abu-Arz were, therefore, exceptionally unusual and were willing to assume a big risk…
>
> We drew encouragement from the power of his love and friendship. Moreover, we loved him as a human being and felt close to his family…
>
> The Syrians were definitely after him, but he was completely devoid of fear. Rather, in his public expressions and speeches he was true to his way without any deviations. In this respect, Abu-Arz rose head and shoulders above the traditional Lebanese leadership, which failed to take a clear stand…
>
> Being in a minority was never a problem for him. He took it as a given that his positions would be the possession of a select few. He was not

> impressed by the political and economic power of other Lebanese leaders, whose questionable moral level and corruption were known to all. He could be satisfied with his small and pure shrine [the Guardians of the Cedars Party] that, he believed, would radiate the light of truth that one day would sweep through all of Lebanon…
>
> Abu-Arz was a friend of Israel…and the conscience of Lebanon. The combination of the two was not overlooked by both leaders and citizens [in Lebanon]. They didn't become supporters of Israel, but their hostility toward Syria was fortified.[11]

At the closing ceremony for the Israeli mission at Debayye, Abu-Arz chose not to address the gathering. Dany Chamoun said a few words, as did other Lebanese and Israelis present. For Abu-Arz this was a black day for both the Lebanese and the Israelis.

CHRISTIAN DIVISIVENESS AND SELF-DESTRUCTION

An intense concentration of political ills continued to debilitate the Lebanese central government, the Christian Lebanese community, and the south, through the decade of the 1980s. For Abu-Arz, these days had their ups and downs. He acquired a certain new standing: in touch with President Amin Gemayel, appointed as a member to the Lebanese Front, a more active participant in the Lebanese Forces in charge of Public Relations for the Executive Committee. As before, he was engaged in close cooperation with the Israelis. His position within the Lebanese political hierarchy remained precarious and his life, no less, always to some extent in danger. FellowMaronites and enemy Syrians were at times out to bring down Abu-Arz, a man of defiant independence and principle.

The death in January 1984 of Major Saad Haddad from Marj'ayoun, commander of the southern militia in alliance with Israel, created a vacuum demanding a strong replacement. Haddad had demonstrated determination and courage in protecting the security and autonomy of the civilian population that was molested, abused, plundered and murdered by raiding Palestinian terrorists in the area. But it was found that Haddad had cancer in an advanced stage, leading Israel to seek a reliable candidate while he was still alive. Israeli officials in the Beirut region asked Abu-Arz to find a good military officer, preferably from among his party's fighters, who could take command of the south. It is worth recalling that in 1976 President Franjiyyeh, through the commander-in-chief of the Army, Hanna Sa'id, had sent Saad Haddad to create order in the south, which was then under siege by the Palestinians.

Due to his acumen and contacts, Abu-Arz was approached by Israel concerning the situation in the south:

> General Meir Dagan came to my headquarters in Beirut, and we went to eat in Jouniya. Dagan said that 'we have a most serious issue to discuss

> because Major Haddad is going to die very soon. Israel wants an officer from among the Guardians.' But I didn't succeed in finding an appropriate person to go to the south. With the passing of Saad Haddad, there was no one commanding the 'security zone' in the south. The Israelis wouldn't have considered Sami Shidyak because, regardless of perhaps other reasons, Shidyak was involved with the Lebanese Forces which were very negatively disposed toward the south. In his day Bashir would not even shake hands with Saad Haddad, and Fouad Abu Nader, typical of the *Kata'eb,* was very hostile to the south. Indeed, the fact that the Israelis asked me to suggest a replacement for Haddad was proof that they didn't want someone from the Lebanese Forces.
>
> Later, Dany Chamoun proposed General Antoine Lahad, though at the time he was no longer serving in the Army. In Lebanon, everybody knows everybody. Lahad was a general, but the bad ones are often appointed and advanced. When Lahad became the commander of the Free Lebanese Army, its name under Saad Haddad, it became the Southern Lebanese Army. The change of name signified a weakening of the force and its fighting spirit, just as calling the area the 'security zone' [of Israel] further diminished and humiliated the identity and goals of the southern troops. Saad Haddad was a man with a cause, but not Lahad.

When Abu-Arz was unable to propose anyone to fill the position, Dagan went to speak to Dany Chamoun concerning the matter. Since the 1950s, the Chamounists had been historically the most influential political force among the Christians in the south. General Antoine Lahad, who apparently had a distinguished army career, was recommended to the post. Abu-Arz claims that Lahad was a weak person who, as commander in northern Lebanon in 1969, fled in the face of Palestinian provocation. When Franjiyyeh was President, Lahad was sent in the 1970s on a military mission to the Bekka and the area around Baalbek which also became subject to Palestinian penetration. Franjiyyeh called and told Lahad to fight, but the commander fled to the Ablah headquarters. From there Lahad went to Rayak, then to Beirut. After Lahad went to the south in 1984, Franjiyyeh later prophetically warned Abu-Arz: 'this man [Lahad] will flee one day, and abandon you too'.

Antoine Lahad accepted the Israeli offer to command the SLA. He related his version of events as follows:

> Dagan informed me that Israel wanted me to take command of the SLA. I went to ask Camille Chamoun for his views on this. Camille didn't express an opinion, but Dany told me to accept the post. I was then brought to Defense Minister Moshe Arens and told him that I agree, on condition that Israel has no ambition to take Lebanese land. Arens answered that 'we want peace and security'. I responded that 'this is good for everyone.'[12]

However, the role of Abu-Arz in this matter did not end with Lahad's appointment. Dagan told Etienne that the *South Lebanese Army,* now officially employing that name, needs someone to be responsible for political matters. Abu-Arz recalls: 'I called Caesar Sakr [no relation to Etienne] from Jbayl, a professor and editor of a French journal *Le Reveil,* proposing that he go to the south. He agreed and joined Lahad at Marj'ayoun. Lahad was an intriguer and instead of Caesar dealing with political issues, he was limited to advising Lahad on media issues.'

On the national plain of Lebanese affairs, there were hardly any brighter signs on the horizon. On 5 March 1984, the Lebanese parliament, subjected to Syrian terror, cancelled the 17 May Agreement. A week later, and again under the tutelage of Damascus, the Lausanne Conference for Lebanese Reconciliation convened, but no agreement among the Lebanese communities was reached. Beirut was in shambles as Shiites fought among themselves (Amal *versus* Hizbullah) and against Palestinians, and the Christians in the eastern part of the city fought to withstand Syrian encroachments.

In the mid-1980s, and in 1985 specifically, events were swift and brutal both militarily and politically. Four in particular deserve our attention along with the role that Abu-Arz played in their evolution.

1. Israeli military forces withdrew in April to a southern 'security zone' limited to 5–10 kilometers wide in Lebanese territory north of the Israeli border, running across the terrain from the Mediterranean Sea east to the Hermon mountains. The SLA assumed control of this zone in cooperation with the IDF. Israel's decision indicated that it had no direct interest or involvement in the political and broader military matters of Lebanon. Syria had won a strategic victory primarily by utilizing proxy Palestinian and Shiite forces to weaken Israel's resolve to play a major role as a foreign power in Lebanon. Every Israeli retreat was seen by Abu-Arz as a defeat for Israel and for the possibility of a free Lebanon.

2. The PLO armed presence in Sidon and eastward, in what is called *Sharq Sa'ida* or *Iqlim al-Kharrub,* was a grave threat to the safety and security of the Muslims and the Christians in the city and the surrounding area. The Shiite majority population and the traditional Sunni leadership complained for years about the Palestinians conducting an 'abusive neighborhood policy', using their arms and strong-handed tactics in ways that threatened the Lebanese character of Sidon. Local resentment provided fertile political soil for Muslims to join the Guardians of the Cedars. Abu-Arz considered the PLO responsible for generating Muslim-Christian sectarian tensions in the area when, in fact, the real war pitted the native Lebanese against the alien Palestinians. He would never agree to sending his fighters into combat against other fellow-Lebanese, unless the latter had allied with the aggressive foreign enemy and submitted wholly to its goals.

As early as 1982, Abu-Arz had decided to open a Guardians station in Maghdouche south of Sidon. In February 1983 a leaflet circulated in Sidon signed by the Cedar Revolutionaries which was addressed to 'the honorable sons

of Sidon' and called upon them 'to expel the outsiders from the land of Lebanon'. It was suspected in the Ein el-Hilweh Palestinian camp in Sidon that the leaflet had been authored by Abu-Arz' party. Then in 1985, combined forces of Hizbullah Shiites, Nasserites and Palestinians—all linked to non-Lebanese ideologies or foreign countries—carried out 'ethnic cleansing' of the Christian population. The Lebanese Forces under Samir Geagea came south, bombarded the Muslims of Sidon, but then left.

The relationship between Muslims and the Guardians of the Cedars Party was of a different quality: Muslim villagers from Arnoun and elsewhere in the area joined the party. Abu-Arz wondered whether Geagea's quick retreat was not part of a payoff by Rafiq Hariri, later to become prime minister, who financed the expansion and settlement of Sunnis in *Iklim al-Kharrub* in place of the fleeing Christians.[13] It is estimated that 50 Christian villages, among them Aabra, Bramiye, Majdalyoun and Qraiye, were overrun causing the removal of approximately 85,000 inhabitants. But there was hardly a real fight here; panic and abandonment were strong enough factors to catalyze the Christian civilians to adhere to the call of the Lebanese Forces that they leave.

Abu-Arz and his forces made a dramatic effort to stem the eroding state of affairs: 'We had our headquarters in Maghdouche. When the Christians fled the area I was in Beirut. I called Geagea; I also asked the Army to come south. In both cases there were no results. So I decided that the Guardians would act separately and alone. We had about 40 fighters "east of Sidon" including Tony Nassar and *Alloush.*'

Alloush vividly recalled:

> The Muslims of the area who joined our party were killed fighting the Palestinians and their Muslim allies in Sidon. Interestingly, those Muslims didn't join the *Kata'eb* or any other party except ours. They were the ones who led us into the Palestinian camps in the Sidon region.
>
> The Lebanese Forces was basically interested in making money—Geagea came south to the area, made a few comments and met with a few people, and left.
>
> Our 40 Guardian fighters left Maghdouche because the inhabitants were scared there would be war. They wanted us to leave, thinking maybe then the war would be avoided. We left in a northeasterly direction by foot to Lebaa. The *Tanzim Nasser* and Palestinians attacked us along the way.
>
> Following the orders of Abu-Arz, we were to get to Kfar Falous and fight to hold it. We continued trekking toward Jezzine, but yet every night we returned to Kfar Falous. The SLA also came and that was good. If the Palestinians could, they would have taken Jezzine.

Abu-Arz picks up the narrative:

I told the fighters to go on toward Jezzine because the inhabitants were fleeing in fright. The whole Christian region from Sidon to Jezzine was in a state of collapse. People were running south from Jezzine toward Marj'ayoun. I spoke with *Alloush* on the wireless and told him to shoot at anyone attempting to flee Jezzine for Kfar Houné, where there were some Lebanese Forces troops. By my orders from Beirut, we held Jezzine.

Then the SLA came there and joined the Guardian fighters. Lahad didn't save Jezzine: the Guardians did. According to the Israel/SLA defined southern 'security zone', Jezzine was excluded from it. But we saved Jezzine for a free Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Kfar Falous was threatened by the Palestinians and the Muslims affiliated with Sunni leader Mustafa Sa'ad. The SLA sent soldiers, among them Sharbel Barakat. General Lahad would later claim: 'I saved Kfar Falous and Jezzine.' But this is a lie. Because we [the Guardians] were in Kfar Falous, people returned to Jezzine from Marj'ayoun. Later we had a few hundred men in Sabbah, which is a few kilometers west of Jezzine, and they held Jezzine. This was done on my order. What counts in Lebanon is the individual and his personal initiative, not the government.

After this I began a campaign to save Jezzine politically. I went to President Amin Gemayel, to the Patriarchate at Bkerke, and to others. I called Suleiman Franjiyyeh and he sent a car to bring me to Zghorta to meet with him. I wanted him to give his support for Jezzine. Franjiyyeh told me that [deputy] Jean Aziz from Jezzine had been to see him. He continued: 'I called Walid Junblatt [Druze leader and head of the Lebanese National Movement] and said that if you touch Jezzine, you touch Zghorta.' Junblatt replied that 'he's not against Jezzine and that he wants it to remain Christian'.

Franjiyyeh continued: 'I called Nabih Berri [head of the Shiite Amal party]. I said the same to him about Jezzine and Zghorta. Berri answered: "No one will touch Jezzine". Meanwhile, Guardians member Tony Nassar became the SLA commander of the Jezzine area. Later he left and Raymond Abu Mirad took over. *Alloush* was a senior officer in the enclave. I told my men to enlist in the SLA and they served with distinction. They were the best fighters in the force.'

The events concerning *Iklim al-Kharrub,* Kfar Falous and Jezzine illustrate the dedication of Abu-Arz to his national ideals. With the available manpower at his disposal, he promoted interconfessional solidarity, national defense and an active military resistance against enemy forces. The scope of his concerns and involvement in Lebanese affairs was dictated by events, never by narrow party interests. Yet it appeared as if his efforts were rearguard actions in an incrementally decaying state of affairs. He might win a battle, but the war was steadily going from bad to worse.

3. After Bashir was killed in 1982, the Lebanese Forces experienced great difficulty in forging unity under a single leader(ship). With the election of Amin to the presidency, the Gemayel family was more or less compelled to hand over the reins of power of the Lebanese Forces. Fady Frem became the commander and Fouad Abu Nader, Amin's nephew, served as a senior officer. However, shortly after, the strong personalities and ambitions of Samir Geagea, military commander of the LF and Phalangist strongman from the northern mountain, and Elie Hobeika who was in charge of intelligence and security in the Beirut area, came to the fore. The LF, it should be recalled, was traditionally and ideologically bound to the vision of a Christian Lebanon, while the president of the republic—in this case Amin Gemayel—would accede presumably because of his national office to the broader conception of a multi-confessional country, but without denying Christian primacy. Yet Amin was unwilling to lose family-*Kata'eb* domination over the Lebanese Forces and for this purpose promoted his nephew Abu Nader to be the commander. Central to Amin's strategy was to expel Geagea from the *Kata'eb.*

Having weakened Amin's position in the bitter rivalry over control of the Lebanese Forces in March 1985, Hobeika and Geagea engaged their fighters in violent altercations thereafter. The Christian community characteristically failed to generate unity of purpose and leadership. Hobeika had come to represent an Arab-Syrian option, while Geagea maintained the vision of an autonomous Christian Lebanese society. In January 1986 Geagea succeeded in getting the military upper hand and took control of the Lebanese Forces, but not before hundreds of Christians had been killed in this internecine Maronite struggle for power.[14] Of related significance in this struggle was the fact that Geagea was identified with the Israelis though Hobeika, who previously trained in Israel, had moved toward collaboration with the Syrians.

Abu-Arz was generally present at the scene of these difficult days of *intifada* (uprising) on different fronts and was partially involved in the intra-Christian struggles. But the Guardians did not participate in the internecine fighting. The principle that guided Abu-Arz was that his men do not fight Christians or, for that matter, any Lebanese. He recalled:

> Geagea and Hobeika opposed Amin's control of the Lebanese Forces. While not directly involved, I agreed with their campaign against Amin on condition that no blood was spilled. Amin's rejection of the 17 May Agreement and his accommodation with Syria were intolerable.
>
> I knew Geagea from the late 1970s when I was in charge of the Akoura region for the Lebanese Forces and Geagea was in charge of Batroun; he had helped me then. Now Amin in the mid-1980s was in a weak position and the LF was in control of the Christian region [in the heart of Maronite Mount Lebanon],
>
> Together with Geagea, Hobeika and others we formed *al-Haya'at al-Tanfiziyya* (Executive Committee) with myself in charge of Public

Relations. But I saw that Geagea and Hobeika didn't get along, and I implored them not to fight each other. 'You'll destroy everything', I said to them. Then I left.

Once Geagea said to me that 'we should have a minimum of trust between us'. But I said to him in reply: 'there is no minimum of trust. Trust is 100 per cent or it is nothing'. I tried to mediate between Geagea and Hobeika, but I didn't succeed. The Christian community as a whole was being weakened.

At one point Geagea wrote a letter to Amin in which he commented that 'the *intifada* is yours'. This was a dark hint that Amin should take action against Hobeika. Then Hobeika gave word that he had the letter, which he got from Walid Junblatt. It seems that Amin had informed the Syrians of the contents of the letter to create the impression that the Christians are with him [the president]. This would strengthen Amin's political position. Perhaps the Syrians showed the letter to Junblatt, and Junblatt showed it to Hobeika. Meaning: Take Heed!

Then we had a meeting of the Lebanese Forces and Fady Frem said that we need to elect a chairman of the LF Executive Committee. The atmosphere was very tense. Frem was against Amin while Abu Nader expectedly was with him. Then Hobeika showed the letter to Pakradouni [senior *Kata'eb* personality close to Amin] and Geagea turned pale. He then admitted that he had written the letter. Frem took the lead and proposed Hobeika as head of the Executive Committee. Geagea raised his hand and immediately agreed.

Hobeika, under the influence of Michel Samaha and Michel Murr, agreed to go to the Syrians to make a deal that would bring an end to Syrian shelling of East Beirut. 'Israel is far away' noted Hobeika. He also sought to end the bitter and explosive intra-Christian rivalries by establishing himself, with Syria's assistance, at the political helm of the Christian community. It seemed that there was no alternative but to go to the Syrians.

I left the meeting for two reasons. First, I chose not to be a part of the very volatile situation which still existed between Hobeika and Geagea. And secondly, I was against any agreement with the Syrians.

Abu-Arz had over the years acquired a certain somewhat elusive public standing as the conscience of Lebanon. Both Sami Shidyak and Sharbel Barakat felt this, and conceivably many other people as well. He stood above the intra-Maronite and intra-Lebanese rivalries. When the *Kata'eb* and the *Ahrar* sent their men on boats from Jouniya to be trained in Israel, the two parties traveled separately in order to avoid any tension between them. It followed too that they also trained as distinct groups in Israel. But the *Herraas Al-Arz* fighters traveled and trained with everyone. They, elevated through the spirit and teaching of their leader, were at peace—or tried to be—with the different movements. Abu-Arz taught

and practised nonviolence among the native sons and daughters of the country. Meanwhile, his opposition to Syria was unflinching, while preserving a consistent bond of cooperation with Israel. Although public information or confirmation is unavailable, the Guardians were considered to have engaged in secret operations based on a conception of Lebanese-Israeli overlapping interests regarding the Assad regime in Syria.

In September 1985, Damascus worked out an agreement with Elie Hobeika of the Maronite Christian community, Walid Junblatt of the Druze community and Nabih Berri representing the Shiites, whose provisions included equalizing Christian-Muslim parliamentary representation and strengthening Lebanon's ties to Syria. But the Christians were overwhelmingly opposed to the agreement, which effectively reduced Lebanon to a Syrian satellite. The Sunnis, not actively represented in the deal, opposed it.[15]

Abu-Arz attempted to salvage whatever he could from the depressing situation:

> Hobeika sent Assad Shaftary to update me about the agreement. Then all the Maronite leaders, including Camille Chamoun, Geagea and Hobeika, went to Bkerke [the Patriarchate] to discuss it. Chamoun said: 'I don't trust the Syrians', and left. But Hobeika defended the agreement.
>
> I asked: 'Do the Syrians want to come into the Christian areas?' Hobeika responded:
>
> > 'I asked President Assad and he said "no". Moreover, Assad is ready to send Vice-President Khaddam to Bkerke to sign an appendix to the agreement stating that Syria would not enter the Christian areas. We cannot alter the original agree ment to include this point as then both Junblatt and Berri would demand equal consideration by Syria for their communal areas as well'.
>
> I felt good about this. Meanwhile I suspected Geagea was preparing something against Hobeika.

On 28 December, the Tripartite Agreement was signed in Damascus. The inter-communal accord did nothing, however, to assuage the intensity of the intra-Maronite Lebanese Forces struggle. Abu-Arz recalled:

> A few days later, while sleeping in Rabieh Marin at Tabarja north of Jouniya, I was awakened in the morning by the shelling of tanks. Hundreds of people were killed in this round of the Geagea-Hobeika *intifada.* Geagea's forces had the upper hand in this intra-Lebanese Forces war. There was a massacre!
>
> Hobeika, Shaftary and Michel Murr's son were surrounded by Geagea's men. I called Army Commander Michel Aoun to intervene and save Hobeika and his people in their headquarters in Qarantina. Aoun did this,

bringing Hobeika to the Defense Ministry, and then sending him to Zahle in the Bekka. Hobeika would stay there until 1990 when he returned to Beirut with the Syrians. Meanwhile, Geagea had taken control of the Lebanese Forces in 1986.

During this time, Camille Chamoun wanted to rebuild the Lebanese Front as a political decision-making body for the Christian community. George Saade of the *Kata'eb* Party invited Abu-Arz to join for the first time, now that he was perceived as a weightier factor than before in the political arena. Camille presided over the Front, with his son Dany, Edouard Honein, Geagea, Abu-Arz and a few others attending the meetings. According to Abu-Arz, the meetings were empty sessions with little concrete purpose or achievements.

One anecdote from the period tells of a particular visit by Lebanese Front members to President Amin Gemayel. Abu-Arz recalls that Chamoun, Geagea and others were present. It was an argumentative meeting, but then Amin said that 'he has good news to share with everybody: the statue of Pierre [his father who died in 1984], which he described in detail, arrived today from Italy'. The sculptor had even come with it to Lebanon. Abu-Arz thought to himself: 'I hope that somebody will blow it up.' He comments:

> There was an unveiling of the statue in Bikfayya, on a Sunday church-day where we all attended. This man Pierre Gemayel destroyed Lebanon. He destroyed the Christians, caused the massacre of the *Maradas* in Ehden and the *Ahrar* in Safra. He told Bashir not to cooperate with the Israelis and Amin not to sign the 17 May Agreement with Israel. He made war against the Druzes in the mountain. He was guilty of all this. Bashir had twice told me: 'My father told me to destroy the Guardians and you.' To kill the party is to kill me. And yet he, Pierre Gemayel, presented himself like a saint, he went to church.
>
> Amin is like his father. Bashir was 50 per cent like the father. But people know only the 50 per cent that is good, like the good of their uncle Maurice who was indeed a good man.
>
> Pierre, Amin and Bashir: the father, the son and the holy ghost.

THE SYRIAN TAKEOVER OF LEBANON

4. From 1975 until 1987, the fighting in Lebanon claimed a death toll of 62,000 people while approximately 1 million people left the country seeking refuge elsewhere. The events in the latter half of the 1980s provided the final *coup de grace* to any semblance of order and freedom in Lebanon. The Lebanese government under President Amin Gemayel and Prime Minister Rashid Karami was divided and increasingly paralyzed by conflicting views on policy toward the Syrians. The rising political power of the Shiites, as symbolized by their role in the Tripartite Agreement, along with their religious passion and increasing

presence in the southern Beirut neighborhoods particularly, offended the Sunnis and challenged their primary Muslim position. Fighting broke out between Amal and Sunni militiamen. An ostensibly odd instance in the maze of alliances led Phalangists, also menaced by Shiite social grievances and Khoumeini-style fanaticism, to sell Lebanese passports to the PLO in order that Palestinians return to fight the Shiites.[16] For this purpose Amin Gemayel met Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) in Tunisia in May 1986. While Syria supported the Amal militia, Christians hoped that Palestinians would effectively counter-balance the Shiite threat to the safety and integrity of their population.

In 1987 the deterioration and suffocation of Lebanon continued. The Syrians took military control over parts of West Beirut, partly as arbiter of communal conflicts, partly as foreign occupier. They extended their control to the upper Shouf in addition to their presence in the Bekka and the north of Lebanon. Major political personalities stepped off the stage: former Prime Minister Saeb Salam, opposing Syria's domination, went into exile in Switzerland; Camille Chamoun died; and Rashid Karami was assassinated. Meanwhile the Iranian ambassador in Beirut, a kind of proconsul for the Hizbullah militia, declared that the warriors of Islam would ultimately conquer the presidential palace at Baabda and bring down the flag of Lebanon.[17]

In these awful days of governmental collapse and street anarchy, Abu Arz introduced a drive for reform, security and honesty that expressed concern for the welfare of the people and their basic interests. He spoke in the forum of the Lebanese Front about widespread corruption that had to be torn from its roots. With the state apparatus in a moribund condition, the Lebanese Front assumed the mantle of political responsibility. With the authority of the Lebanese Front behind him, Abu-Arz set out in 1987–88 with a campaign 'to clean up Lebanon'.

His first target was the wealthy business class, much of whose activities were illegal and immoral to the core. He approached the Minister of Economics, Victor Kassir, about the need for on-the-spot inspection of goods stored in warehouses and food products whose expiry date was long past, but yet sold on the open market to unsuspecting customers. Abu-Arz went to the government inspectors, who were paid a salary for doing nothing, and also paid by the businessmen not to disclose their corrupt methods of altering the expiry date on old products:

> I told the inspectors to be at work at 8:00 a.m. I went out with them and gendarmerie forces to inspect big warehouses, after announcing in a press conference that my target was not small businesses, but especially big ones. My activities were covered on television and had an affect on the public. Thirty fines were issued by the Minister of Economics, due clearly to my initiative. We actually found workers in warehouses putting later expiry dates on spoiled food. I exposed this terrible corruption. Yet Kassir begged me to bring my campaign to a halt. In the warehouse of Amin Aour, we found ice-cream whose expiry date was 1983 being sold in 1987! These sudden spot checks were very effective. Of course, knowing this, some

> businessmen threw away spoiled goods before I showed up. In order to put an end to my campaign, I used to get telephone calls that businessmen wanted to meet and have coffee with me. Aware that this would be a venue to bribe me, I always refused to meet. Seeking contact with me via my friends was another maneuver I suspected.
>
> In the end, I reported with satisfaction of my work to the Lebanese Front. Later President Amin Gemayel called a high-level meeting, which included security and military officials, to inform me that he would take responsibility to continue the campaign which I had begun. Of course, I knew this would be the end of the campaign. But at least I proved that it is possible to reform Lebanon. You need a good leader with good will.

Next, Abu-Arz took on the bakeries racket. They received flour for free, but instead of providing good customer service to the public, the bakers sold much of their bread to Cyprus. People used to line up early in the morning outside the bakeries in Beirut and then be able to buy just very little bread. In 48 hours I solved the crisis. I went to the granaries and the bakeries and put an end to the trade with Cyprus. I ordered the bakeries to start work at 3:00 a.m. so that enough bread would be available for customers by 7:00 a.m.

Abu-Arz, Robin Hood and policeman rolled into one, continued with his efforts to affirm state authority, public order and good government. For one year he convened a Tuesday morning meeting of the gendarmerie, and sent the police forces to arrest people on the wanted lists. More than 120 were arrested as the Lebanese state reasserted and recovered some of its prerogatives. In a similar campaign on behalf of state legality, Abu-Arz took on the endemic plague of car theft. Using TV to publicize his efforts, he gathered dispersed files at the license bureau offices and transported them to the Lebanese Army. The files were computerized in order to improve the efficiency of surveillance methods. This story became very famous in Lebanon as the one-man-show of Etienne Sakr became legendary.

Hardly anything or anyone, it seemed, could stop the overall drift as the Christian community proved unable to extricate itself from its suicidal crash. In 1988, Amin Gemayel ended his term of office with no support or succor from any quarter, and soon left Lebanon for exile in Paris. Two separate confessional governments arose: one under Prime Minister Michel Aoun, Maronite Commander-in-Chief of the Army who had earlier commanded the Eighth Brigade which won a famous victory against Palestinian and Syrian forces at Souk el-Gharb in 1983, and another under Prime Minister Selim al-Hoss who was a pro-Syrian Sunni patrician politician. A persistent malaise attended the tension and rivalry dividing the Lebanese Forces under Samir Geagea and the Army (and government) under Michel Aoun. The Maronites were endlessly in a state of internal conflict.

Michel Aoun believed that his possession of legitimate constitutional authority endowed him with the right to incorporate the Lebanese Forces militiamen into

the Army and thereby fortify the central institutions of government. Geagea, claiming his responsibility toward the Christian ethos of Lebanon, refused to bow to the Prime Minister and Commander of the Army whose public appeal extended to Christians and Muslims alike. Fighting erupted between the sides in late 1988 continuing into 1989, while Aoun referred to the Phalangists, the essence of Geagea's Lebanese Forces, as nothing less than 'fascists and gangsters'. No small number of Christian Maronites apparently considered this defamation not far from the truth.

The Army proved stronger than the Lebanese Forces, which led Geagea to call upon Abu-Arz to intervene with General Aoun to refrain from sending his Special Forces against Geagea's headquarters. Geagea wanted to give the impression that he would more or less submit to Aoun. Abu-Arz recalls:

> The Lebanese Forces had lost to the Army in Monteverde and Beit Mery in the Matn region. Sami Shidyaq told me that they were in deep despair, to the extent of preparing to flee the country by sea. I went to Aoun with Geagea's message, which was one of submission on condition that the Army refrain from sending its special forces *Al-Maghaweer* to invade Lebanese Forces headquarters at Qarantina. Aoun asked me for my advice. I answered: 'When I carry a message, I am neutral. But if you ask what my opinion is, then I think you should overwhelm Geagea and absorb the Lebanese Forces fighters into the Army. There is no alternative to this.' Aoun, to his later dismay, rejected my advice.

General Aoun, nonetheless gaining confidence in this local confrontation, decided to wager on a broader field of conflagration. He was decidedly unsympathetic to Israel and outwardly hostile to Syria. In these somewhat dubious circumstances, he declared Lebanon's 'War of Liberation' in March 1989 against the occupying Syrian forces with the hope that, somehow, he could win the day. But before this struggle could assume the military proportions and nationalist form of an authentic uprising against a foreign occupier, the Syrians imposed a political realignment to subdue Lebanon under Damascus' rule.

On 22 October 1989, the Lebanese parliament meeting in the Saudi Arabian city of Taif endorsed an accord for 'national reconciliation'. The Lebanese deputies, who assembled under the auspices of the Syrians, the Saudis and the Americans, may not have sensed the historic significance of the site. The Lebanese prided themselves on the grandeur of their mountain and the urbanity of their culture in distinction from life among the wild desert Arabs. Traveler John Burckhardt, who visited Taif in 1814, found occasion however, to see a likeness between the picturesque scenery in the area of Taif and that in Lebanon. Yet the irony of the comparison is that the 'almost perpetual war against each other' which Arab tribes historically engaged in, as the European visitor reported, was the very malaise of Lebanon that produced the meeting in Taif in 1989.[18]

The Taif Accord defined Lebanon with 'Arab affinities and an Arab identity' while maintaining 'preferred relations with Syria'. This political terminology was conspicuously fatal to the special character of Lebanon across the Arab-Muslim region. Governmental reform measures to reduce the role of the Maronite president and elevate that of the Sunni prime minister substantiated it. Parliamentary representation would be divided evenly between Muslim and. Christian deputies eliminating the tradition since the National Pact of 1943 which granted the Christians majority control of the legislature. In addition, the Accord called for the restitution of Lebanese sovereignty over the entire country, though the withdrawal of Syrian forces within two years to the Bekka area was an empty clause forgotten thereafter. Michel Aoun, not having participated in the crawl to Canossa, rejected the Taif Accord in pursuit of the liberation of Lebanon. Yet, Samir Geagea and George Saade of the Phalangists, and Suleiman Franjiyyeh in the north, were willing to accept it. Abu-Arz, needless to say, reviled the thought that Lebanon would accept the humiliating status of a Syrian vassal.

For Abu-Arz, choosing between Aoun and Geagea was only necessary because there was no third option. Aoun had at least adopted an antiTaif position. Despite the incoherence in his ability to make rational decisions, the seamier sides of the *Kata'eb* prevailed in the choice Abu-Arz made.

On 5 November Damascus orchestrated, along with the Saudis and the Americans, the 'election' to president of René Moawad from Zghorta in the northern coastal town of Qlaiaat. He, however, proved uncooperative with the Syrians by refusing to take action against Michel Aoun. Just 17 days after assuming office, explosives ripped through the car of Moawad and others in his entourage killing him and 22 other people.

Abu-Arz was fully aware of the Syrian intervention in Lebanese political affairs and of those Lebanese collaborating, or willing to collaborate, with Damascus:

> Syrian Vice-President Khaddam immediately ordered the Lebanese parliamentary speaker Hussein Husseini to install a new president within 24 hours. Husseini phoned Albert Mansour, the Minister of Defense, to propose a Maronite candidate and suggested Pierre Helou, wondering whether the Syrians would accept him. Husseini told Mansour to go to Damascus to convince the Syrians to accept Helou, but Helou himself rejected the idea of his own candidacy fearing that he would be assassinated like Moawed. The Syrians in fact accepted Helou's candidacy, but to no avail. Mansour was at that time in Paris.
>
> In the meanwhile, Elias Hrawi left his native city of Zahle for Damascus, met with Assad and put himself under his authority. The matter was settled. The following day Husseini, Mansour and the Baathist Jean Obeid came to Khaddam's office in order to market the Obeid candidacy, but it was too late. Khaddam informed them that 'Abu-Basil (President Assad) had

already met with 'Abu-George' (Hrawi), and that Hrawi would be the next President of Lebanon.

Phony elections were arranged by General Ghazi Kanaan, Syria's master of intelligence services in Lebanon, at the Park Hotel in Shtaura. After Moawad's murder, Hrawi would be docile and obedient.

In fact, the Syrians kept Hrawi in power beyond the six-year term (1989–95), by having the Chamber of Deputies pass an amendment to allow the president to extend his term of office. Eventually Assad removed Hrawi in 1998. Meanwhile, the dramatic events pertaining to the political problematics of General Aoun's situation in 1989–90 did not subside, but assumed greater tension and risk:

Most of the Army sided with Aoun against Geagea, and against the Syrians. People actually hated the Lebanese Forces for their arrogance and abusive treatment no less of the Christians in their residential areas. When Geagea would intermittently get the upper hand with the Army, which was not at all unusual in the ongoing skirmishes, the Forces would then impudently cut-off water and electricity supplies to those who had supported General Aoun. Aoun was very popular with the people because he was against the Lebanese Forces and, of course, against the Syrian occupation. Tens of thousands of people gathered at Aoun's headquarters at the presidential palace, which was popularly named *Qasar al-Shaab* (the Castle of the People). I was at the palace almost every day. People slept there for weeks. They liked Aoun but hated the Lebanese Forces (of which I was the political godfather and founded in 1976).

When the Syrians fired their cannons into East Beirut, the people took refuge in shelters. But even all that suffering did not deny Aoun the public support he enjoyed. He said he wanted to smash the head of Hafez el-Assad. But he couldn't win. His War of Liberation became a War of Destruction.

After the Taif Accord, Aoun thought he wouldn't be elected president. Syria was naturally against him. I went to Aoun at the presidential palace at Baabda, which he had taken over [unwilling to vacate it despite Hrawi ordering him to leave]. He agreed that he should open a link with Israel. This came after he and the Americans found themselves at cross-purposes; the Americans had supported Taif, which Aoun opposed. Aoun had organized popular demonstrations which virtually forced the American ambassador out of Beirut. But this would have bad consequences.

I told Aoun that after the debacle with Amin Gemayel, the Israelis didn't trust the Lebanese. Yet he agreed with me to nonetheless begin a dialogue with them, but by then the Israelis refused. I sent a committee to Cyprus to contact the Israelis and they then agreed to deal with Aoun. He was pleased with this, and I helped by serving as the conduit for cable communication

> between the Israelis and Aoun. I then organized a direct communication post for him to Israel. But Aoun proved unreliable and severed ties with Israel.

More problems were on the way.

> The Lebanese Front had already collapsed against the background of the Geagea-Aoun confrontation. George Saade from the Lebanese Forces-Phalangists took over the Front in the name of the traditional leadership, while I lined up with Aoun under the leadership of Dany Chamoun. Dany and I were at Baabda. Thousands of people came to the palace and provided a human shield to prevent the Syrians from destroying or capturing it. It was a spectacle of popular enthusiasm with a readiness to sacrifice one's life for a free Lebanon.
>
> While Aoun conducted the war against the Lebanese Forces and the Syrians, I formed the *Broad Front for Liberation and Change* on behalf of the Lebanese Front. Its purpose was to provide a political cover for Aoun's military struggle. Every few days we held a meeting with him at Baabda. We knew that Geagea would sooner or later attack Aoun's forces, but Aoun didn't believe this. He didn't understand that Geagea practised *batiniyya*—secret dissimulation against an adversary. I was opposed to intra-Christian fighting, but Geagea had to be stopped. An attack by the Army against Lebanese Forces HQ would have done the job. But Aoun didn't understand this, and waited.

Aoun is portrayed as lacking political knowhow and being limited to the symbolic power of his military position which evoked broad appeal. Had he relied more on the judgment of Abu-Arz, he might have forged the domestic unity and foreign support his 'War of Liberation' so lacked. Later the Lebanese Forces of Samir Geagea attacked the troops of General Aoun. In October 1990 they would coordinate their offensive with Syrian forces. It is important to appreciate that the LF from 1980 in particular had been weaned on a disparaging and rather hostile view of Lebanese state institutions. The Army had not liberated an inch of Lebanese soil from the Syrians, but had confronted the LF on various occasions to diminish its independent militia status. The Forces had no less opposed Amin Gemayel as president in this regard. When Aoun became prime minister and assumed the pose of president, at the same time serving as Commander of the Army, the LF felt threatened and taken aback. A decade's residue of Army-Lebanese Forces bad feeling and fighting took its toll.

Hanna Atiq *(Hanoun),* from his exile in the United States, confessed years later to Abu-Arz that he regretted the Lebanese Forces war against Aoun. He considered it 'the most awful thing we did in our lives'. *Hanoun,* whom Sami Shidyak said was worth a whole battalion just on his own, had commanded the LF elite Israel-trained *Al-Sadem* force. He levelled major responsibility for the basically intra-Christian Army-Forces war on the shoulders of Aoun. In his view,

it had been unacceptable that Abu-Arz and Dany Chamoun, whose parties were part of the Lebanese Forces, should side with Aoun in the conflict. He did recognize the positive efforts of Abu-Arz in trying to bring about reconciliation between Geagea and Aoun, efforts designed to prevent further bloodshed and bring about peace.[19]

The Lebanese Forces had acquired a horrific reputation among many Christians in Lebanon. During the days of the mass vigils at Baabda Palace in support of Aoun, the demonstrators would sometimes go out and try to awaken ever-greater support for their cause. Demonstrators even went to the Shiites in the southern Beirut neighborhood of Shiah and to the PPS stronghold at Dhour Shweir. But the Lebanese Forces actually shot the people on the roads, killing children in cold blood, in their savage war against Michel Aoun and the Army. More than once, the Lebanese Forces showed that they were willing to kill Christians without regret. Joseph Tawk, Guardians devotee and archivist and, like Geagea, from Bsharre, related that Geagea's mother had once said of her son Samir: 'if the Christians don't accept him by love, then they'll accept him by force'.

Abu-Arz, who had escaped with his life and dignity throughout countless menacing moments, found himself targeted by Samir Geagea. The historic *Kata'eb* animosity against him was real enough. An Israeli with an insider's knowledge of Maronite rivalries confirmed that the Gemayel party had over the years wanted to kill Abu-Arz.[20] Perhaps out of respect for the man and his principles, they refrained from doing so. But matters came to a head in late January 1990 with the full outbreak of the Christian Civil War, with all its idiocy and ferocity, between the forces of Aoun and Geagea. Abu-Arz relates:

> The Lebanese Forces came to the Guardians headquarters and to my home. Really they came to kill us. I disarmed my men who were on the roofs in order to avoid bloodshed. We were only a few in number and if shooting began, we would all be killed. In such situations the danger is in the first two minutes. The LF took some party leaders to the Front's headquarters and imprisoned them for a week.
>
> I was under house arrest with my family for about a month. The Forces cut off my communications with the outside world. They took my party files [which following Syria's dismantlement of the LF in the early 1990s ended up in Syrian hands]. Uri Lubrani [Israel's Coordinator for Lebanese Activities] warned Geagea not to harm me or the Guardians. We had been faithful to Israel.
>
> I then became ill and was taken to St George's Hospital in Ashrafiyyeh. Geagea sent his men to make a deal with me. I was forced to hand over the party to a committee of four, which in effect meant that Geagea took over the Guardians. I was to make a statement to the Lebanese Broadcasting Network and leave Beirut.

> In the spring of 1990 I left Beirut for Jouniya, sailed to Cyprus, and then proceeded to Israel. I was invited to a dinner organized on my behalf at the Dan Hotel in Tel-Aviv which was attended by a number of senior Israeli officials. Soon thereafter I returned to Lebanon at Marj'ayoun in the south, visited my home village Ayn Ebel, and then traveled to my party headquarters at Sabbah near Jezzine.

Abu-Arz had been helpless in the confrontation with Geagea, while Aoun's situation proved no less hopeless in the face of a joint Lebanese Forces-Syrian coalition against his Army. Both Geagea and Hobeika coordinated with the Syrians. Aoun tried to get help from the Iraqis because they were in conflict with the Syrians. At the same time, world and regional attention was focused on the Persian Gulf crisis concerning Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, and America's military preparation in concert with its Arab allies to confront Saddam Hussein's aggression. The United States succeeded in having Syria line up with the coalition forces against Iraq.

Michel Aoun explained his ultimate defeat not by his own political miscalculations and inadequate strategic thinking. Rather, he identified the coalition of forces that opposed him: the United States, Syria and Israel. Geagea was therefore just an executor of the decisions taken by others, and accordingly, the conflict with Geagea could not be effectively resolved with him because more powerful forces were actually deciding matters. Of course, this interpretation of events, though far from being divorced from the realities, militates Aoun's failure by casting the adversaries in dark and awesome colors. Concerning Israel, Aoun confirmed that Lubrani had articulated his country's policy as being opposed to Aoun, but not to Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. There is clearly a ring of truth surrounding this charge.[21]

Abu-Arz, although not at Baabda in Aoun's final and futile days, was able to convey the following narrative:

> The Americans finished off General Aoun. They got Geagea to open fire on the Baabda Palace and two days later were behind the Syrian invasion on 13 October. The US ambassador in Tel-Aviv told Uri Lubrani that Washington wanted Aoun out. The ambassador asked Israel to let Syrian warplanes bomb Baabda, and not interfere. Israel, yet, wanted to see the Christian enclave [north of Beirut and into the Maronite heartland] saved as an Israeli interest.
>
> Aoun held a press conference and attacked Israel. He even made anti-Semitic remarks against the Jewish people. Lubrani responded and told Aoun that he was 'digging his own grave'. Israel maintained aerial surveillance over Beirut, but then let Syria bomb from the air. A convent was hit. In fact, an Israeli aircraft flew above the Syrian one and allowed it to carry out this one aerial sortie. Aoun saw both aircraft and concluded that both Israel and Syria were against him. But this was not the case.

Aoun's military resistance collapsed in the face of Syrian aerial, artillery and rocket fire on his eastern region, the Baabda Palace and the Ministry of Defense at Yarze in Beirut. He told his soldiers to join the Lebanese Army commanded by Emile Lahoud. Some of his soldiers fought, others surrendered to the Syrian invaders—but were then executed in cold blood and their bodies mutilated. The massacre at Dahr al-Wahsh became the barbaric symbol of Syria's conquest.[22]

Abu-Arz was aware that Elie Hobeika with *Cobra,* his bodyguard, collaborated with the Syrians. Yet Hobeika saved some Christian lives. The Syrians wanted to harm Aoun's family, but *Cobra* and Hobeika protected them.

Aoun stayed alive, was whisked off to the French Embassy in Beirut, then to political exile in Paris. Dany Chamoun, who like Abu-Arz had supported Aoun, was less fortunate: on 21 October he, with his wife and two children, were murdered in cold blood in their home. Presumably the Syrians, perhaps with Phalangists like Hobeika or Geagea as accomplices, added another name to their Lebanese 'hit list'. The similarity between the horrific family murder of Tony Franjiyyeh committed in 1978 with the family murder of Dany Chamoun in 1990 does cast suspicion on one particular person.

Abu-Arz concluded this chapter of his recollections with the words: 'we lost everything due to the Aoun-Geagea war'. In those destructive years of 1989–90, 150,000 Lebanese fled the country. The resistance struggle was buried before it could become a true national revolution. In his day Trotsky, the Russian communist who was expelled from the party and then banished from his country, concluded that his archenemy Stalin had become 'the grave-digger of the revolution'. The communist revolution became the incarnation of terror by a totalitarian dictatorship. Trotsky charged that Marxism was debased into Stalinism.

Abu-Arz was defamed, marginalized and ultimately forced out of Beirut. Thanks to Israel and the South Lebanese Army commanded by General Antoine Lahad, he was able to go live in the south at Jezzine. Would that be his Siberia before exile? His fellow Maronite leaders had all but eliminated him more than once, while Geagea had purged him from the Lebanese Forces. He survived while the national resistance not only descended into a virtual dictatorship, but dissolved and died. Instead of flowering into a full revolution of democratic institutions and national unification, the resistance deteriorated into terror and murder.

The war that erupted in 1975 was, as discussed earlier, not a civil war but one essentially between Lebanese on one side, and Palestinians and Syrians on the other. But if there was truly a civil war, it was without doubt the intra-Lebanese/intra-Maronite war among the brothers. Fathers fought sons when one was in the Lebanese Forces and one served in the Army. Friends, one of whom joined the Army and another the Forces, met on the battleground. A story was told of a mother who lost four sons in the space of a few weeks, two from each warring side. It is incomprehensible to fathom the depth of unrestrained savagery that animated the Christian community in particular, when the struggle for power

between Geagea and Aoun touched off a certain psychic mechanism where the ground of love erupts in an earthquake of hatred. Considering the seeming irrational and unnecessary aspects of the case, along with its tragic consequences, nothing had been as terrible as the Army-Lebanese Forces war of 1989–90 since the country had descended into violent turmoil in 1975.

6

Banishment and Betrayal in South Lebanon, 1990–2000

The Syrian occupation of emaciated and fatigued Lebanon became in the decade of the 1990s the political consummation of many years of intensive penetration of institutional political power and national cultural levers by the Baathist regime of Hafez el-Assad. The primary dimension of domination was based in the military and security domain, by over 30,000 Syrian troops, an intelligence network spread throughout society, the demotion of the Lebanese Army, and the use of arbitrary arrests, assassinations and torture as brutal methods to subdue Lebanon to the iron-fist rule of Damascus. The Syrians stood behind the assassination of Kamal Junblatt in 1977 and that of Bashir Gemayel in 1982. They had attempted to assassinate Pierre Gemayel in 1979, which left him slightly injured. In 1980 there was an assassination attempt against Camille Chamoun, and another failed attempt at eliminating Bashir which left his baby daughter Maya and three others dead in Ashrafiyyeh. The Sunni Mufti of Lebanon, Hassan Khaled, was murdered in a car explosion in West Beirut in 1989. Samir Geagea was imprisoned in 1994 on charges of bombing a church in Jouniya. In the same year, a Lebanese court doing the will of Syria sentenced Abu-Arz *in abstentia* to 15 years imprisonment on a charge of 'collaboration with Israel'. Hundreds of Lebanese, primarily political opponents of Syria among whom many Lebanese Forces personnel and a large number of officers and soldiers belonging to General Aoun, were abducted and disappeared, ending up in Anjar in the Bekka or Mezze prison in the Syrian capital—and never heard from again.

Syria emasculated and dominated the political domain in Lebanese affairs by creating a puppet Beirut government and manipulating the facade of democratic elections. Syria had forced the removal of the Shiite Speaker of parliament, Kamel el-Assa'ad, grandson of his namesake from the post-World War I events in southern Lebanon, who had approved of the 17 May Agreement, and replaced him with Hussein Husseini who accommodated Syria's tyrannical rule. In May 1992, the Treaty of Brotherhood, Coordination and Cooperation was concluded between Syria and Lebanon, with 14 spin-off accords, that solidified the 'integration' of the two countries and established 'joint-decision-making' as the euphemism for Lebanese subjugation as a Syrian protectorate. The choice by Assad of Elias Hrawi for president in 1989 demonstrated the political neutralization of the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies, which constitutionally

chooses the president of the republic. Syrian Colonel Ghazi Kanaan compelled Omar Karami and his bloc of deputies from Tripoli to humiliate themselves as 'Lebanese' parliamentarians and vote for the extension of Hrawi's term of office, for three extra years until 1998.

With the loss of its independence, Lebanon was on the road to losing its national character. Over 1 million Syrian workers were said to have flooded the Lebanese manual job market which set off rising unemployment rates and social impoverishment. Many Lebanese left their country in desperation, fear and frustration. Newspapers were muzzled and censorship a constant threat, and often an active policy. The assassinations of journalists Selim al-Lowzi, a Sunni, and Riyad Taha, a Shiite, paralyzed the media from serving, as it had in the past, as a beacon of freedom of speech in liberal Lebanon. In the school system, texts propagated the Arabization of Lebanon while depicting Israel as the mortal enemy of the country. Lebanon was stripped of its freedom and its soul.[1] Amnesty International concluded in a report from November 1997 that human rights in Lebanon were extensively violated despite the end of the war in 1990.[2] President Assad, whose picture posters adorned security posts in Lebanon, urged the Lebanese to naturalize 500,000 Syrians in Lebanon as a central mechanism to denaturalize Lebanon through Syrian colonization and Islamic (Shiite) conquest. War ended in 1990, but a vicious foreign occupation took hold.

Abu-Arz had used the image of the 'raper and the rapist' and the phraseology of the 'occupation of souls' *(ihtilal al-nufus)* in describing the Arab *anschluss* of Lebanon since 1975. His comment that the occupied population copies the politics, consciously or unconsciously, of the occupiers points to the psychological dynamic for personal collaboration by the Lebanese with the Syrians. The pattern of native accommodation with the foreign enemy arose among a stratum of the Lebanese elites who provided a cloak of legitimacy to Syrian occupation and the ostensible normalization of its political conduct. President Emile Lahoud and Minister of the Interior Michel Murr from the Christian camp, Rafiq Hariri, Selim al-Hoss and Nabih Berri from the Muslim camp, were some of the prominent political figures who swam with the tide of Syrian hegemony. Distant from home were the well-known Maronite leaders in exile, especially Amin Gemayel, Michel Aoun and Raymond Eddé.

Abu-Arz, remaining in Lebanon in 1990 and for the full decade there after, stood out as a pillar of steadfastness in the volatile events that disrupted the lives of people and transformed the politics of the country. He rejected the disdain of Vichy-style collaboration in Beirut or exile, but with some pomp and plush, in Paris. Instead he set up his Lebanese headquarters in the south of the country.

The Guardians of the Cedars maintained three buildings in Sabbah situated a few kilometers west of Jezzine, for Abu-Arz, a secretary, and the bodyguards. About 1,050 meters above sea level, the winters were extremely cold with heavy snowfalls. Daily living was difficult. Abu-Arz' tenacity, and his staunch commitment to symbolize rejection of the Syrians, gave him the strength to continue. He acted like a soldier and went on patrols and ambushes at night with

SLA units that his own Guardian fighters had joined to defend the area.[3] He took long walks in the mountains for leisure purposes with an entourage of at least five bodyguards.

The political activities of Abu-Arz were the essential part of his stay in the Jezzine enclave. The party issued a weekly statement which was published until 1995 and broadcast in the Beirut media. He held a monthly meeting of the heads of Guardians cells in the southern region to study the fundamental question of how to remain in Lebanon despite the oppression of Syrian rule and the precarious character of Israel's presence. From 1993–98, the party published a monthly magazine called the *Melkart Review,* in which Abu-Arz and others set forth their ideas on the subjects of politics, history and literature. He read extensively about Maronite history during the years at Sabbah. In addition, he later recalled three books by Israelis and about Israel that he enjoyed: *A Place Among the Nations: Israel and the World* by Binyamin Netanyahu, *Warrior: The Autobiography of Ariel Sharon,* and *The Last Option: After Nasser, Arafat and Saddam Hussein—The Quest for Peace in the Middle East* by David Kimche. Netanyahu's book made a particularly strong impression with its vibrant message of Jewish tenacity and call for Israeli strength. Beyond this, he like the majority of the Christian Lebanese had great admiration for Ariel Sharon.

Jezzine had a problematic status in regard to the security concerns of Israel and the SLA. In principle, the Jezzine enclave was the responsibility of the SLA alone, even though IDF units and outposts were in the vicinity. Abu-Arz wrote position papers in which he analyzed the geo-strategic importance of the area in the broader military context between Israel and Syria. His goal was to convince the Israelis to support the enclave, likewise to maintain a military presence generally in the south, as a permanent policy commitment.

At times, Abu-Arz would visit his family home which he had renovated in Ayn Ebel. When asked if he felt that he should stay in Ayn Ebel permanently, and set up party headquarters there in as much as it was his native village, he replied:

> As a national leader I don't feel in my heart differently for one village than for others. As a Lebanese, every village is mine. I felt for Beit Mallat or Mazraat El-Mathanni [which are Maronite], or Qaa [which is Catholic], or Kalmoun [which is Sunni] as my own village. The feeling is the same for all. There is no difference between one village and another. I was in Jezzine because it was the front-line of the battle at the time [the northern-most point beyond Israel's southern 'security zone'].

An important part of Abu-Arz' role in the south was receiving visitors, especially on the weekend. Christians, Muslims and Druzes came from Beirut to see him. The Druzes controlled the road south through the Shouf to Jezzine, but they were sympathetic to Jezzine and its Christian population. The Druzes knew that Abu-Arz had opposed the Mountain War of 1983 that the Phalangists had initiated

against them. For such visits, the Guardians put up a big tent and entertained some 30 people for lunch. The visitors from the north said they 'came to breathe freedom in Jezzine' in contrast to the suffocating atmosphere of Syrian occupation in Beirut. The Sakr family, Etienne's wife Alexandra and his two daughters Pascale and Carol, also traveled to see him. His son Arz was living nearby at Bkassine.

A visitor of a special character came to Abu-Arz in 1991 from the capital. This was Claude Hajjar whose tale begins with a firm belief in the fundamental right of Lebanon to assert its full independence. She was herself an Aounist 'who took orders only from the General', who was living in Paris. Abu-Arz had himself visited Michel Aoun around this time:

> I met Aoun in Marseilles [which tradition holds the ancient Phoenicians founded and whose name is composed of two Lebanese words: *Marsa* meaning harbor and *El* the name of the Phoenician god.] I asked two things of him. One, for money to buy radio equipment, establish a station, and thereby broadcast to Beirut in order to motivate the Lebanese crushed under Syrian oppression. And two, that he come to Jezzine, rally the people, and raise the morale of our struggle for resisting the Syrians. On both counts the answer was 'no'.

Aoun apparently believed, naively as it turned out, that he and his sympathizers would soon be back in Beirut. He also refrained from identifying publicly with Israel, and this reason too led him to reject the requests of Abu-Arz.

Claude Haj jar, aware of the Guardians within the amalgam of Lebanese affairs, became curious about the party and its leader. She questioned her mother, who spoke of the patriotism and nobility of Abu-Arz. Her older sister commented wryly about his fault: that because of his love for Lebanon, he never cared to be seen publicly or take credit for what he had done: 'Instead of working for others to lead the country, he should have concentrated on himself. No one knew better than he did the history, geography, and strategic aspects of this country.'

An opportunity arose coincidentally soon thereafter which facilitated Claude visiting Abu-Arz in Sabbah.[4] A doctor friend was traveling south from Beirut to his native village and she approached him about whether he knew of Abu-Arz. Astonished, he replied: 'What? If I ever heard of Abu-Arz?' he replied laughingly, and continued: 'If I ever think of spending my week-ends in my village, it's only because I can breathe some oxygen from Abu-Arz—I adore this man.'

The trip to the south passed uneventfully with no security complications. Claude's detailed narrative is personal, informative and vibrant:

> What seemed like an eternity finally came to an end when the gates of his quarter opened in Sabbah, Jezzine. Ten minutes later we were inside Abu-

> Arz' living room, waiting for him to enter. His living room and dining room were poorly equipped: the dining room was furnished with plastic chairs and a big plastic table, while his living room consisted of long sofas, old and worn. I mean, I literally felt the springs under my buttocks! The walls were all decorated with pictures of Guardian martyrs and party slogans. It was the poorest and at the same time the most impressive house I have ever visited.
>
> At last, Abu-Arz entered the room and greeted everyone. After we were formally introduced, they all started chatting. While everyone was talking, I kept staring at this man. A man with such charisma and humbleness at the same time, that one couldn't help but wonder if this was his true face. As the people were talking, they questioned him about the general situation in Lebanon. He started explaining, starting from the very beginning of the war to that present day [in 1991], how/why things went wrong and how the whole situation would change. His entire outlook and explanation rested upon Lebanese history, geography and theology.
>
> He explained everything in such a simple way that it was hard, even for a child, not to understand. I asked him why he made things so simple while others make matters seem so complicated. And he answered: The truth is always simple and only lies are complicated.'
>
> I realized that this was the first time in my life that I met a leader who knows how to listen without interrupting anyone, and knows how to speak to people.
>
> [Regarding the war in Lebanon, Abu-Arz said] 'All the wars are made by outsiders, each one for different reasons and interests…but wars do not take place if there aren't leaders from within that permit the wars to occur; in other words, traitors'.

Claude found in Abu-Arz what was lacking in General Aoun. Yet Aoun was her hero. She became confused, she cried.

> Tears were running down my face and I couldn't do anything to stop them. He [Abu-Arz] looked at me but didn't say a word! I believe he knew the reason from the very first moment—At the end of the long night of talking and discussing, the people there kept repeating the whole time that 'only a man like Abu-Arz can save this country'.

The wisdom and simplicity of Abu-Arz had left Claude awed, but also sleepless and crying all night.

In the morning she discussed with Abu-Arz the stalemate condition of Lebanon that, perhaps, had brought her to Sabbah. Aoun, as mentioned, believed that he and the émigrés would soon return to Lebanon. He was also emphatic in rejecting any ties with Israel. Abu-Arz explained to Claude that there was no reason to suspect Israeli intentions toward Lebanon. Israel seeks neither her

'territories nor resources'. The ties between Lebanon and Israel had been, he added, strong since the beginning of history. Moreover:

> if they [the Israelis] had the slightest intention to harm anything that belongs to us, I will be the first Lebanese to strike back and confront them, like we did with the Palestinians and the Syrians in 1975. think Aoun knows this or at least should know it by now, and if unfortunately he doesn't, then what kind of leader does that make him?

Abu-Arz wanted Aoun finally to make his peace with Israel. Claude, for her part, was offended by the idea that Aoun somehow didn't have a grasp of the political situation, and gave voice to her conviction that Aoun did not understand the situation any less than Abu-Arz. He remained calm in the face of her frustration and merely said: 'Inshallah [let it be God's will].'

The fact that Etienne Sakr was in south Lebanon, while Michel Aoun was in distant France, anticipated the strong sense of urgency and need to act. And although his resources and freedom of action were certainly limited, Abu-Arz never ceased seeking the key to change the dismal situation.

Claude Hajjar returned to Beirut and reflected on her experience in Sabbah. Both captivated and curious about the Guardians' leader, she made her way back to Sabbah five days later to report to Abu-Arz. She returned 'to him and his closest companions…the martyrs and freedom'. That night back in Sabbah she heard Abu-Arz berate one of his men, yelling at him at 11:00 p.m. just because the man had not yet eaten his dinner. Claude was amazed 'how a man like Abu-Arz, carrying all the country's problems on his shoulders, still looks out and worries about simple details'. Before leaving in the morning, Abu-Arz presented her with two bags, one with fresh eggs and the other a bottle of pure honey. The first time they met Claude mentioned to him that her daughter Jennifer was anemic: 'He gave me the eggs and honey especially for her.'

Within a period of time, Claude came to the conclusion that many leaders in Lebanon sought popularity, but Abu-Arz sought the good of Lebanon and not his own good. She became a Guardian and devoted to Abu-Arz, but that meant being loyal to Lebanon 'and not just loyal to the man himself'.

Claude Hajjar once asked Abu-Arz why he prays before writing and releasing a statement. He answered: 'my family, my friends and my militant Guardian members are in Beirut under Syrian control. So I pray to God to give me the strength and courage to write down the truth and to name things as they really are; not to weaken my hand thinking of the severe consequences that certain people might have to bear.' A real man, or a real leader, is always one who acts despite a danger or a dilemma that can otherwise paralyze all action.

Living in the Jezzine area, Abu-Arz would travel south to Marj'ayoun, Deir Mimas and Ayn Ebel to meet with party members and other acquaintances. But he also traveled twice to Beirut in 1992–93, to see family and friends, even though he did so at considerable personal risk. He went disguised as a priest on

the second trip. When approaching Khalde south of Beirut, a Syrian checkpoint awaited travelers. Joseph, who served as Abu-Arz' personal bodyguard, knew of a small road by which to avoid the post. But along this way Syrian security personnel in civilian clothing stopped the car. Danger lurked, but was diverted from Abu-Arz in a moment of grace:

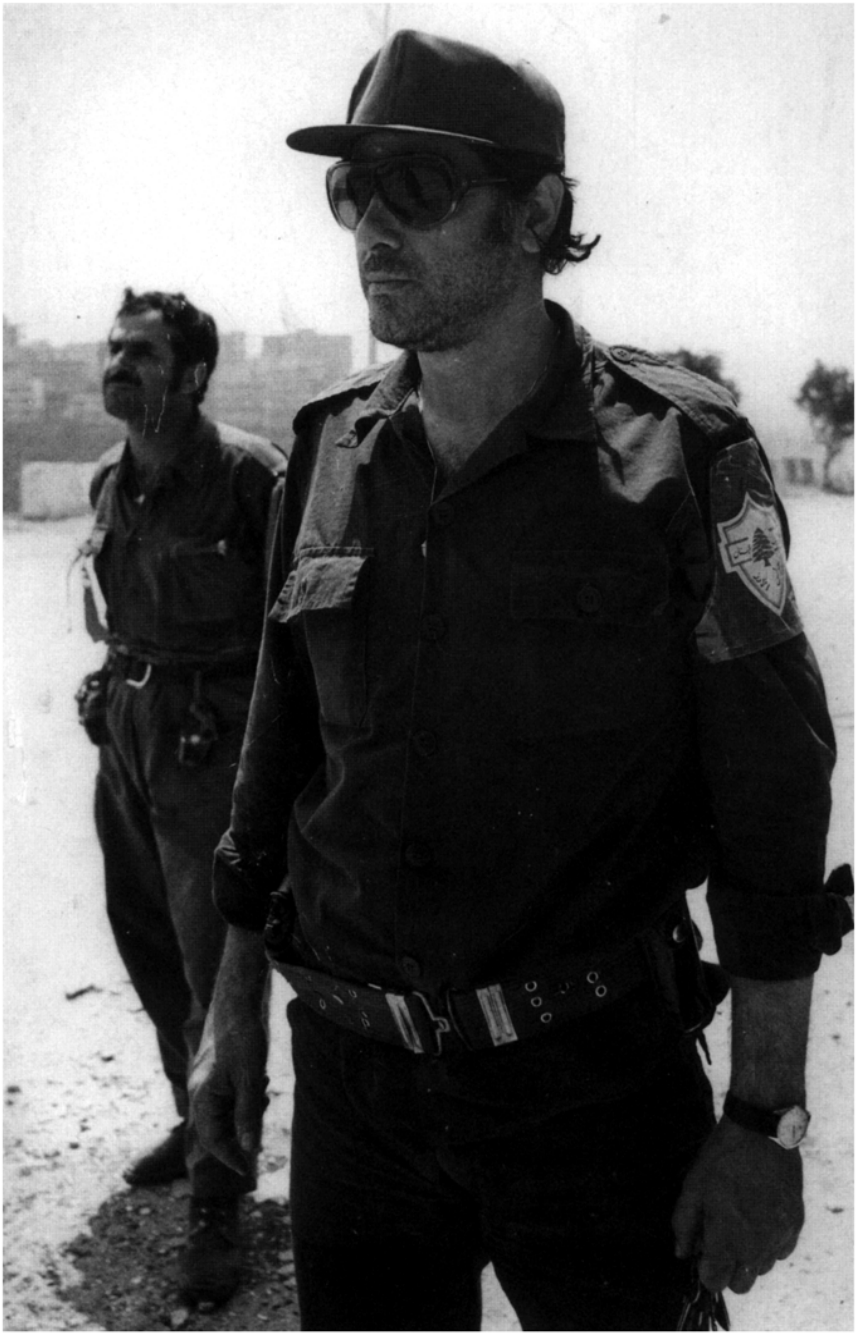
> Joseph told me to be careful. I picked up something to appear to be reading. The Syrians began questioning where we were from and where were we going? Joseph and I were carrying Christmas gifts with us, and one of the Syrians noticed the baskets we had in the car. I told Joseph to offer him a basket. The Syrian agreeably responded and told him to leave it at the gas station up the road.
>
> After this incident I used to say that 'the chocolates and whiskey saved us'.
>
> We got to Beirut safely, visiting my family and people from the party. I wanted to give everybody moral support living under Syrian occupation [Claude Hajjar was amazed and tremendously impressed at the time to see Abu-Arz in Beirut]. Later, friends of mine from the Army escorted me back to Jezzine.

One day when he was in the mountains in Jezzine a delegation of two Lebanese officials, who were no more than Syrian proxies, visited Abu Arz. The Syrian-controlled Hrawi government had sent them. Carol Sakr recalls that

> the two had the guts to visit my father, asking him to recognize the Taif Accord, accept Syrian domination and reconsider his objection to the current regime in Beirut. And if he would consent to all this, then he would be GIVEN [emphasis in original] his freedom. He should [so to speak] pass by Damascus and everything would be okay. His immediate answer was: 'Tell your boss [President Assad] that if one single rock remains free on the sacred Lebanese soil, you'll find Abu-Arz sitting on it.'

SOUTH LEBANON: MILITARILY FREE, POLITICALLY STRANGLED

The staunch stand of Abu-Arz against the Syrians was politically and strategically based on the forging of an alliance with Israel. He had veritably staked his national reputation and optimal hopes on Israel providing active support for a free Lebanon. Until 1990, when the relations between the Israelis and the Lebanese resistance had foundered more than once, Abu-Arz had the integrity to place the blame on his wayward compatriots. After 1990, he would accuse the Israelis of disabling and restraining the southern struggle which, as a vehicle for local autonomy, could evolve within wider territorial ramifications. Abu-Arz tried to set in motion a real national liberation campaign in the southern



1. Etienne Sakr (Abu-Arz) at Tel el-Zaater, 1976.

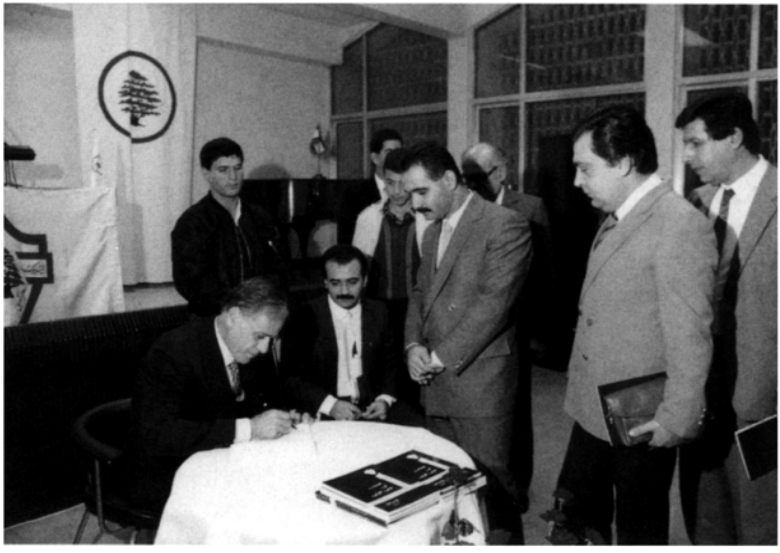
2. Press conference held by Etienne Sakr at the Guardians headquarters, East Beirut, 1977.

3. Abu-Arz at the Guardians training camp, Akoura, 1979.

4. Amin Gemayel (seated alone on the right of the picture) visiting Abu-Arz (seated at right of the couch) at the Guardians party headquarters, 1980.

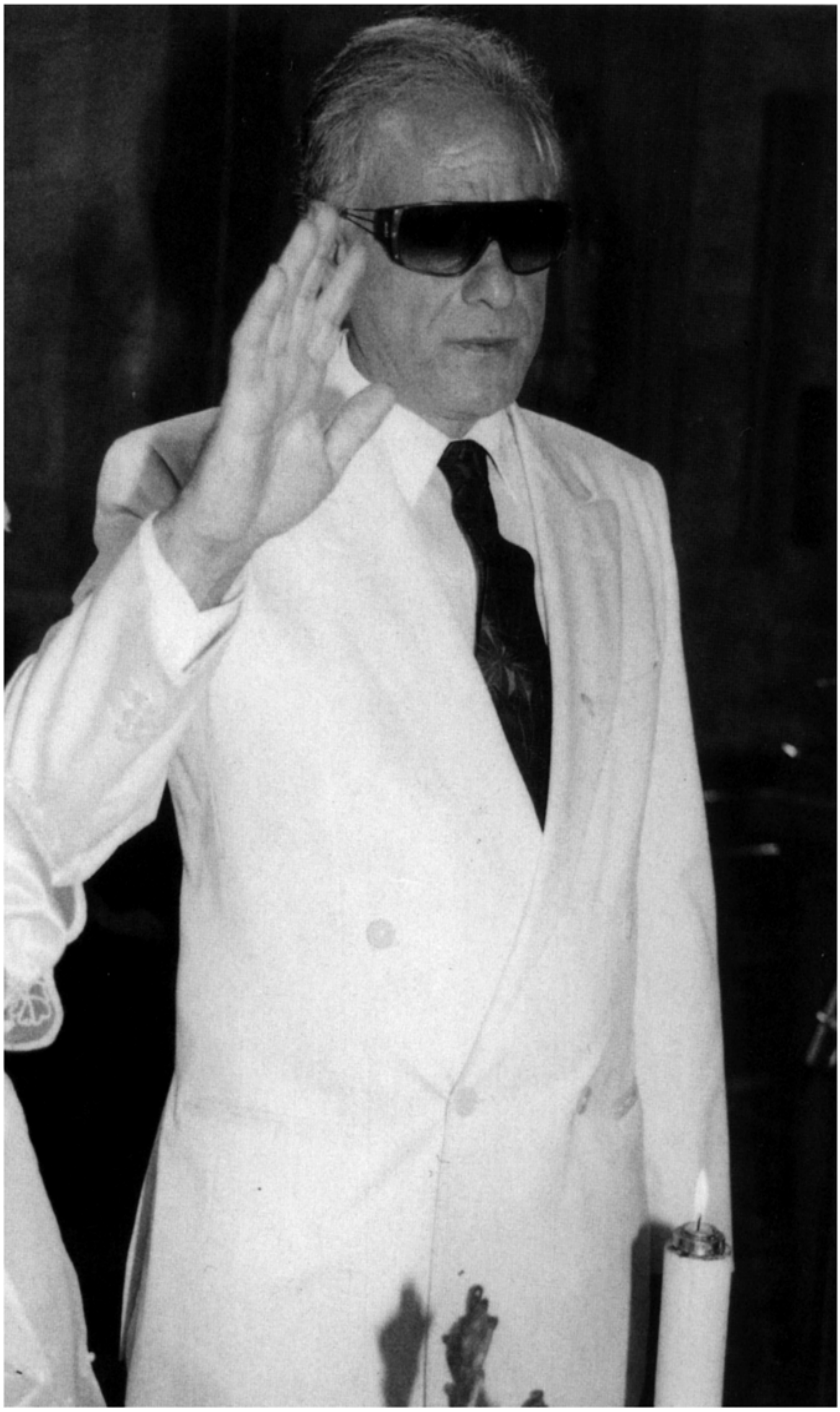
5. The Guardians commemoration of martyrs ceremony at Sainte-Coeurs Schoo Ashrafiyyeh, 1981? l,

6. Abu-Arz with Ariel Sharon at the funeral of Saad Haddad, Marj'ayoun, 1984.



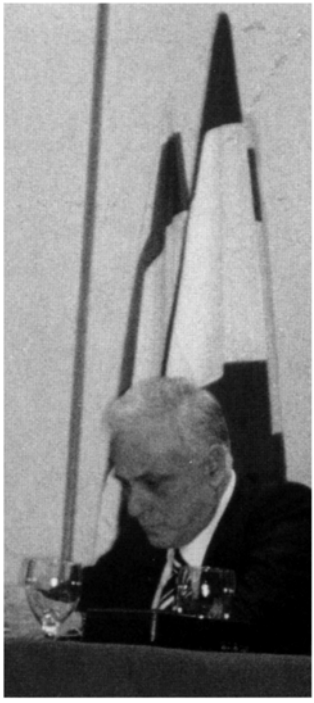
7. Abu-Arz at a signing of his book, *National Alertness,* 1987.

8. The Sixth Conference of the Party Central Command, 1988 (Abu-Arz is seated sixth from the left).



9. Abu-Arz, godfather at a baptism, Jezzine, 1993.

10. Abu-Arz at Sabbah near Jezzine, 1991–92?



11. Abu-Arz at the Jerusalem conference, June 1999.

12. SLA protest tent, Tel-Aviv, September 2000.

hinterland that could eventually spread and conquer the core heartland of the country.

The core of local military power was the South Lebanese Army commanded since 1984 by General Antoine Lahad. Israel worked out a mutually satisfactory understanding with the southern militia, and bonds of camaraderie and good faith characterized the Israeli-Lebanese military relationship. Israel also contributed to civilian projects in the south, like road construction, agricultural assistance and support for education. The native southerners fought to fend off terrorist infiltrations of the Palestinian and Shiite variety. Hizbullah was considered a spiritual satellite of Iran. Southern Shiites, some of whom could actually trace their roots to Iran, were exposed to the revolutionary doctrine of Khoumeinism which catalyzed them to challenge the national ethos of Lebanon, oppose respectful relations among the different communities in the south, and undermine stability on the Israeli-Lebanese border. SLA soldiers, many of whom nonetheless were Shiites holding different views, were determined to keep Hizbullah terrorists out of their villages. To do so required a strong bond of cooperation and strict coordination with the IDE Indeed both existed until May 2000.

An example of Israeli activity, quite to the satisfaction of Christians and many Muslims in the south, was the abduction in 1989 of Sheikh Abdul Karim ‘Ubeid, the *imam* from the village of Jibsheit just to the west of Nabatiyeh. This was in the heart of the Shiite Jabal ‘Amil. For Israel, kidnapping ‘Ubeid was punishment for ongoing Hizbullah forays, *katyusha* rocket fire, and road bombs against IDF soldiers in the ‘security zone’. For the SLA, the abduction of ‘Ubeid was a measure that perhaps could pacify the south and assure safety for its residents.

Even before Abu-Arz came south, he had told his fighters to join the ranks of the SLA. The fact that both the Guardians of the Cedars and the South Lebanese Army were intimate allies of Israel might have naturally endeared Abu-Arz and General Lahad to each other, but this was not to be. Lahad, from a mixed Maronite-Druze village near Deir al-Kamar in the Shouf, was accorded predominant authority by his Israeli patrons. Abu-Arz, though originally a southerner from Ayn Ebel and a personality of national stature, was denied any formal recognition or role in southern affairs.

Salam Eid from Klay’a recalled that Abu-Arz held a political rally at Ayn Ebel in 1994, but Lahad told him to be silent and desist from public activities of this sort. Lahad claimed, moreover, that it was thanks to him that Abu-Arz was able to be in the south, following Geagea’s expulsion of the Guardians’ leader from Beirut in 1990. According to Eid, the southern population had a certain aversion to the politics of Beirut and the leaders that came from there. For the sake of unity, the south accepted the SLA as the sole military force and General Lahad as the sole official leader of the security zone. Abu-Arz was therefore neutralized even on his own southern turf.

Abu-Arz tried to propose two basic changes in the south, but to no avail. In the military domain, he advocated an activist policy that would more effectively confront the 'Iranian terrorists'—as he referred to Hizbullah—in place of the predominantly defensive posture adopted by, or imposed upon, the SLA. Hizbullah employed hit-and-run tactics following the guerrilla *modus operandi* of melting into the rural Shiite village milieu. An ethos of self-sacrificial martyrdom in a persistent war of attrition against both Israeli and SLA units sustained the Shiite momentum in the battlefield. The IDF suffered a monthly fatality toll of approximately 20 soldiers; the SLA lost about 650 soldiers from 1984–2000. An offensive mobile strategy meant, according to Abu-Arz, shelling Sidon and maybe even Damascus from the heights of the Jezzine mountains in response to the Syrian-supported terrorist warfare of Hizbullah. He also advocated that Israel establish, or allow the establishment of, a pseudo or underground Lebanese movement that would attack Syrian positions in the Bekka the way Hizbullah attacked Israeli posts or patrols at Sujeud or Kfar Houné in the south.

The military policy that Abu-Arz suggested was part of a broader critique of General Lahad. There were rumors concerning financial corruption, through arbitrary tax measures on items like the sale of gasoline and alcohol, leading to enormous private gain at the most senior level of the SLA. Monies collected from local taxation and Israeli funding served, according to certain suspicions, other than the common good of the 'security zone' inhabitants. Moreover, Abu-Arz condemned what he saw as moral obtuseness and indifference on the part of Lahad toward the soldiers in general, and the widows and orphans of fallen soldiers in particular. Abu-Arz routinely took it upon himself to visit mourning families of SLA soldiers killed in battle. Sami Shidyak dismissed Lahad's military reputation as scandalous: 'he was not a soldier, he was not a commander' (though, said Shidyak mockingly, Lahad shot his gun once at the wedding of an aunt—in the festive spirit of the Arabs). Shidyak reported the widespread suspicions concerning Lahad's financial indiscretions to Israeli officials, but nothing was done. Surprisingly enough, Shidyak ('the Israeli') became a *persona non grata* in the eyes of the Israeli bureau within the Ministry of Defense that administered southern Lebanon.

In February 1998, Abu-Arz formulated a four-page proposal submitted to Israeli officials called 'An Operative Plan to Change the Situation in Southern Lebanon'. He identified the erosion of Israeli military morale and the weak leadership of the SLA as root causes of the deteriorating security situation in the south. Moreover, Abu-Arz openly charged Israel with preventing the SLA from conducting a more dynamic offensive against the terrorists. He advocated altering the aseptic SLA name to the 'Army for a Free Lebanon' (AFL), installing a new military command, and generating a renovated *esprit de corps* with goals of victory and liberation. Abu-Arz did not refrain from advising the Israelis to put aside their bitter memories of soured relations with certain Lebanese politicians (the Gemayels), and choose more reliable Lebanese partners.

In the political domain, Abu-Arz advocated the establishment of a political council in southern Lebanon to act as a supervisory body for military and civilian affairs. The local population should be represented by a cross-section of the confessional groups in keeping with the pluralistic composition of the area, and consistent with the religious make-up of both the SLA and the Guardians. With renewed political resources, and media initiatives, the struggle in the south would beam a message of hope all the way to Beirut.

But it was not to be. The Israeli political-security establishment had narrowly def ined the role of Abu-Arz and, in a certain way, he was retained or perhaps rewarded only or primarily for past service done. Abu-Arz told the following story in connection with Uri Lubrani of the Ministry of Defense who served as Israel's Coordinator for Lebanese Affairs from 1984 until 2000:

> I had given Lubrani a gift to symbolize the Lebanese-Israeli alliance. It was a plaque from wood with a cedar tree emplaced in the middle of the Star of David. Here was the cedar and the star enmeshed together. The accompanying inscription read: 'A common struggle for a common destiny.'
>
> In 1993 or 1994 I visited Lubrani in Tel-Aviv. He told me that Syria will give Israel what it wants, and there will be an agreement. 'What would you do if you were me?' he asked. I told him, that when Israel believes in peace with the Arabs, then it is going down. I then noticed that the plaque I gave him was not hanging on the wall as before. Lubrani said that the nail had fallen off. That was the last time I went to Lubrani's office.

Abu-Arz' anecdotal experience with Lubrani was symptomatic of Israel's shabby treatment of him for many years. His meetings with politicians and officials, regardless of their individual inclinations, were of no concrete or visible policy consequence. David Bar-Illan, who headed a Media and Policy Planning Unit under Prime Minister Netanyahu from 1996–99, met with Abu-Arz and agreed with his basic contention that Israel's strategic interest overlaps with southern Lebanon's in favor of maintaining the IDF in the 'security zone'. Abu-Arz also met with Uri Elitzur, who headed Prime Minister Netanyahu's Bureau, and agreed with giving the SLA more rope to conduct the fighting in a far more flexible and tactically offensive way. But Israel's fundamentally status quo orientation tacitly accepted Syria's military grip on most of Lebanon and even accommodated Hizbullah's tactical advantages in confronting the IDF and the SLA in unconventional combat. In the opinion of Abu-Arz, Israel erred in trying to fight against Hizbullah 'in a democratic way', as he put it, by denying itself an aggressive right-of-pursuit campaign into the Shiite villages to eliminate or at least flush out the terrorists. General Lahad, who accommodated the Israeli policy of a low-profile SLA mode of warfare, enjoyed Israel's support, such that Abu-Arz was not able to challenge the commander's singular authority in the

south. According to former Israeli officer Haim ‘Arev, the southerner Abu-Arz would have been a more appropriate commander of the SLA.

Mutual estrangement and rivalry marred the Sakr-Lahad relationship. Abu-Arz considered Lahad responsible along with Israel for the demoralization of the south. The case of Ahmad Hallaq, a Muslim who served as an informer for Israeli intelligence, illustrates the point:

> He came south to Marj’ayoun in 1996–97 but was kidnapped by Roger Salem, a major in the Lebanese gendarmerie. Salem sent him to Beirut. Hallaq was hanged and Salem was promoted. Yet people didn’t blame Lahad, who was a close friend of Salem, for these developments, even though they took place in the SLA-controlled zone.
>
> People feared that Israel would imminently leave the area and so, anxious about their future safety, some began to work with the Lebanese state authorities. A few perhaps became informers for Hizbullah. But the SLA continued to fight [against Shiite terrorists] and the overwhelming population in the south supported the force.

Abu-Arz was reduced to political insignificance in the south where the military entity of the SLA alone counted for anything. Indeed, the military commander of the SLA had it in his power to control all areas of activity, like the economic domain, as a kind of autocratic figure. Lahad, no doubt with Israel’s backing if not initiation, ordered the removal of SLA soldiers from the Guardians party headquarters at Sabbah in October 1998, in a move to close down Abu-Arz’ anti-Syrian political activities. Daibiss Mekled, a newscaster at the ‘Voice of the South’ SLA radio station in Marj’ayoun, was purged on the charge of sympathizing with ‘extremist views’, meaning those of Guardian vintage. The METV station, an offshoot of the US Christian Broadcasting Network, was prevented from broadcasting Lebanese Front press releases which Abu-Arz issued from Sabbah. Lahad, perhaps pressed by popular resentment of his own extraordinary financial exploitation of his position, clamped down on freedom of speech and political action in the southern zone.[5] He feared that Abu-Arz threatened his position and sought to muffle and hamstring him at every turn. Antoine Lahad tried to dwarf Abu-Arz’ overall and extensive national role in Lebanese affairs by saying that he had a small party, yet good soldiers, and merely provided intelligence information for the Israelis.[6] There was in this statement a grudging compliment wrapped in what sounded like a judgment of contempt.

Abu-Arz considered that Lahad was no patriot at all who actually maintained close contacts with the Syrian-controlled Beirut government. The following story he told is indicative of that suspicion:

> In 1998 Caesar Sakr [referred to earlier], an assistant to Lahad who came from Jbayl to work with the General in Marj’ayoun, died and the family

> wanted his body returned home for burial. Caesar's wife Dolores was from Spain. Lahad spoke with Prime Minister Hariri and the Lebanese Army about transferring the body north. Apparently the Syrians, via Hariri, and the Army said 'no'. Yet Lahad had connections with both the prime minister and the Army. He had after all ordered the SLA out of Kfar Falous and handed it over to Prime Minister Hariri, who invested and built extensively in the area on behalf of the Sunni population east of Sidon.

Guardians' fighter *Alloush,* who was the SLA commander of the Jezzine enclave, saw the writing on the wall. In the case of Kfar Falous, the Lebanese Army moved from Ayn el-Mir to the area of the 'Hariri Hospital'. The SLA withdrew eastward to Anan on the road to Jezzine. *Alloush* suspected a Lahad-Hariri deal with money oiling the wheels of the SLA pullback. The strategic implications were twofold: Sidon, Prime Minister Hariri's home town, was somewhat removed from the range of SLA cannonfire (though hardly targeted to begin with); and the east of Sidon region would be more accessible for investment and construction as a Sunni zone rather than emerge under the Shiite banner of Hizbullah, which Hariri feared. The Christians, we recall, had earlier fled the area.

At that time in 1998 *Alloush*'s analysis ended with a warning: 'Look what Lahad did at Kfar Falous: this will happen to Jezzine too.' In April 1999 *Alloush,* fearless and fear-inspiring, was gravely injured in the Jezzine area by a roadside bomb. Hizbullah had tried to eliminate him before, and now they seemed to succeed. But he survived albeit scarred and disabled, with serious head wounds, losing part of a finger and some of his hearing. Fady Fadel, an SLA officer and a dedicated Guardian, was with the convoy when the explosion detonated and was sure *Alloush* would not have survived it. His bodyguard just disappeared into nothingness like the wick of a candle. *Alloush,* however, miraculously recovered after many months of rehabilitation treatment in Israel.

However, there was no restoration for Jezzine. General Lahad pulled the SLA out of Jezzine in early June 1999. This came after many roadside bomb attacks by Hizbullah that killed soldiers and civilians in the enclave. In the grim situation preceding the withdrawal, SLA Christian soldiers took a moment to pray in front of the Statue of the Virgin Mary in Jezzine before dismantling the checkpoint at the entrance to the township. The withdrawal south to Kfar Houné and ultimately to Marj'ayoun was another sign in the writing on the wall. Abu-Arz, who lived with the people, explained:

> The inhabitants of Jezzine supported the SLA. When the SLA lost one man, Jezzine would hold a strike. Lahad lied when he said the people want the Lebanese Army and that it will come to replace the SLA. This is not true. He wanted to please the Lebanese government and have Beirut remove the legal sentences against him. Lahad was really against Jezzine. When I saw him in Marj'ayoun [before the May 2000 withdrawal] he

would say to me: 'Only your party flag flies there and you are behind the shelling of Sidon by the SLA cannons.'

When Tony Nassar was the SLA commander of Jezzine, he *once* shelled Sidon in retaliation for some attacks against the enclave. Lahad blamed me for this and Tony was given a ten-year sentence *in abstentia* by Beirut.

In the 1990s the people in Jezzine would say to me: 'Tell Israel [which provided military cover for the SLA] not to leave. We are free. There are no Syrians here and the area is still Lebanese.'

Abu-Arz was in New York when the withdrawal from Jezzine began. He urged Professor Walid Phares, founder and president of the World Lebanese Organization based in Florida, with whom he was then in contact, to call Lahad to try and persuade him not to pull out. Three efforts by Phares failed to dissuade Lahad who celebrated the move which Etienne Sakr and Walid Phares bemoaned. An Israeli friend who spoke with Abu-Arz on the telephone to the United States heard this broken man repeat over and over: 'We are defeated. More than 100 soldiers and civilians had been killed in the Jezzine enclave alone. We are defeated. It's over.' He was unable to get out of bed for three days.

The Syrians had 'sent' Abu-Arz to Akoura in 1976. Geagea sent him to Jezzine in 1990. Lahad now sent him to Marj'ayoun in 1999. He would be on the move and on his guard in the south, between Deir Mimas and Ayn Ebel. He would sleep intermittently in one or another place out of caution for his personal safety. But the hardships of flight and expulsion were nightmares that Etienne Sakr would experience yet again.

Jezzine could have been the core of the Lebanese national resistance against the dark forces of terrorism, Baathism and Islamic fundamentalism. It had the topographical and geographical features, with the human resources and military potential, to serve as a wedge blocking full Syrian hegemony from the Bekka to Sidon. The enclave could also have been the staging-ground for mobilizing dormant energies and catalyzing a national uprising against Syria and its proxies in a broader struggle northward to liberate Beirut. Abu-Arz had argued these points, but instead, Israel and Lahad chose to let Jezzine deteriorate. It was seen as an unnecessary military burden borne on the shoulders of the SLA, as the town with a Christian population of 22,000 residents dwindled to just 7,000 inhabitants prior to the final collapse. Jezzine seemed a symbol for Lebanon and Israel reminiscent of France's Dien Bien Phu, not Russia's Stalingrad.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Israel under Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and his Likud-led government from 1996 was the target of a growing domestic campaign pressing for a military withdrawal from south Lebanon. Devoid of territorial ambitions, Israel would be satisfied with a secure border to convince her to pull out. With no political

settlement in sight, however, the military status quo continued despite the loss of Israeli soldiers by Hizbullah's effective low-intensity warfare.

General Lahad favored an Israeli withdrawal and the end of 'Israeli occupation'. It appeared indeed that he was always conscious of making the right impression on the Beirut government. He promoted the March 1978 United Nations Resolution 425, whose call for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory was implemented at that time in the aftermath of 'The Litani Operation'. Regardless, Lahad favored its execution (again) in the late 1990s and worked to persuade Israel to abandon the 'security zone', which the Lebanese Army would then take control of. He had given an interview in Marj'ayoun, later to be reported in the Beirut newspapers, in which he asked 'our sister Syria to help us in liberating south Lebanon from the Israeli occupation'. Colonel Sami Shidyak gave the Israelis a copy of a newspaper in which Lahad's comment was published. According to Abu-Arz, 'Lahad told his friends that it took him two years to convince Israel to adopt 425. He would pride himself on saying this.' Abu-Arz added: 'But 425 is against us.' And while declaring himself in favor of Israel withdrawing from Lebanon, Abu-Arz made it absolutely clear that he wanted Syrian forces out first. Perhaps Lahad believed that an Israeli pullback would catalyze a Syrian withdrawal as well from Lebanese territory. For Abu-Arz, Syria must leave first and only then should Israel pull back.

The obstacles and opposition of both the Israelis and the Lebanese facing Abu-Arz did not diminish his tireless efforts on behalf of a broader vision for a *free* Lebanon, even though he seemed to sense that the political ground was slipping from under his feet. In an interview in the Tel-Aviv daily newspaper *Yedioth Aharonoth* on 24 March 1998, he entreated Israel 'not to betray us' by a precipitant withdrawal that would expose Israel's southern Lebanese friends and allies to the wrath of their hate-filled enemies. He argued for a far more active military offensive than Israel was prepared to undertake. In late June, Abu-Arz attended a conference in Washington organized by the World Lebanese Organization. Assuming the honorary role of elder statesman, Abu-Arz met with Lebanese emigrés, some of whom were Guardian members, and set the tone of political discussion in a series of intense sessions. He laid special emphasis throughout the three-day conference on Syrian occupation of Lebanon as the core problem. Thus, he referred repeatedly to UN Resolution 520 from September 1982, which provided international sanction to the demand that Syrian and all other foreign forces withdraw from Lebanon.

Upon his return to the Middle East, Abu-Arz hoped finally to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in order to argue in favor of maintaining the IDF presence in south Lebanon, along with a more spirited war against the terrorists. But unlike former Likud prime ministers Begin and Shamir, Netanyahu refused to meet with Lebanon's most dedicated and public friend of the state of Israel.

In June 1999, two seminars on Lebanon were convened in Israel in which Abu-Arz participated. He arrived to the one organized by the WLO in Jerusalem after

a long and tiring six-hour trip from southern Lebanon, taking the podium along with two other Lebanese spokesmen, Professor Walid Phares of Florida Atlantic University and president of the WLO and Colonel Sharbel Barakat, former deputy-commander of the SLA. The Ariel Center for Policy Research headed by Arieh Stav organized another seminar in Tel-Aviv and it included both an Israeli and a Lebanese panel. Among the Israeli speakers was Member of Knesset Uzi Landau who advocated Israeli military action against Syrian forces in Lebanon in response to their logistical and political support for Hizbullah terrorists. IDF Reserve General Rafi Noy, who had experience on Israel's Lebanese front, explained the feasibility of strengthening the SLA as an alternative to Israel's marred military entanglement in the south. But there was no openness for new thinking in the councils of Israel's government.

In his address in Tel-Aviv, Abu-Arz told the Israeli audience about his first visit to Israel in 1977 with Prime Minister Begin and the subsequent decision by the Guardians of the Cedars to cooperate with Israel seen as 'a strategic and historic ally' of Lebanon. He referred to the recent withdrawal from Jezzine a few weeks earlier which was 'the loss of a beautiful dream we had to keep this Christian region as our stronghold free from domination and as a springboard to return to Beirut when the opportunity arose'. Abu-Arz further related that some SLA men and Guardian members had decided to stay in Jezzine to face a foreboding future, and they explained their choice by saying that 'yesterday they sold us out in Jezzine, tomorrow they will sell us out in Marj'ayoun, and we do not want to be sold twice'. Sadly, this would prove to be prophetic in the months ahead. The general feeling in the south was one of being 'deceived, humiliated and without hope'. He spoke in the name of 'the [Lebanese] heroes of war who fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the Israeli heroes of war'. Abu-Arz did not hide his anger and outrage, the substance of which became a mournful prophecy: 'We refuse to finish our long, difficult and courageous struggle in a refugee camp inside Israel.' In concluding his address, he related that a Lebanese poet and philosopher had once said in a speech he gave in French: *'J'admire beaucoup plus Israel conscience qu'Israel science'*—meaning, I admire the conscience of Israel more than the science of Israel. Abu-Arz, the personification of the conscience of Lebanon, tried by complimenting Israel's moral conscience to convince her 'not to sell us [the Lebanese] at a cheap price'.[7] Certainly the country which rescued airplane hostages in distant Entebbe in 1976 and arranged for the safe rescue of Jews from Ethiopia in 1991 could, it seems, be expected to stand by her loyal allies in southern Lebanon just across the northern Galilee border.

With his characteristic honesty, Abu-Arz explained in a lengthy interview in the Israeli weekly *Mekor Rishon* on 24 September 1999, that he 'was an ally of Israel not because he loved Israel but because he was in love with Lebanon'. Their common goal and cooperation over history, never fighting one another, was the foundation for peace between Lebanon and Israel. Etienne concentrated on the

cause and its reasonable foundations, despite personal frustrations meted out to him by Israel.

During that week in late September, Abu-Arz had a meeting in Jerusalem with Ezer Weizmann the President of Israel. While the president insensitively talked about the Palestinian question and the need for regional peace, Abu-Arz asked him to speak on his behalf, during his upcoming visit to the United States with President Clinton and other American officials about UN Resolution 520 to liberate Lebanon from Syrian forces. Official Israel's insulting attitude toward Abu-Arz was expressed, not only by Weizmann's wayward political monologue, but by a remark by his chief aide that the meeting should not even be reported to the press.

Later in the year Prime Minister Barak gave notification that Israeli forces would leave south Lebanon by July 2000, and rumors surfaced that Israel was preparing to accept about 500 senior SLA personnel and their families for resettlement. The impression grew that, with or without an agreement with the Beirut government or Syria, the IDF would withdraw. The future of the SLA seemed bleak, clouded in doubt and uncertainty.

In mid-February 2000, Abu-Arz carried his message and concern to Washington where he addressed a group of Congressmen on the question of Lebanon. Among other Lebanese speakers at the session were Dory Chamoun, son of the late Camille Chamoun who served as the mayor of Deir al-Kamar, and Maronite Archbishop Paul Sayah of Jerusalem. Abu-Arz did not mince his words:

> Syrian occupation is the root evil and cause of Lebanon's tragedy, and responsible for the loss of its political independence. Syria's military grip and intelligence services decide all fundamental questions concerning Lebanon—Beirut is Lebanon's Vichy…
>
> We demand to be released from all foreign occupation—especially Syrian which is the most perilous—in accordance with United Nations Resolution 520 which called for 'the withdrawal of all non-Lebanese forces from Lebanon'.
>
> Syria has flagrantly disregarded the Taif Agreement of 1989 that demanded a Syrian military pullback from Beirut. Meanwhile, Syrian colonialism has flooded our land with close to 2 million Syrian laborers.

Abu-Arz then turned from the congenital problem to the ray of hope:

> For over 20 years, the security zone in south Lebanon has served as a free Lebanese region that has kept the flame of liberty burning. Our courageous soldiers in the south, of whom more than 600 have been killed and many more wounded in action, assure that the vision of a Free Lebanon will not vanish. But the SLA…requires a new and revolutionary purpose…to be

> able to face the forces of Iranian Islamic terrorists like Hizbullah and Syrian Arab occupation.

Abu-Arz concluded his address in Congress by calling upon the United States to take measures to expose and declare the illegitimacy of Syria's domination over Lebanon, and to support the Free Lebanese resistance and struggle in the name of democracy, human rights and national selfdetermination.

A month later, on 24 March, 11 Congressmen led by House members Eliot Engel and Benjamin Gilman sent a letter to President Bill Clinton with a request that followed the lines of Abu-Arz' address. They urged the president in his upcoming meeting with Syrian President Assad to call for the fulfillment of Resolution 520 and the Taif provisions regarding Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. Worth noting is that the attitude of Congress, distinct from that of the Administration, was very sympathetic to Lebanon's suffering. Back on 8 June 1999, for example, Representative Michael Forbes had introduced the 'Lebanon Independence Restoration Act of 1999' which identified Syrian occupation as a denial of freedom that should cost Syria any aid or legitimacy that it seeks from Washington.

In Israel in April 2000, Abu-Arz met with Amnon Shahak, Minister of Tourism and former Chief-of-Staff of the Israeli Army, in Tel-Aviv. During this hour-long meeting, Abu-Arz surveyed the deteriorating economic conditions in Beirut where previously prosperous families have been reduced to hunger and a virtually subsistence diet. The suffocation of social and political life under Syria and her proxy Lebanese collaborators led Abu-Arz to say in anguish that 'Lebanon is dying'. In response to Shahak's question why the Lebanese did not respond in any active way to the situation, Abu-Arz wryly related the following story: 'In Lebanon today, a dentist extracts a tooth by cutting through the cheek—as people are afraid to open their mouth.' Contrary to the mistaken notion that the Lebanese have not fought, the Guardians leader stared at Shahak and said: 'We have fought for 25 years against the Palestinians, the Syrians and Hizbullah.' He looked Shahak deep in the eyes and said, softly and firmly, 'From the beginning I chose to stand with Israel. Others chose Syria. When I was fighting the Palestinians and the Syrians, Emile Lahoud [then an officer in the Lebanese Navy] went swimming in Kaslik [at a country club north of Beirut]. Today Lahoud is the president of Lebanon. And where am I? We are homeless.'[8]

There were moments during the Sakr-Shahak conversation when the Israeli minister nodded his head in agreement, spellbound by the hard truths and solid facts presented by Abu-Arz. Perhaps Shahak felt the cutting edge of moral deceit grating upon Israel's consciousness toward Lebanese allies. Loyalty and submission by Emile Lahoud to Syria gave him the presidency in Beirut, while the loyalty of Abu-Arz to Israel left him banished in southern Lebanon. He asked Shahak that Israel support the SLA as an autonomous fighting force against Syrian-supported Shiite and Palestinian terrorist organizations, adding, 'We respect Israel's right to withdraw unilaterally from Lebanon, but you should

likewise respect our right to remain and fight for our homes, for which you should support us.' This statement and request elicited only silence from the Israeli minister.

Abu-Arz was a wise master at using examples and imagery as a teaching method. For Shahak, he evoked Lahad's flawed leadership as SLA commander in the form of a parable: 'A hundred rabbits led by a lion can win a war against 100 lions led by a rabbit.' This poignant adage was a devastating attack against General Lahad whom, according to Etienne, was totally inappropriate to head the SLA. Despite the '100 lions' in his army, he submitted obsequiously to Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem. This is not the stuff of a true leader who has to know how to say 'no' sometimes.

On 18 April, Abu-Arz distributed a letter from southern Lebanon to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Guardians of the Cedars. In it he gave expression to the precarious days of uncertainty that faced southern Lebanon. His literary style was crisp, the structure of the message was rigorous and the mixture of heroism and despair was unmistakable. Abu-Arz related that the history of the party overlaps the war in Lebanon from 1975, encapsulating the tragedy of the country and its people. 'We have suffered the oppression of our enemies…of our state…of those close to us who have betrayed us…and the deep wounds inflicted by our allies [Israel]. But through all this suffering and pain we never questioned anything.' The Guardians' leader referred to the rumors circulating in the south and the atmosphere of defeatism which had spread, and he emphasized that the Guardians and the southerners as a free community 'represent the truth as they confront evil'. They are the ones who are 'the sparks of freedom that emanate from the south' with the hope of liberating all of Lebanon. Nevertheless, Abu-Arz was witnessing an incremental collapse that he would be unable to prevent.

In early May, Abu-Arz appeared at a small press conference in Jerusalem organized by a Jewish intellectual group called *Mekeimi.* Both the conveners and the main speaker were perturbed by what seemed to be the imminent abandonment of south Lebanon by the Barak government. Fears were afoot that once the IDF retreated, Israel's loyal SLA allies would be imprisoned by the Beirut authorities, or massacred by the Hizbullah terrorists. Abu-Arz gave voice to this anxiety in his typically eloquent and dignified manner. Speaking in English during the press conference, he also gave short interviews in French and Arabic to journalists present.

THE END OF THE SLA

But the die was cast. The only remaining obstacle was the SLA which had to be swept aside in the frantic policy leap of withdrawing the IDF from southern Lebanon in the hope that peace and security would be achieved for the distraught state of Israel. Friedrich Von Schiller in *Wallerstein* had described a reality

where the lies of friends can be more terrible than the power of enemies. He wrote:

> Freedom has vanished out of the land,
> Only masters and slaves will you find;
> Deceit and treachery now command
> Among craven human kind.
> Looking death in the face, as only he can,
> There's none but the soldier who is a free man.

Removing the free Lebanese soldiers, as an act of deceit and treachery, would crown the Israeli masters with a questionable triumph. Freedom would vanish from the land of the cedars for without soldiers there can be no freedom. This would be the disappearing SLA component in the fatal script for southern Lebanon.

Israeli authorities, probably on orders from the prime minister's office, prevented General Lahad from attending two planned meetings of importance just prior to the 22 May ignoble flight from Lebanon: one with Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef in Jerusalem, whose religious stature was matched by his considerable political clout through the formidable Shas party; and another with the Likud Central Committee in Tel-Aviv. This interference apparently reflected Prime Minister Barak's dogged intention to silence Lahad and deny him gaining any public support for the SLA. Barak's office had seemingly told him not to interfere in Israeli politics. Later Lahad would say of Barak that 'he was the worst' *(le plus pire)* [of the Israeli prime ministers he dealt with].

Israel, in fact, adopted and promoted Resolution 425 as a diplomatic means to demonstrate international compliance and as a political means to mollify certain sectors of public opinion. From 22–24 May 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak ordered the IDF to withdraw from Lebanon and thereby implemented the resolution to the letter.

The IDF withdrawal from the southern 'security zone' began suddenly on 22 May. General Lahad was away in Paris with his family, whisked off to avoid any last-minute complications. He was reportedly meeting with military officials concerning French participation in an expanded United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL), established back in 1978 to monitor the situation in south Lebanon following an Israeli withdrawal. Lahad had spoken with his men at Marj'ayoun on the night of Sunday 22 May and everything seemed to be in order, but great uncertainty filled the air. Lahad's trip to France raises questions about his culpability for what imminently transpired. Yet the Israeli government had misled the SLA commander, and that Sunday night turned out to be virtually the last night of the SLA as an integral functioning military force.

The withdrawing Israeli forces ordered the Lebanese to withdraw with them. Havoc and panic gripped the traumatized SLA officers and soldiers, and with them their wives and children who were told to leave in an hour or two at the

most, run to the fence and pass through the gates into Israel. They had been deliberately and completely kept in the dark regarding the impending Israeli pullback in order to prevent any effective organized resistance on their part. In at least one case, an IDF officer ordered the evacuation of an SLA outpost and threatened that he would fire on it within a specified time in order to assure the SLA abandonment. For the SLA this would be more than their pullback: it would be the end of their commendable military record and the beginning of their despair and exile in Israel. Abu-Arz' prophecy from less than a year earlier had come full circle.

There was really nothing fundamentally new, but just with a sharper dose of vitriolic meanness, in Israel's treatment of her Lebanese allies. The political-military-media establishment had never cultivated a recognizable or positive image of the SLA in the eyes of the Israeli public. Israeli news coverage of the SLA, or the civilian population in the southern zone, was scanty at best. The death of SLA soldiers in battle was disinterestedly reported without ever identifying them by name, or home village, or family composition. The Lebanese were unknown soldiers, without a personal biography, as far as the Israelis were concerned. Israel never broadcast a human-interest story on an individual SLA fighter or his family. Israel truly dehumanized the Lebanese into ghost-like non-persons. Their suffering was a closed book and the price of their struggle ignored.

All this contrasted sharply with the meticulous reporting on the Palestinian wounded and dead in altercations with Israeli security forces. Israel's enemies were real people, with names, ages and addresses. Israelis were presumably expected to empathize with their enemies, feel for their pain and compensate for their loss. But the Lebanese soldiers of 25 years' comradeship and alliance were true brothers-in-arms. Yet Israel's attitude and treatment of the SLA in both large and small ways was a shameful act of abuse and ingratitude. These Lebanese were patriots, fighting the Palestinians and Hizbullah, in sacrifice and resolve; yet Israel seemed to look at them as mercenaries. The misguided and foolish Israelis saw the Palestinians as representing national determination; they were worthy of recognition. The Lebanese, virtual nonentities for the large mass public in Israel, were in truth the worthiest allies Israel ever had.

The moment of flight and betrayal caught Abu-Arz in Ayn Ebel. He drove to Marj'ayoun to get a fuller picture of what was transpiring. Chaos and fear reigned all around. Civilians and soldiers, some on foot, some in their cars, were fleeing to the Israeli border. Hizbullah was coming to the Christian villages and threatening to break into the al-Khiam detention center. The western and eastern SLA brigades dissolved one after the other. The inhabitants, who were affiliated with Israel through work or visits, left their land, homes, businesses and other properties in a mad flight to survival. They had lost control of their lives, and maybe they never really exercised control. Abandoned by the government and army of Lebanon already from the mid-1970s, they came to rely on Israel for the next 25 years. But their trust was violated and thrown to the wind by the crass perfidy of a false ally.[9]

On Wednesday 24 May, Abu-Arz came through the Fatma Gate at Metulla into Israel. He had hoped that the Christian zone of Marj'ayoun and Klay'a would fight to the end. But it was not meant to be. Israel had decided to give Syria, Iran and the terrorists a complete and clean victory. If ever Abu-Arz had thought that his choice of Israel was an error, this was surely one of those times. He concluded that it matters little who is in power in Israel: 'When Netanyahu was prime minister we lost Jezzine, with Barak as prime minister we lost everything else.'

The conviction and insight of Abu-Arz regarding the Shiites was particularly compelling:

> Israel had made heroes out of Hizbullah when they were nothing more than gangsters. Israel should have let us—the Lebanese—deal with them. The SLA was a gift from heaven for Israel. Now we'll never forgive Israel. Hizbullah came into our [Christian] villages with mortars and cannons…
>
> You should understand that no one in Lebanon likes Hizbullah. Even in the Bekka they don't like them.

Abu-Arz was convinced that Israel had made a tactical if not strategic error in handing over southern Lebanon to its enemies, without a fight and without any agreement, and for no gain. Syria had over the years managed the political and military arena in Lebanon while Iran shaped its religious and social ambiance. The result was instability and terrorism which Israel met by keeping the IDF and the SLA hamstrung. Wasting time and withdrawing in stages since 1983, Israel would perhaps achieve nothing by its final retreat in the year 2000, and even exacerbate an existing bad situation.

After the shameful days of May, Abu-Arz remarked with a Lebanese adage: 'I prefer a wise enemy to a stupid ally.' This remark, as if addressed from a distance, struck home in a painful way.

A second comment by Abu-Arz concerning the Shiites was surprising and bold: 'With the IDF-SLA withdrawal, Hizbullah won't really do anything in Ayn Ebel [Etienne Sakr's village].' I asked him, why? He answered confidently: 'Because the Shiites have an inferiority complex toward the Christians.' This, even after the SLA and the IDF were gone and Hizbullah was in control. The Lebanese Army did not come south and assume responsibility and control; and UNIFIL was a pure abstraction in its southern posts. In the immediate aftermath of the pullback, one Christian man was killed in Rmeish. He was the only one.

Abu-Arz had a grasp of a deep truth in the cultural bedrock of Lebanese society that makes contemporary circumstances in politics and warfare prove to be of secondary and temporary importance. He relied on the mental structures that defined interconfessional perceptions, despite the changing character in the power relations among the communities. Etienne Sakr knew his Lebanon in as intimate a way as he loved his Lebanon. All this despite the fact that Lebanon was effectively not his anymore. He had not been able to turn it to

his benefit and give it life according to his vision. But he had escaped death many times, as on the occasions when Hizbullah or others, had attempted to assassinate him in south Lebanon. Once in September 1999 his car was shot at, but he fortunately was visiting Israel at the time. Indeed, he was informed from time to time by reliable security sources that an imminent attempt was afoot, and he best leave the area for a few days or weeks. When in the south, his vulnerability demanded that he move from place to place to seek a safe bed for the night.

A few days after the uprooting of the Lebanese from the south, I went to visit Abu-Arz in a small, dark apartment in Herzliya on Israel's coast. He could not believe what had happened to him and his people. He could hardly speak. His world had caved in, and he felt humiliated and cheated. Having explained for years that Israel was not an enemy of Lebanon and had no territorial ambitions toward her, he could not foresee that he and his people would pay such a horrific price for the truth of his understanding of Israel. Indeed, the Israelis left Lebanon but forced the free Lebanese out with them. That Syria was a real enemy of Lebanon was always clear to him, and events verified this for decades.

Soon, Etienne Sakr moved into a brighter apartment in Tel-Aviv. But the brightness was not in his heart, and no one could know if it would ever become part of his future. For Abu-Arz, however, truth will always win out in the end.

7

Nationhood and Politics in Lebanon: The Place of Abu-Arz

The pluralistic ethnic-religious or confessional character of Lebanese society has been the paramount historical feature impinging upon the politics of the country. Students of Lebanon have inveterately pointed this out, while advocating a version of the separation of religion from politics and the inauguration of a secular polity.[1] This rationalist model of Western vintage would, it is assumed, neutralize the fire of faith in the public domain. There have been theorists of non-homogeneous societies who believed, as did Lord Acton, that 'the combination of different nations [groups] in one State is as necessary a condition of civilized life as the combination of men in society'.[2] Cultural richness and political liberty are the fruit of what otherwise appears to be a situation of endemic conflict, perhaps culminating in civil war. But sectarian politics, based on blood and the tribe, are by definition grounded in divisiveness, while the attempt to balance distinct group claims is the result of a conscious and rational effort to contend with a heterogeneous society through compromise and reasonable power-sharing arrangements. It is a hard question indeed to arrive at a single judgment concerning the optimal principle of politics and the practical implications of ethnically diverse societies. Religion as a menace to political order, or rather as one of its legitimate bulwarks, is a way to posit the polar alternatives at issue.

Central to a pluralistic society is the challenge of forging a coherent political community. Clifford Geertz, in his seminal essay on the topic, was not excessively pessimistic about the feasibility of balancing 'primordial sentiments' of old communities with the shaping of 'civic politics' as an integrative revolution in new states.[3] When groups retain their most precious identities and spiritual possessions, the emerging state apparatus within which they live can appear a threat to their particular historical existence. In Lebanon, it is certainly the case that the various communities highly value their ancestral faiths and collective memories. Nonetheless, the vitality of a modernizing society, exposure to global influences and the urban matrix, introduce a variety of new symbols, experiences and opportunities. The cultural walls of a confessional community begin to crack and contacts develop with members of other communities.

It is a complex intellectual and human project to build a political community that transcends the authenticity and attraction of individual religious-ethnic group identities. It is helpful if the component communities share a common vision of

their past that then facilitates the bonds of solidarity. They require a working equilibrium in their relationships and in the pursuit of national goals. Political participation and governing must be structured in ways that no group feels alienated or barred from the public space of state power. Social mobility and political openness are essential conditions in pre-empting justifiable grievances among any of the population groups. When a leader takes the helm, he should be recognized as representing the entire populace and not that of his own communal affiliation alone.

The case of Lebanon has rendered the search for political community an extremely ponderous task. Religious differences between Christians and Muslims, for example, were traditionally a source of political friction, and the fact that a Maronite presided as president over a significant urban Sunni population was a sneering denial of Islamic pride and principle. History did not serve as a common focus of a shared narrative but rather, at times, the reason for ethnic competition in Mount Lebanon between Maronites and Druzes. The Maanite prince, Fakhr al-Din II, from Baakline in the Shouf was viewed as a Druze lord by the Druzes, but as a political founder of modern Lebanon by the Maronites. For the Muslims, Lebanon is part of the Arab Middle East, though even in the doctrine of the Christian *Kata'eb* and *Ahrar* parties Lebanon is considered an Arab country. Still, for the Christians, it is an enclave of Oriental Christianity and a bridge to the Occidental West, such that Bashir Gemayel saw Lebanon more than just an arena for Christian-Islamic dialogue. It was, after all, predominantly engaged in a struggle for national liberation and the defense of its civilizational and religious values. There were a variety of definitions of Lebanon, not all of which were exclusive and one-dimensional, in the quest for clarifying and directing the country's future.

The Lebanese were able to ride the crest of sectarianism/confessionalism and stay politically afloat. The 1943 National Pact provided a modicum of equilibrium but not equality in power-sharing without menacing the groups' 'primordial sentiments'. Agreement was reached around the formula that Lebanon was 'neither of the East nor the West' which was a creative way of avoiding antagonizing those communities which wanted Lebanon to be either of the East or of the West. In order to generate a satisfactory degree of domestic cooperation, the electoral system with its multi-member voting constituencies would serve as a critical political mechanism. Most of the constituencies contained mixed populations and each such confessional population would, assuming it had a respectable number of residents, be worthy of political representation in the national Chamber of Deputies from that constituency. The very special aspect of the system was that all voters would cast ballots for candidates competing to represent all of the communities. As a result, Muslims would vote for Christian candidates in Beirut and Christians for Muslim ones in Tripoli—and *vice versa.* The atypical case was when the population of a constituency was overwhelmingly composed of one community, like Maronites

in Bsharre, with no room for other than Maronite representation. But the norm and necessity was in the practise of confessional coalition politics.

The seemingly complex electoral method was oiled by brokering crossconfessional alliances. For example in the Baalbek/Hermel district, there were ten seats in the September 2000 elections: six Shiite, two Sunni, one Maronite and one Greek Catholic. Each voter chose six Shiite candidates, two Sunni candidates and so forth. In the Beirut 'District One' elections, candidates from the Sunni, Orthodox, Maronite, Catholic and Armenian communities sought confessional representation. Candidates tend to form joint lists. One of the fascinating consequences is that competing members or lists from the same community necessarily seek allies from other communities. So Junblatt-Arslan competition to represent the Druzes in the Shouf sets each clan afoot to forge electoral coalitions with non-Druze voters, like the Christians. Exceptional permutations of this system gave birth to cooperative efforts between the political forces of Sheikh Nasrallah's Hizbullah party with Maronites in the Jezzine district elections. Likewise, Christian, Muslim and Druze deputies all exercise their individual parliamentary prerogative—*when Lebanon is free*—to vote for the Maronite president.

The religious cleavages in Lebanon constitute a social datum that radiates its own particular political texture. Renan's famous quip that a nation's existence is 'a daily plebiscite' is true enough, but it ought not trivialize, certainly in the Lebanese case and undoubtedly in others, the subtle dynamics in sowing the sinews of nationhood. A negative approach to nationhood, based on rejecting others and their foreign identities, is an 'us-and-them' dichotomy that also can disparage the subtle forging of domestic Lebanese integration. Many current ideological options are, however, far from attractive to many Lebanese. The mainstream urban Sunnis feel threatened by fundamentalist or terrorist Islam; many Shiites also are uncomfortable with the current brand of Khoumeinist-Hizbullah revolutionary, suicidebomber Islam. Arabism, for the Muslims, is an embarrassment since the demise of Nasserism and the maniacal machinations of Saddam Hussein. Arab nationalism seems only to promise dictatorship and repression, with hatred of the West a cultural animus rather than learning from the West serving as a cultural catalyst. To be a Syrian can hardly be an attractive option for the Lebanese; nor is the Francophone option as tempting as it was in the past considering France's fawning pro-Arab compulsion in recent decades.

This rather gaping political and ideological vacuum can greatly contribute toward the consolidation of the Lebanese nation-state for all the citizens of Lebanon, at home and abroad. One does not have to be a Maronite to be a Lebanese patriot, though it is due to the Maronites that all other Lebanese communities have been able to live within the specific contours of the Lebanese republic rather than in a regressive Syrian, Arab, or Islamic political entity. The Sunnis who opposed *Le Grand Liban* of 1920, and pressed for the inclusion of Sidon, Beirut and Tripoli within the borders of Syria, have long since dropped their opposition. The Shiites would be a tiny minority within Sunni Syria had

their preference for inclusion been honored; instead they are a growing force, a plurality among the Lebanese communities, in Lebanon today. If they were living in Syria, elements from the Sunni, Shiite and Druze confessions of Lebanon might one day have had experience of the inside of Syrian jails. Thank the Maronites for your freedom.

This is the basically, though not totally, negative way of illuminating one side of the Lebanese political coin. More positive ways are available, and here is an interesting exemplar with a biographical sketch provided by Kamal Salibi of a Sunni mayor of Beirut, Salim Ali Salam (d. 1938), who touched base with the mosaic of Lebanon's social elite.[4] He was educated at the Greek Catholic Patriarchal College and he sent his sons to the Syrian Protestant College (later the American University of Beirut) in Ras Beirut. Salam was a friend of the Greek Orthodox Archbishop, a Greek Catholic priest taught his children French, while a Maronite tutored one of his daughters in Arabic. The role of Christian education is a rather astounding and yet not atypical feature in this Sunni portrait, and it is part of Lebanon's custom, unlike the Arab countries, to promote foreign-language teaching in French, but also in English. Salim Ali's son Saeb Salam would, in the late 1980s, leave Lebanon for exile in the face of Syrian occupation, which says something for his proud Lebanese convictions. The portrait of Salim Salam radiates with personal confidence and cultural diversity in an environment where persons from the different confessions mixed with ease and friendliness. The common bonds of a like-minded class-consciousness and urban sophistication may not have borne an identical political outlook, but there was definitely something particularly *Lebanese* about the non-threatening social matrix radiating from the Salam family's milieu.

The social mingling among the different communities is in particular, though not exclusively, more an elite than a popular phenomenon. Sunnis were known to vacation in the summer in the Druze Mountain, while the Druzes were known to look favorably on the Armenians. Muslims traditionally attended private Christian schools for the higher quality of education, including the study of foreign languages like French. Until the outbreak of the war in 1975, there was a rise in mixed Christian-Muslim marriages in upper-middle class urban society. In the banking sector of Beirut, strict confessional lines have not been the norm as senior staff revealed elite cohesion through interconfessional personnel policy.[5] In a singularly controversial political issue—that of the role of the Palestinians in the war—all Lebanese communities without exception, including the Sunnis and Druzes who were formally linked to them, were polled as yet blaming the Palestinians for the war.[6] This is both a somewhat surprising finding and one that is revelatory of the deep current of proud Lebanese consciousness animating the various confessional groups, not just the Maronites. The questionnaire as administered during late 1999-early 2000 also discovered a broad consensus against granting the Palestinians citizenship in Lebanon or agreeing to their permanent settlement in the country. Again, the fact that the Muslims and not

only the Christians held these attitudes indicates the pervasive national credo throughout the Lebanese population.

The choice of both personal and family names among the various Lebanese communities reveals cross-confessional usage. In many cases, a name will not indicate the religious affiliation of the person. Christians may be called Abdallah, though it has a very specific Islamic ring to it. Someone with the very particular name of *Jihad,* whose most popular meaning is 'Muslim holy war', may in fact be a Christian. René Moawad, Maronite Lebanese president for 17 days in 1989, gave his only son a Muslim name. One exceptional example of the communal interchange of names in Lebanon relates to the Maronite Patriarch, *Nasrallah* Butrus Sfeir, and the leader of the Shiite Hizbullah party, Sheikh Hasan *Nasrallah.* Maronites were, nevertheless, historically inclined to give non-Arabic and French or English names to their children.

The overall notion of an authentic pan-confessional Lebanese sensibility was modulated by another notion, no less fundamental, of Maronite primacy of station and status in the national hierarchy. This point has been adumbrated and discussed before but demands further clarification and emphasis at this juncture. It is well-known that the Maronites, and the Christians as a whole, have been decreasing in numbers in comparison with the rise of a Muslim majority population. Higher Muslim, in particular Shiite, birth rates and extensive Christian flight and migration account for the changing confessional demographic balance that has reduced the Christians to a minority segment within Lebanon. This development did not, however, convince the Maronites to concede and accommodate a radical reduction in their pride of place. Nor did it convince the Muslims to campaign strenuously for such a reduction. This point should nevertheless be considered in light of the reformed 'troika presidency' based on the Taif Accords, which did elevate the authority of both the Sunni prime minister and Shiite speaker of the Chamber of Deputies at the expense of the Maronite president. But the formal structure of government and the symbolism and power which derive therefrom have not brought the Maronites down. The Christians, though less than half of the Lebanese population, continued to constitute half of the 128 deputies in the parliamentary chamber.

The Maronite axis of the Lebanese polity is a remarkable product of Christian self-perception and of the particular and broader configuration of religious/confessional perceptions. In the Middle East, Lebanon represents the last line of Christian defense in the face of a surging and ambitious political Islam. The gushing wave of fundamentalism and terrorism had washed ashore in Lebanon in the form of Hizbullah and its Iranian patron. Without a special political status, beyond what the arithmetic of democratic politics justifies, the Christians of Lebanon will decline like the Assyrians of Iraq and the Copts of Egypt. They will be the targets of discrimination and persecution as vulnerable *dhimmi* denizens of a Muslim religiously dominant society. A Maronite president in Beirut may appear as a dose of injustice to the Muslims, but he represents a higher justice for the Christians. The Muslims may have a grievance against

having to suffer a Maronite head of state; but this political frustration pales in comparison with an existential threat which would face the Christians, in certain volatile circumstances, if a Muslim were head of state.

The standard of education, culture and sophistication in Lebanon is conventionally associated with the Maronites, as a stereotypical image and a certain partial social reality. The Shiites, the plurality community since the 1980s at the latest, envy the numerically diminishing Maronites, but not with a vengeance. According to one commentator: 'Even the vast majority of Shiites in Lebanon just want to be Maronites—not religiously, but socially, politically, educationally and materially.'[7] The Christians generally are the models for prevalent emulation. Shiites in the capital want their children to learn French, attend the American University of Beirut and read Lebanon's major newspaper, owned by the Greek Orthodox Tuéni family, *Al-Nahar.* Nabih Berri, head of the Amal party and speaker of the Chamber, has distinguished between the Shiites being a *numerical* majority (really plurality) but without becoming a *political* majority. He once pointed out that the Shiites are not interested in the presidency, though they are decidedly demanding a more fair distribution of offices and regional development resources for the south and the Bekka. Here is Shiite deference to the Maronites, or the Christians as a numerical minority but a political majority, who will be obliged to take more account of the traditionally less-advantaged communities in the country.

The historic communities of Lebanon, specifically of Mount Lebanon, were the Maronites and the Druzes. The founding communities of modern Lebanon were the Maronites and the Sunnis. But the *fin de siècle* new political community of Lebanon are the Shiites. They, along with the Orthodox, the Catholic and the Armenians, deserve their legitimate place in the Lebanese matrix of power and social standing.

The sense that the Maronites are 'more Lebanese' than the other communities, and thus more worthy of the highest office, is a rather selfevident proposition. The Sunnis are part of the sweep of Arab Muslim nationalist sentiment and traditionally looked to Syria as their political address. The Shiites in Lebanon are part of the regional revival of their sectarian community with fundamentalist Iran as the focus of power. The Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic communities, some of whose adherents have been patriotic stalwarts, and the Armenian denomination, belong to externally centered universal churches. The Druzes in Lebanon are part of the esoteric brotherhood residing also in Syria and Israel. But the Maronites are concentrated in Lebanon as their ancestral and singular homeland. The link between religion and nationality in their exceptional case is bound to the land of Lebanon.

As the pristine Lebanese according to ascriptive and achievement criteria, the Maronites have not been challenged as the legitimate possessors of the office of president. This itself is significant of a deeper and broader truth. When the Sunnis, Shiites, Orthodox, Catholics, Armenians and Druzes vote for a certain Maronite candidate for president, they are doing more than declaring the

Maronites the native blue-blood political aristocracy of the country. They are also declaring *themselves* to be Lebanese more than bespeaks their other identity options. If, at the time of voting for a Maronite as president, Sunni deputies saw themselves first as Arabs and as Muslims, then they would not agree that a Christian hold the highest political office over, no less, the majority Muslim community. This is a violation of Islamic doctrine and lore. But the Muslims affirm their Lebanese identity when they willingly choose a Maronite president. At that moment they demonstrate that Lebanese nationhood is not a Christian fiefdom but a spiritual homeland for all Lebanese communities—and as Lebanese they choose a fellow-Lebanese for president.

The Lebanese National Anthem, written by the Maronite poet Rashid Nakhl in the 1920s, praises 'our country, our flag and glory'—and the cedar, of course—in the name of all the Lebanese. There is no Christian reference or symbol in the words of the anthem.

It could be asked: if all Lebanese citizens ultimately recognize themselves as Lebanese, then why should the Maronites be considered the Lebanese *par excellence*! The idea that nationhood goes beyond the boundaries of the Maronite community is itself a successful expanding re-definition of Lebanese identity. The Maronite victory in having unearthed the Muslims' self-consciousness as Lebanese can however be the dialectic for Maronite political loss. This is a question which future Lebanese thinkers and politicians will quite possibly have to confront.

Each group makes its own confessional consideration in this context. The Sunnis have been numerically overtaken by their Shiite co-religionists and this found political expression in the Tripartite Agreement of 1985, though not in the Taif Accord of 1989. Nonetheless, Sunnis traditionally see themselves for historical and educational reasons as the dominant Muslim sect above the Shiites, and would not want to see the Shiites acquire control of the presidency. This could transform Lebanon into a radical Islamic republic that could unleash centuries of Shiite jealousy and animosity against the Sunnis in the cities. Hilal Khashan's research findings confirm that the Sunnis depend on the Maronites to stem the Shiite tidal wave of recent years.[8] Better an *infidel* Maronite than a *mujaheedin* holy warrior Muslim as president of Lebanon.

The critical locus of the Christians in the Lebanese social complex is a fascinating piece of historical sociology. Shiites and Druzes feel cold to each other for religious reasons. But Druzes are comfortable living with non-threatening Christians, while Shiites can accede to Maronite superiority. Sunnis and Greek Orthodox have lived amicably together in West Beirut. When Muslims attacked and intimidated the small Jewish Beiruti community in 1947–48, some Jews went to stay with Maronites in Mount Lebanon. Noteworthy was the fact that while the Sunni Prime Minister discussed pan-Arab warfare against the emerging Jewish state, he yet sent an army unit to provide protection for the Jews in the capital. The exceedingly complicated communal ledger seems to add up to the following conclusion: no community really rejects a Maronite president

and each community has a way to rationalize its preference for accommodating the special Maronite status in the country. The Lebanese paradox is an enigma whereby one group's special numerically unwarranted status is a political foundation for national stability. Instead of Maronite privilege jolting the system into instability and turmoil, it has the capacity to gird the system with stability and continuity. A Sunni or Shiite president would very likely signal the end of a distinct Lebanon, as well as the end of the Christians.

Lebanon is a nation of communities more than it is an absolutely egalitarian regime of its individual citizens. It has chosen group representation over personal representation. It has offered each major community a certain defined stake in the system despite the inherent competition among the separate groups. This consociational democracy is based on the cooperation and political interaction among the groups' elite representatives, in the government and Chamber of Deputies specifically, who manage the political trade-offs in a reasonably satisfactory fashion. No group is disenfranchised and a modicum of stability is achieved.

A Lebanese political community therefore emerges from the floating formation of a shared national consciousness. This is a matter of historical development in the minds and not only in the public offices among the Lebanese. Statesmanlike magnanimity and a balance-of-power appropriate to the composite Lebanese people are the way toward a comprehensive resolution of rivalry in this segmented society. If aggrieved Shiites, who are loyal first and foremost to Lebanon and not to Iran, demonstrate their patriotism on behalf of the independence of the country from foreign predators, then there can be no justification not to acknowledge Shiite requests for opportunities and advance. With an eye to the judicious Metternich, who advocated restraint over revolution as a political principle, it will be advisable to include rivals rather than exclude and turn them into enemies. Politics is about imponderables, while the destructive forces should be removed from the platform of a new political order for Lebanon.

Theodor Hanf contended that his research findings indicate the Lebanese have experienced 'the decline of a state and the rise of a nation'.[9] It is of course true that Lebanon as a state degenerated terribly in the 1970s and 1980s: it lost its sovereignty to the impudent intervention of foreigners and failed to represent a focus of proud independence in the eyes of its own citizens. Yet the 'rise of a nation', using the phrase of Hanf, is compatible with the notion of the 'rise of the state' in its potentiality, if not actuality, to reflect that very emerging nationhood of Lebanon. The inner core is the people and the external shell is the state. Throughout the years of anarchy and warfare, the regime changed but not in an exceptionally extreme way. Rather, power arrangements were adjusted and altered without doing away with the regime form in its institutional parameters as such. The regime rests as before upon confessional distribution of power, Christian-Muslim symbiosis and symbolic Maronite primacy. The state shell

declined but the political regime was strengthened by measured and limited reform.

PROBING LEBANESE NATIONALITY

The recent record of history in Lebanon is suffused with foreign penetration as a cause and catalyst of the country's identity crisis. Alien intervention is not a recent development. In earlier times, the French supported the Maronites, the English patronized the Druzes, the Russians identified with the Orthodox and the Vatican looked to the Catholics. In the twentieth century, the Arabs sided with the Muslims, Syria came to support the Palestinians, Iran aided the Shiites and Israel armed the Christians. This pattern of foreign involvement stoked the fires of communal tension and aroused confessional competition for resources and power. The Europeans and the Middle Easterners did a grave disservice to the Lebanese. Better that the Lebanese walk toward each other on a narrow national lane alone rather than parade their pride and presumption on the boulevard of a broader political arena.

The old debate about the Arabness of Lebanon, or specifically that of the Christian population, is highly overworked, overcharged and unpro ductive. That Lebanon has its own particular national attributes and political regime is as true as it is for Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. Each country in the region is unique in respect of its cultural and official habitat. The territorial-state framework produces its own country rhythm, identity and symbols. This relates to scenery and historic sites, vernacular tongue/dialect and national holidays. Lebanon is certainly no less particular and unique—though perhaps even more so—than other countries in this regard. The experiences of life become woven into the consciousness of each people in each particular country, regardless of those factors which may be characteristic in more countries than one.

A state is an institution that demands compliance from its residents. It is normatively indifferent to the particular parochial identities of the different groups which inhabit the state. The English, Welsh, Scots and Irish all reside in the United Kingdom and are, in some way, part of the British realm. In Switzerland the citizens speak German, French and Italian; but they all give their assent to the law and symbols of the land. The English and the French inhabit bi-national Canada; they are all Canadians.

A certain threshold is crossed when the state matures and consolidates its collective identity virtually blind to ethnic-religious-linguistic differences which cease being stigmatized as cleavages. Lebanon, after a long war and under foreign occupation, may yet cross this threshold. Indeed, there is reason to believe that it edged up to the line without full realization of its manifold selfhood. Progress toward a tempering of the national nerves need not be a fully conscious process. Complete clarity of self-understanding can come after rather than before the constitution of a generally acceptable political order. There is much to be said for this kind of Burkean conception of an organic development in political

attitudes and political institutions. For Lebanon is a product of its ancient and more modern past, not especially a product of a blueprint formulated in the abstract or from afar based on comparative models of government. It is affirming that it has a right to be itself.

In the Maurice Barrès' conception of France, the national community emerged from culture and not biology as a historical evolution based on language and territory in particular. He gave voice to the idea of sacred space which is home to the collective soul of the people. For him, Lorraine was the locus of religious emotion that evoked a sensation of grandeur and courage. The Christian religion was also a component of nationhood, but Barrès was attracted in addition to paganist pre-Christian celtic symbols and the broad sense of Latin culture in the collage of France's collective identity.[10] Theoretically anyone in France, even coming to her from the outside, could be or become a Frenchman. The nation was very particular, but also open. This conception clearly fits a certain sense of Lebanese nationhood that can be acquired by individuals and groups who absorb and internalize the special ethos or spirit of the country. Certainly the magic of the mountain, as the Frenchman Henri Lammens taught about it at the St Joseph University in Beirut, was at the heart of the national and historical mythology of Lebanon.

LEBANESE PATRIOT, ISRAELI ALLY

The conception of a multi-confessional Lebanese people was a very central doctrine for Etienne Sakr and in the ideology of *Herraas Al-Arz.* It was in fact a way of life. He was convinced of the inherent existence of a Lebanese people that extended beyond the Maronites, or even all the Christians, to include the Muslim and Druze communities as well. His party was distinct from the Christian parties/militias—the *Kata'eb, Ahrar, Maradas* and *Tanzim*—in its membership composition on a multi-religious foundation. In this respect, and accounting for his lack of a clan heritage, the patriarchal families of the Maronite community looked askance at Abu-Arz as a wayward political stepson. According to Sami Shidyak, who knew Abu-Arz in Beirut and in the south, Etienne was a leader with charisma and honesty. He was able to 'get a piece of the national cake', though lacking family ties or money. All this is a noteworthy, indeed remarkable, achievement in Lebanon.

The need for the Christians to reach out to the Muslims and together constitute the national body of Lebanon could be seen as a political necessity rather than an ideological imperative. That the Christians were in decline, demographically and otherwise, was a central feature of both the long war and socio-religious trends in the country. In order to preserve a place for themselves in the political arena, it was prudent for the Christians to forge a renewed alliance with the Sunnis in particular. But for Abu-Arz, his advocacy of an encompassing and inclusive Lebanese peoplehood had been part of his outlook for decades, and was not the result of circumstances or events. His view penetrated deep into the history of

Lebanon: it constituted a faith and conviction, not a policy. But when the process of Christian deterioration proceeded apace, Etienne Sakr's ideology was undoubtedly bolstered by the contemporary profile of Lebanon and not just by its special mythological past. This development could confirm Abu-Arz as a visionary, rather than an agile opportunist.

Two anecdotes related by Guardian fighters in the SLA illustrate the authentic vision of Lebanese peoplehood complemented by Maronite leadership. *Alloush* kept a photo of himself and another soldier who served under him in the Jezzine area. The soldier was a Shiite who wanted to be called 'Fady' because it is a name basically used by Christians. He adopted Christianity and Abu-Arz officiated as the godfather at the baptism of Fady under the supervision of Father Nasseer Matta. Later he married in the Maronite Church of Mashmoushi near Sabbah. But soon thereafter, Fady was tragically killed in the war. This is a moving and sad story of brothersin-arms with the Christian being the elder brother.

Tony Abu Jamra, from the southern Christian village of Deir Mimas, told the story of SLA officer Rony Hasbani who commanded a unit of Shiite soldiers. They loved and admired their Maronite officer so much that they wanted to convert to Christianity. This story too highlights the natural primacy of the Maronites and the loyalty of the Shiites to them.

In Beirut, the multi-confessional composition of the Guardians made a strong impression on the Israelis who visited Abu-Arz' headquarters and beheld his militia manpower. Oded Zarai said: 'I loved the Guardians group' and one of the reasons was the enervating spectacle of a microcosm of Lebanon's confessional mosaic living, working and fighting as one in the ranks of the Guardians. The same was true for the South Lebanese Army with its multi-confessional Christian-Druze-Shiite composition and *esprit de corps.* Noteworthy is that SLA Shiite fighters faced Hizbullah Shiite terrorists in battle. The SLA Shiites were fighting as Lebanese and the Hizbullah Shiites as Iranian proxies. It is nonetheless a fact that Hizbullah fought foreign Israelis on Lebanese soil, while the SLA fought native Shiites on Lebanese soil. This description of events is accurate within the controversial complexity of the political problematic in southern Lebanon. The SLA did represent the goal of political freedom, but its Israeli connection tarnished this otherwise reasonable and very legitimate aspiration.

The struggle of Abu-Arz with the traditional Christian leadership was ideological and political on many fronts. His political attitude toward Syria as an enemy-state in 1975 from the start of the war was grounded in history and ideology, and proved absolutely correct. The Gemayels and Chamouns, Suleiman Franjiyyeh, Elias Sarkis and others, understood this only when it was too late. Abu-Arz' dogmatic opposition to the Palestinians in Lebanon was a record of principle and consistency. The Liberal Party of Camille Chamoun cavorted with the Palestinians to fight against Bashir's forces after the Safra episode of July 1980, and *Ahrar* elements coordinated with Fatah in the Zahle events in December the same year. But the Guardians never laid to rest their

demand and goal that the Palestinians be removed from the country. This was frowned upon as an extreme and unfeasible goal. But later all the Christian leaders, including President Emile Lahoud, and Muslim leaders including Sunni Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and Shiite Speaker Nabih Berri, adopted the same fundamental position that rejected the permanent (re)settlement of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Etienne Sakr saw earlier, understood more profoundly, and stood more firmly on the principle of 'Lebanon for the Lebanese' than anyone else.

The Guardians of the Cedars was a credible political party in the sense that it formulated a detailed program for reform in Lebanon that extended to all spheres of society. It was not a family club or just a fighting militia. The National Liberal Party of the Chamoun clan lacked, by comparison, any credible doctrine, ideology, or program. It existed under the paternalistic eye of Camille Chamoun alone. The *Kata'eb* Party was a Gemayel fiefdom which, during the days of Bashir's leadership of the Lebanese Forces, raised the twin principles of *unity* and *liberation* as exalted goals; but this slogan dissipated after the assassination of the charismatic Bashir Gemayel. However, by comparison, the Guardians formulated a program that reflected broad thinking and a comprehensive outlook on the national needs of the country. This meant that the Guardians did not only want to win the war: they also wanted a revolution of ideas and politics for Lebanon. The *New Lebanon* would take measures to sweep away the traditional politicians, charged with corruption and hungry for private gain; reduce the number of civil service functionaries, who are lazy and appointed without concern for their moral, intellectual and patriotic qualities; offer universal and free education and medical care; promote light industry and modern agriculture; and build a strong army that believes in God and in Lebanon. Of cultural significance was the proposal to substitute the Arabic alphabet with the alphabet designed by Sa'id Aql based on the ancient Phoenician characters. (Although emphasizing that he conventionally spoke Lebanese, Abu-Arz was very pedantic in his written and at times oral use of the Arabic language, and would declare confidently that he knew Arabic better than the Arabs—a not untypical and rather traditional Lebanese claim.) The complementary political measures in foreign affairs would be the withdrawal of Lebanon from the League of Arab States and the signing of a peace treaty with Israel.[11]

The flawed leadership of Lebanon was for Abu-Arz the most basic reason for the collapse and enslavement of the country. He unfailingly accused the traditional Maronite political dynasts of unpatriotic behavior. He denounced various parties and movements active in Lebanon with treasonous anti-Lebanese behavior on behalf of foreigners: the Syrian Social National Party, the Communist Party, the Baathist Party, the Palestinian organizations, the Nasserite Sunni factions and the Shiite parties, especially Hizbullah under Iranian tutelage.

Abu-Arz constantly denounced the Christian warlords for causing the fall of the Maronites in their wild penchant for interminable in-fighting: the Gemayels versus the Franjiyyehs and the Chamouns; Amin Gemayel versus Samir Geagea;

Elie Hobeika versus Geagea; Geagea versus Michel Aoun. For most of the time, most of them were in one way or another against Abu-Arz while he endeavored to promote unity of ranks and purpose in the common struggle for Lebanese freedom. He considered the Maronite leaders one of the primary causes of intersectarian warfare in the 1980s in particular. This Lebanese cauldron of party strife, along with the fissure between pro-Syrian collaborators and anti-Syrian patriots, recalled in history the breakdown of unity in Jewish ranks during the revolt against the Greeks and the Romans in the Hebrew homeland 2,000 years earlier. Fratricidal strife was the Jewish order of the day; the result was the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of any semblance of Jewish autonomy in the land. For Lebanon, the destruction of Beirut and the loss of Lebanon's independence defined the contemporary catastrophe. For Etienne Sakr, Lebanon had not really had a worthy leader of the republic since 1943, and moreover, it was the errors of earlier presidents that enabled someone like Emile Lahoud to become president in 1998. This 'diabolical cycle', as he called it, has yet to be broken. A local adage decries pitilessly the decaying character of politicians: 'When there are no noble horses, they put saddles on dogs.'

The Maronite clerical leadership was also the target of criticism for its accommodating quiescence to Palestinian warfare and Syrian occupation. Abu-Arz had hoped that the spiritual authority of the Patriarchate would be employed as a powerful political weapon by rallying the people and public opinion on behalf of Lebanese independence. When Mount Lebanon fought in earlier history for its liberty, the Patriarch appointed officials to lead the military struggle along with a half-priest *(shidyak)* to provide civilian leadership with religious inspiration. At the head of the campaign was the Patriarch who carried a wooden staff in his hand on the road to victory over Damascus. A French visitor to the mountain was highly impressed with the quality of Maronite patriarchs, reflecting: Their sticks are from wood and their hearts from gold.' Abu-Arz commented that now in his time it was the opposite: their sticks are from gold and their hearts are from wood.

Unlike the traditional leaders of Lebanon, Abu-Arz was not burdened in his analysis of the Lebanese reality and in proposing the proper course of action to adopt by either personal self-interest or family goals. Etienne Sakr could then examine questions on the agenda as a thinking man examining the world before him. His was a rational decision-making calculus and one buoyed by a strong dose of courage. Seeing things clearly, he unflinchingly called for resistance against the Syrians and the Palestinians from the beginning. This position made sense, not necessarily power or money.

The miscalculations of Lebanese leaders in the context of his own personal experience led Abu-Arz to recall a story about President Beshara al-Khoury from the late 1940s:

> Asaad Germanos, a Maronite member of the Guardians who was a judge, related the tale he heard from his father who had been a lawyer. President

> Khoury was willing that large numbers of Palestinians enter Lebanon—they could have been stopped with five soldiers at the border—after fleeing from Israel in the 1948 war. Interestingly, Prime Minister Riad al-Sulh, a Sunni like most of the Palestinian refugees, opposed this. Sulh told Germanos to go speak with Khoury in order to persuade him against the resettlement and naturalization of the Palestinians in Lebanon.
>
> *A Muslim wants to tell a Christian to be against the Palestinians!*
>
> Germanos went to Khoury at the [then] presidential palace at Kantari and the president invited him to a fish dinner. Germanos went not for fish but to talk. After telling Khoury what Sulh had said, Khoury answered that 'when the Armenians came to Lebanon after World War I and became citizens of the country, they ended up supporting Emile Eddé for president. Now the Palestinians will become naturalized citizens, and they'll vote for my *Hizb Al-Destour* (Constitutional Party) and me.'

Abu-Arz considered that it was this kind of inter-Maronite rivalry that, at least in part, enabled the Palestinians to enter Lebanon, and let them stay. Narrow short-term interests and an ultimately incorrect view of politics and nationalism bespelled disaster for Lebanon: 'All our problems in Lebanon', Etienne added, 'are due to inter-Maronite struggles.'

Abu-Arz used a striking image to explain further and deeper the nature of Lebanese peoplehood and his extraordinary faith in its intrinsic power.

> The confessional *[sic]* division of Lebanon is not between Christians and Muslims like everybody says and thinks. The division is between the good Lebanese, who constitute an over 80 per cent majority and include Christians, Muslims and Druzes, and the bad Lebanese who are less than 20 per cent and include Christians, Muslims and Druzes. There are good and bad people from all the communities. We called our party The Guardians of the Cedars—The *National* Movement. It is national in conception and composition. We need a national spirit and identity in Lebanon. This is good for the Maronites: if Lebanon becomes an arena for Christian-Muslim conflict, the Christians will lose. They should understand this, be the 'head' of Lebanon, and everybody including the Muslims will cooperate. We are not Arabs; and the Arabs outside want to swallow Lebanon. Therefore we have to cultivate a national consciousness and political determination against those who are strangers to Lebanon and her enemies.

The Taif Accord evoked in Abu-Arz his worst fears and outrage. The idea of a troika was a 'political freak' that meant disunity, not interconfessional unity. This imposed constitutional reform foisted upon Lebanon from the outside, engineered by the Saudis, the Syrians, and the Americans, absolved the

Palestinians and the Syrians who were the real agents of the war from 1975. Instead, the reform that equalized power among three offices—the Maronite president, the Sunni prime minister, and the Shiite parliamentary chairman—implied that a confessional imbalance had been the political bane of Lebanon and the source for the so-called 'civil war'. But Etienne considered Taif the possible future cause of a civil war rather than its alleged cure. Moreover Lebanon was in need, as any other state, of a single head and not three heads. And better that the head be a Muslim, he mused, both because of the record of Maronite national faithlessness and surrender in the past, and accounting for the supposition that a Muslim president would not act against the Maronites. Despite their decline, they could still brake any untoward deviations from normative Lebanese national interests.

Abu-Arz was convinced of the feasibility and necessity of the Lebanese national project. He recalled that when President Franjiyyeh sent the Army to invade Palestinian refugee camps before the outbreak of the war in 1975, there were Muslim officers who led the operation against the PLO. This is a striking example of Lebanese unity against arrogant foreigners. Abu-Arz was thoroughly convinced that, were he president, he could send Sunni pilots to bomb Damascus. He felt, moreover, that he could more easily convince Muslims to be devoted Lebanese patriots than convince Maronites to accept them as absolutely loyal to the country. The 'fly in the ointment' was Maronite misunderstanding and not Muslim treachery.

Abu-Arz, whose love for Lebanon was legendary, felt responsible for the welfare of the country as a whole. However, his vision and ambition far exceeded his resources. Both Lebanese and Israelis testified that he sought no private gain, indeed received none. He did not chase publicity and got little. Maronite bishop Paul Sayah and journalist Salam Eid testified that Etienne Sakr had virtually no money. Nagy Najjar commented that 'he was the only leader who fought in the war and came out poor'.[12] A rumor nonetheless made the rounds concerning the person who headed the Guardians intelligence network. There were those who suspected that Abu-Arz kept for himself official funding that Israel provided the party. Abu-Arz totally denied this accusation and charged the responsible official with underhanded financial dealings. One Lebanese related that the official, while respected as a patriot by Israelis who knew and worked with him, tried to do things behind Abu-Arz' back, and spoke in ways designed to tarnish his name and reputation. The overall Lebanese consensus regarding Abu-Arz would find its pithy definition of him as 'a man of noble character', in the words of May and Alfred Murr. Israeli journalists Oded Zarai and Shlomo Ganor, who visited his headquarters in East Beirut, witnessed the simplicity of the small modest surroundings. The Guardians, like Nicole who ran the party office in Ashrafiyyeh, were pure idealists who believed totally in the cause of Lebanon. Altruism is one of the main principles of the Guardians ideology, Abu-Arz proudly pointed out. When considering that in Arabic there was

no term for altruism, Sa'id Aql invented a new word *ghayriyyah* to express the idea.

The fact that the Guardians were financially dependent on Israeli subsidies was a function of the party's poverty. The role of money and politics is a problematic mix when a man like Abu-Arz, deep in moral and ideological principles, strives to achieve Lebanese goals, but with Israeli backing. National liberation struggles throughout history have often and almost always relied on foreign support. There is nothing contemptible or incriminating about this. Until 1989, the party received a share of just 2.5 per cent from the Lebanese Forces fund, with 50 per cent allotted to the *Kata'eb* and 47.5 per cent going to the *Ahrar.* This meagre allotment and donations from some wealthy individuals provided the Guardians budget. After coming to Jezzine, Abu-Arz no longer received LF monies and the only remaining source of income was a small sum provided by Israel. In the case of the IsraeliGuardians relationship, however, the giving side weakened and limited the receiving side. Israel benefited from the Guardians in the fields of security operations and intelligence information. Yet at the same time Israel diverted Abu-Arz and blocked him from ascending the ladder of Lebanese leadership. He was always a great friend of Israel, but Israel kept him down. Accepting funding did not compromise the fundamental principles that he believed in and from which he never swerved. But his dependence on Israel proved to be problematic and disappointing. The balance sheet suggests that he deserved better treatment and greater respect from Israel. When all is said and done, he was a Lebanese patriot and not an Israeli agent. But he was an extraordinarily loyal friend to Israel.[13]

Abu-Arz proved to be deadly accurate concerning the Syrian and Palestinian questions in Lebanon. Even his adversaries could admit to this, though they may prefer to forget the poignancy of his political judgment and prognosis. The political equation regarding Israel is, however, complex and the results far more problematic. The historic Zionist-Maronite connection, of which the Guardians-Israeli one is a chapter, goes back at least to the 1920s. It includes the pact signed between Jewish land-purchasing agent Yehoshua Hankin with Maronite activist Nejib Sfeir on the basis of mutual recognition of a Jewish national home in the Land of Israel and a Christian Lebanon separate from Muslim Syria. The friendship between the sides involved Patriarch Antoine Arida's offer in the mid-1930s to support the settlement of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in Lebanon. The Emile Eddé-Chaim Weizman meeting in Paris in 1937 was another occasion for conveying wishes for political independence of the two peoples in their small lands. In the same year David Ben-Gurion stated that 'the Christian people of Lebanon faces a destiny similar to that of the Jewish people'. In 1946 Zionists and Maronites again signed an agreement for mutual cooperation. In the mid-1950s Prime Minister Ben-Gurion supported a'minorities alliance' based in particular on a Jewish-Maronite link. And while not all the Lebanese, nor even all Maronites, were consistently favorable toward Israel, the underlying current of feeling was positive. Specifically, it is unlikely

that there was ever a Maronite attack initiated on Jews or Israel. After his election in 1977, Prime Minister Menachem Begin held the political view and moral conviction that, indeed, the Jewish people of Israel and the Christian people of Lebanon share a similar fate in a threatening Arab Middle East.

Abu-Arz proved his firm friendship to Israel for a long generation of war and disappointment. Bashir Gemayel misled the Israelis and his brother Amin distanced himself from them. Elie Hobeika turned against the Israelis and Michel Aoun lied to them. But Etienne Sakr said what he believed and did what he promised.

Israel's treatment of Abu-Arz bordered on the derogatory during the 1970s and 1980s and touched on the malicious in the 1990s. Under the 'dual Lahad-Lubrani regime' in south Lebanon, Abu-Arz was denied the political recognition and freedom of activity that he had justifiably earned for himself and the Guardians during years of struggle on behalf of both Lebanon and Israel. But the Israeli establishment failed to appreciate the man and his work. Four reasons explain this:

1. The politics of Abu-Arz rested upon a solid nationalist ideology in years, when for large sectors of the Israeli elite establishment, ideology was instinctively vilified as irresponsible right-wing fanaticism. His ardent Lebanese nationalism did not conform with the withering Israeli national spirit and the rather official erosion of Zionist faith and activism.
2. The vision of Abu-Arz and the wellsprings of his optimism were at odds with the banality of Israel's political self-composure and restrained policies, as in the face of the Palestinian *intifada,* which broke out in late 1987. Israeli *Mapai*-style pragmatism was the norm while for Etienne Sakr, who appeared insensitive to pragmatic considerations, his embattled people needed a more uplifting ethos in the struggle for political freedom. After 1982 and Israel's seemingly endless problems in Lebanon, public opinion in Israel instinctively steered away from any grand strategy for Lebanon. Abu-Arz did clearly represent grand strategy thinking for Lebanon.
3. The inclusive national doctrine of Abu-Arz, and his potential appeal to broad strata of Lebanon's mosaic society, was not sufficiently appreciated in Israel. Certainly until the mid-1980s, Lebanon was identified in the Israeli political mind with the Maronites. This perhaps parallels the political perception according to which Israel is identified with the Jews. The Guardians pan-confessional notion was eccentric or incredible, and therefore dismissed, instead of being examined and exploited for positive political purposes.
4. At rock bottom, the integrity of Abu-Arz came up against Israeli cynicism. Israelis tend not to give compliments and often do not show gratitude to those who assisted or cooperated with them, no less in fulfilling Israeli national interests. This character flaw is striking in comparison with the

> moral teaching of Caesar Sakr, which his son Etienne learned well, that there is a difference between right and wrong.

Much criticism has been leveled against Israeli policy in Lebanon and its multiple failures. The leftist camp was especially indignant about Israel's arrogance in thinking that a military campaign, as in 1982, could lead to a new political order in Beirut and a peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon. Israel's extended military presence cost the lives of over 1,300 IDF soldiers until 2000. At the same time, Israel obstinately refused to employ alternative options in dealing with the Lebanese entanglement: either, engage in a direct full-blown military confrontation with Syrian forces in Lebanon to get to the strategic root of the terrorist campaign; or, support a fortified, vibrant and free SLA to take on Hizbullah in a rapid-movement no-holdsbarred guerrilla offensive.

It is compellingly clear that, once the polemical dust settles, Israel failed to achieve its objectives in Lebanon: the Christian community was weakened, the Syrian presence was strengthened, Hizbullah was vindicated and victorious, Iran was confirmed in its Shiite revolution, and friendly South Lebanese allies and neighbors were uprooted from north of the Israeli border. The entire Galilee and Haifa Bay area was exposed to enemy rocketfire as of the May 2000 IDF flight from Lebanon. Israel's air force no longer conducted aerial surveillance over Syrian military positions in the Bekka area. Only blind Israeli haughtiness could nurture massive selfdeception in thinking that Israel realized its goals in Lebanon, despite the glaring facts to the contrary. Ultimately, Israel failed to understand an old Middle Eastern political principle, embedded in historical affairs and somewhat in a common consciousness, which posited the following equation: if Israel harms Lebanon, it harms itself. For Israel and Lebanon, as Abu-Arz grasped and taught, shared one history, one geography and one destiny. With the total submergence of Lebanon under Syrian and Iranian domination, Israel had lost a window to the Arab world. Lebanon, if free and friendly, could be a cultural, economic and political conduit for Israel throughout the Middle East. As it turned out, Lebanon was instead a platform for rabid and incessant media and political barrages against Israel and her very right to exist.

The Israelis, it seemed, could hardly appreciate either Lebanon and its national qualities or Etienne Sakr and his high human qualities: his authentic friendly comportment, his dignified cultural serenity; no less his penetrating understanding of Lebanese society and his political advice concerning the senior Lebanese Christian personalities. What was noted and sometimes recognized was the tenacity and consistency of his doctrinal commitments, an unbending will. But the Israelis did not like it when he told them the truth and repeated it on every occasion. The Israelis preferred to hear what they wanted to hear: about an alliance with the Gemayels in the 1970s-early 1980s, about collaboration with the Shiites in the 1980s and 1990s, and about General Lahad's leadership in the mid-to-late 1990s. Abu-Arz found himself creating enemies rather than friends and admirers due to his uncompromising honesty and straight talk.

Abu-Arz was on political target in the positions he adopted regarding Lebanon, the Syrians and the Palestinians. Regarding Israel, though his theoretical analysis and ideological judgment concerning the alliance were sound, he missed the political target. Israel, after all, never was willing to do the work of the Maronites for them. Not in the 1950s against the Nasserites, nor in the 1970s against the Palestinians, nor in the 1980s against the Syrians. Lebanon's independence and freedom was the responsibility of the Lebanese. There was admittedly a strong overlapping of Israeli-Lebanese interests, but it was not absolute. It was an error to think that Israel would expend its full resources and run major risks when it could manage with a difficult situation, like the Syrian presence in Lebanon, but which was for Lebanon an existential problem. An attitude of dependence on Israel, with the supposition that she would save Lebanon from others, contributed to hoping for salvation rather than successfully acquiring the instrumentalities and optimal mode of struggle to achieve it. Something of this characteristic dependency affected the political misjudgment of Abu-Arz concerning Israel.

THE NOW AND THE ETERNAL

To draw a final summary of Abu-Arz is premature because his full destiny has not yet unfolded. Clemenceau was 80 years old when he came to head the French government in World War I. Ronald Reagan only became the American president at the age of 69. At the time of the May 2000 betrayal and his leaving from Lebanon to Israel, Abu-Arz was 63 years old.

His was a sisyphean fate: condemned by the gods to roll a rock to the top of a mountain and see it slide down, again and again, as it approaches the summit. This torment was part of the life of Abu-Arz. He might have reached a higher echelon in 1982, in particular after Bashir's assassination. But Etienne didn't. He could have renewed the climb to the mountaintop from Jezzine in 1990, but his path was blocked. His decade-long effort thereafter seemed to have achieved no solid results. But he survived it all, and with life there is hope.

Charles de Gaulle was obscure and unknown until the age of 49. Although broadly rejected, he became the symbol of *la résistance* of the Free French against the Nazi occupation of France during World War II. He fled to London while his Free French movement was hardly more than a one-man show. But later he returned with the Allied forces for the liberation of Paris in June 1944. De Gaulle, who saw the world in terms of nations and not ideologies, had 'a certain idea of France'. He waxed sentimental about the greatness of France. He considered himself a 'man of destiny' and believed that the French republic, rather than the Vichy regime of Pétain, was embodied in the Free French Committee. De Gaulle was a man of vision and principle which history eventually vindicated in the annals of modern France. He was elected president of France at the age of 69.

For Etienne Sakr, the career of de Gaulle represented a great historical truth: that nations cannot create a great leader, but a great leader can create a nation, and a great leader may appear once in 200 or 300 years. But the spirit of a great leader can inject life into a nation that can resonate for hundreds of years. 'Lebanon is still living on the spirit of Fakhr al-Din from the seventeenth century, because he was a great man', declared Abu-Arz.

It would be unsatisfactory and disgraceful for Abu-Arz, and in his view for the Lebanese as a whole, to just live in the homeland and exercise freedom of religion, but without exercizing political freedom. This would be a dishonorable state of affairs for true patriots of Lebanon. Anything less than liberty was slavery.

Etienne Sakr was a known public figure, though marginalized and discredited, while posing as the true symbol of the Lebanese resistance struggle against foreign forces in the country. His Guardians of the Cedars Party embodied the pure and authentic Lebanon. There was the *legal* Lebanon of the puppet Beirut government, of Hrawi and Lahoud, of Hariri, Berri and Murr. Juxtaposed was the *true* Lebanon of Abu-Arz, the Guardians of the Cedars, of Saad Haddad and the Army of Free Lebanon. Party member Fady Fadel said: 'Abu-Arz is the only chance for Lebanon.' Joseph Khoury Tawk referred to the Epic of Gilgamesh in writing about his party's leader: 'He is one of the pillars of the Temple which, without him, may fall—Like Khombaba protected and saved the cedars of Lebanon, Abu-Arz is the Khombaba who will save Lebanon.'

Abu-Arz had not reached the peak of political achievement and recognition. Perhaps what would sustain him in the dark days of great personal tragedy was the very fact that he had not risen to the highest rung of leadership. Perhaps he could weather a painful loss because he had never achieved sweeping success in the past. This is not to underestimate the misfortune he endured, but only to weigh it in proportion to the balance of success and failure over time. But he had nonetheless been able to salvage his life and much of his dignity, despite the betrayal of friends (and family), the threats of rivals and the menace of enemies. He survived physically, unlike Tony Franjiyyeh, Bashir Gemayel and Dany Chamoun. He was true to his principles, unlike Elie Hobeika, who was murdered in spring 2002. He survived in Lebanon longer than did Michel Aoun, exiled since 1990. He survived with his freedom longer than Samir Geagea, jailed since 1994.

The struggle of Etienne Sakr recalls that of Zeev Jabotinsky who shaped a militant brand of Zionism and campaigned for Jewish national freedom against British rule in Palestine. While famed for his cultural refinement and linguistic talent, Jabotinsky ('Jabo') was more than anything else dedicated to a Zionism that fought the foreign enemy with arms in struggling for an independent state of Israel. He set up the Betar youth movement to ideologically instill Jewish boys and girls, men and women, with a faith in their Biblical patrimony. Some considered Jabotinsky a romantic dreamer, others an extreme nationalist; Ben-Gurion vilified him. The British imprisoned him in 1920 and then expelled him

from *Eretz-Israel* in 1929. He would never set foot again in the Hebrew homeland. He died in 1940, while revered by the activist Zionist forces until today.

Etienne Sakr was uncompromising in symbolizing the war of Lebanon against Syrian occupation, Palestinian terrorism and Iranian *jihad.* He remains a living legend and a suffering servant of his country. With freedom snuffed from the public life of Lebanon, it was impossible to know what proportion of the Lebanese, or among the more active demonstrators in Beirut, were in the privacy of their thoughts supporters of Abu-Arz. Was he as the conscience of Lebanon but a faint glow embedded only in the sub-consciousness of the Lebanese? Away from Beirut for so long, and without any major public campaign to remind them of his existence and ideas, Abu-Arz could seemingly hardly be a central figure in the conversation of the people. This was hard to know and harder yet to measure. It was yet somewhat permissible under the reign of terror to speak out in support of Aoun or Geagea, but not for Abu-Arz. As he said, 'I'll be the last to return home.'

While separated from his family, Etienne's solitary lifestyle added further to his image of strength and purpose. He had taught Lebanese youth to love Lebanon and work for Lebanon their whole life. Some considered him a romantic dreamer, but this for Etienne Sakr was hardly a weakness. As in the words of the soothsayer from Lebanese author Khalil Gibran's story 'Dreams', only the dreams that you behold in your wakefulness, not in your sleep, are worth probing for their meaning.[14] Abu-Arz dreamt when awake, but the reality of his wakeful hours and days was often cruel. Ultimately he was cast out of his homeland. But he never recanted his political program or ideological doctrine in order to achieve a personal reprieve and advancement. Some were convinced that Abu-Arz remained Lebanese Enemy Number One of Syria. The Syrians had bought off many Lebanese: Abu-Arz and the Guardians would not be bought.

Perhaps the search of Diogenes of Sinope from the fourth century BC has symbolically ended. He was a proto-type Cynic who, while exercising inner spiritual freedom from wants and luxury, came in exile to Athens. His ideas and ways disturbed conventional norms of behavior. One of the things he did was peering with a lantern in daytime in search for a man. He could have found him in the person of Etienne Sakr.

Once, Etienne's relative went to the security office in Beirut to approve renewing her passport. The officials, speaking openly, said to her that 'Syria fears Abu-Arz more than anyone else'. Abu-Arz represented *truth* at war with *power* until politics will again be subsumed under the bright light of morality.

Epilogue

The irony of Israel uprooting the southern Lebanese from their homes, villages and lands in May 2000, and yet opening the border for their flight to safety, reflected the moral and practical confusion of the moment. Approximately 6,000 Lebanese entered Israel, unsure whether they should thank Israel for preventing Hizbullah and other enemies from slaughtering the southerners, or whether they should despise Israel for preventing them from deciding their own fate. Abu-Arz reacted with firm clarity in a press conference in the Israeli Knesset organized by Likud Party parliamentarian Ayoub Kara, on Sunday 29 May, just five days after the withdrawal. In no uncertain terms he blamed the fiasco on Prime Minister Ehud Barak. In a tense and packed room, with some 15 Members of the Knesset and media correspondents in attendance, Abu-Arz told the audience that the Lebanese did not want to leave their country and now demanded that Barak arrange for their safe and honorable return home.

Etienne Sakr was defiant and angry:

> You must know the truth about what happened in south Lebanon last week. This was a true betrayal. We were betrayed by the Israeli government. We could have stayed without the help of the IDF for a long time—We were stronger than Hizbullah. We were ready to remain and fight but when the government decided to withdraw, IDF officers ordered SLA officers to prepare their equipment and hand it over. In two hours, without a battle, the entire front collapsed. The Israeli government gave Hizbullah an unearned victory and us a shameful defeat. Yesterday I saw my people, who fought like lions for 20 years against their enemies, now humiliated and sitting in corners like rabbits…
>
> We are not traitors, like they say in Beirut. The traitors are in Beirut. The government is a Syrian government, a puppet-government in Syrian hands. We are the patriots, the heroes. We fought for 20 years against the terrorists. We have the right to return home.
>
> This is the job of the Israeli government: she took us out of our homes and she has to return us home. She must pressure the United States and other international forces so that we can return to our country.

> We are not interested in an amnesty. We have committed no crime for which we seek forgiveness. We are not guilty. We are not traitors. We were never agents of Israel, but the politicians in Beirut are the agents of Syria and her servants.
>
> We were allies of Israel and now this episode is a shameful chapter in your history. We call upon the Israeli government to call for implementation of United Nations Resolution 520. Israel never even mentioned this resolution. It calls for the withdrawal of all foreign forces to leave Lebanon.

Ya'ir Ravid, who as a young Israeli army officer was pivotal in forming the core south Lebanese militia in 1976, had harsh words on the shameful days of May, remarking 'We [Israel] threw them out like dogs.' He recalled that in 1976 the Lebanese asked for Israel's help: they did not want political asylum in Israel nor that Israel fight their war against Palestinian terrorists then. Ravid pointed out that the turning point came in 1984 when the Free Army of Lebanon under Saad Haddad became the South Lebanese Army under imperious Israeli control. Instead of being one of a myriad of militias in the war-torn land of the cedars, the SLA became a subdivision of the IDF. It lost its spirit and independence. The withdrawal of the IDF in May 2000 entailed necessarily, we conclude, the withdrawal of the SLA.

The thousands of Lebanese in Israel, half-refugees/half-guests of their former ally, encountered the emotional trauma of displacement and readjustment in circumstances of impoverishment and indignity. Over the succeeding months, many hundreds of them returned to Lebanon only to be arrested, often tortured, sentenced and jailed in Beirut. By January 2001, the military court in Beirut had sentenced more than 2,000 people, some who had remained behind in Lebanon among whom were civilians and soldiers, and those who returned from Israel to Lebanon, on charges of 'contact and collaboration with the enemy [Israel]'. Sentences ranged from a few months and fines, to sentences of up to 20 years. About ten were sentenced to death *in abstentia.* Three men died under torture in jail: 72-year-old George Sa'id, whose medications had been confiscated by the prison authorities, and militiamen Barakat Said el-Amil and AbdelMenhem Salim Karout. Torture was used in many cases against SLA men.

At the same time, the civilian population in southern Lebanon, which had bonded its life and fate with Israel, lived in the shadow of Hizbullah/ PPS/ Communist intimidation. Neither the Lebanese Government nor Army was in the south to protect the local population from harassment and threats by armed roaming militias. Wives, whose husbands had as SLA soldiers fled to Israel, were especially discomfited by the situation.

In Israel, the government did not consider its actions in May 2000 a betrayal of Lebanese allies. No shame was expressed, and responsibility was cold and administrative in spirit. A rehabilitation agency under the aegis of security

officialdom was set up to deal with the SLA refugees and families in the country. Providing only minimum financial stipends, the Israelis seemed interested in encouraging the Lebanese to leave for abroad. But virtually no country was willing to offer refugee status or political asylum to the SLA for fear of antagonizing the Shiite terrorists and their Iranian patron. There were among the Lebanese men, whose wives and children had remained behind in the south, some who considered going to settle, if at all possible, in another country. Abu-Arz was of the opinion that the Lebanese should remain in Israel until it becomes possible to return home. If not, then the 'good Lebanese' will have forfeited their villages and country to the fanatical Shiites. This would confirm the 'ethnic cleansing' of south Lebanon and especially of the Christian Maronite population. Guardian member and SLA officer Tony Abu Jamra, who had been known as 'little Abu-Arz' in south Lebanon, decided to leave Israel for abroad. His anguish and pain were overwhelming, and in desperation he hoped that he could start a life somewhere else with his wife and two baby children, still in south Lebanon, who would later join him. Abu-Arz, who had experience with family separation, thought differently: Tony shouldn't have gone away. Salvation is inside. You have to bite your wound even though it bleeds more.'

The Lebanese in Israel, of whom slightly less than 4,000 remained by summer 2001 and only about 2,500 by early 2002, were placed in a ghastly predicament. The escalation of violence and tension between Jews and Palestinians could trigger fear and suspicion of the Lebanese, who may seem to be Arabs and Arabic-speakers. In the eyes of Arabs in Israel, the Lebanese were vilified as traitors because they had fought alongside the IDF against Hizbullah and the PLO. Arabs in Israel, whose loyalty to the country becomes increasingly questionable over time, identify nationally as Palestinians; the SLA was decidely an enemy of the Palestinians in Lebanon. But at the same time Jews could mistaken the Lebanese for Arabs and, with Palestinian terrorism exploding throughout Israel, suspect the recent arrivals as the old enemies. An innocent Lebanese civilian might arouse fear of being a Muslim suicide-bomber. Beset by longing for their native homes just across the border and difficulties in managing in their new Israeli environment, many SLA families decided to return to Lebanon. This meant, however, that the former soldiers who were allies of Israel were arrested immediately upon their return, sent to a Beirut military court, and imprisoned. Going home entailed going to jail.

In early June, the Ariel Center for Policy Research convened a public forum in Haifa on the topic of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Abu-Arz was the central speaker and he laid three demands at the political doorstep of the Barak government: to work for the implementation of UN Resolution 520 concerning the withdrawal of Syrian/Iranian forces from Lebanon; the dismantlement of Hizbullah by the Lebanese government; and an effort on behalf of national reconciliation among all groups in Lebanon. Abu-Arz also called upon the Israeli government not to encourage the Lebanese 'our best men' he called them—to

migrate abroad. In addition, he criticized General Antoine Lahad who had expressed his forgiveness in the name of the SLA to the Lebanese government:

> For what do we have to express regret? What did we do? The SLA fighters were the true Lebanese patriots. The others, like Hizbullah, were the long arm of Syria and Iran. The SLA, different from the collaborators with Syria, didn't give up an inch of Lebanese land or provide any water to Israel. The Lebanese parliament and government are under Syrian control, and the Syrians appoint the president. These [Lebanese] collaborators are the real traitors.[1]

In late June, Abu-Arz appeared on the Arabic-language Israeli television program called *Apropo* and had an opportunity to express his ideas in his native tongue. His demeanor was grave, but his voice forceful as he laid out his political testament in detail. The background of the Lebanese collapse, he explained, was not due to a sectarian war but the Syrian occupation, the dissolution of the Lebanese Army, the traitors in Beirut. When the state abandoned the south in the mid-1970s, Saad Haddad did what was necessary to defend the region from terrorism: this is where the true Lebanese patriots stood their ground against the Palestinians and the agents of Syria and Iran, that is, Hizbullah. Concerning Israel in the year 2000, the government conspired against the SLA. Now Israel should push for the implementation of UN Resolution 520, promote national reconciliation in Lebanon, and promote the dismantlement of Hizbullah by the Syrians. How these worthy goals were to be realized, if at all, and by Israel specifically, remained something of an unanswered question.

In August, the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Anan, met with Sheikh Nasrallah of Hizbullah in Lebanon. Theirs was a warm meeting. There was no sign that Anan was striving to persuade the Lebanese government to establish normalization in the south by positioning the Army there, or working toward Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon and the disarming of Hizbullah. The signs pointed only to Hizbullah—and Syria and Iran—continuing to dominate the political stage in Lebanese national affairs.

In early September Abu-Arz met with Haim Ramon, a senior Labor Party politician, who was the Israeli minister responsible for the Lebanese in the country. Ramon conveyed no remorse for Israel's behavior toward the southern population and intimated that the best solution would be for SLA soldiers and their families to resettle elsewhere. Abu-Arz expectedly rejected this option, and the meeting ended on a cold note.

At the same time, there were Israelis who genuinely felt ashamed by the government's deceitful and disgraceful behavior and treatment of Israel's loyal allies. Former IDF officers who had served in the Lebanese Liaison Unit in southern Lebanon established an association to try and assist the Lebanese in Israel. They submitted a petition to the High Court requesting that the government offer full rights and privileges equal with those granted discharged

IDF soldiers, and including citizenship to those Lebanese who wish to remain in Israel.

Another association was established in the name of the Committee for Israeli-Lebanese Brotherhood and it organized a 'protest tent' in Tel-Aviv in September to demonstrate public solidarity with the SLA. In the course of the five-day event at Rabin Square, Abu-Arz had an opportunity to speak with Israeli passers-by and ordinary citizens who felt embarrassed by the shameful days of May. For virtually the first time, the Tel-Aviv public had the opportunity of meeting face-to-face their Lebanese allies and friends, who manned the protest tent. But their allies and friends were now in Israel not by their own choice.

The shame of the Israelis who came by Rabin Square revealed perhaps their personal trepidations for the future of their own country. Israel, no less than Lebanon, is the target of Arab and Islamic warfare, and the threat of being cast out of the country is a fear that Israelis have, consciously or subconsciously, felt. Aristotle had written in *Rhetoric* that 'what we fear for ourselves excites our pity when it happens to others'. This would not detract from the moral empathy that some Israelis, visiting the protest tent, felt for the Lebanese; but it does add a dimension of self-concern that is natural and understandable.

A variety of political figures, among them Members of the Knesset, visited the Lebanese and especially Abu-Arz. MK Yuri Stern expressed his suspicion that the withdrawal had involved an Israeli-Hizbullah conspiracy. Later, as a Deputy-Minister, Stern assumed governmental responsibility for improving the status and benefits for the SLA contingent in the country, and he demonstrated great empathy and energy on their behalf. Other MKs, like Uzi Landau, Tzipi Livni and Ayoub Kara from Likud, came away from the tent strengthened in their conviction that a great injustice had been done to the Lebanese. Visitors from the Israeli Left, like MK Mosi Raz from the Meretz Party, also came to show solidarity with the suffering of the Lebanese and the unfair treatment they were receiving from the Israeli government. As part of the protest activity, Abu-Arz led the Lebanese demonstrators on a march through Tel-Aviv to the American Embassy on Hayarkon Street, where he presented a letter to a diplomatic officer addressed to President Clinton. He asked the United States president to take action in order that 'Lebanon would be liberated from foreign forces' in accordance with UN Resolution 520. Then, he added, 'we could go home with dignity to our beloved Lebanon'.

There was in Etienne Sakr's speech always great emphasis on the preservation of dignity or the recovery of dignity, both for himself personally and for the Lebanese in general. It is culturally commonplace in the Middle East to set great store by the value of dignity, for an illiterate bedouin or an uneducated farmer or lowly bureaucratic official. This would be considerably more poignant a disposition in the case of a Maronite Lebanese who lost everything he had. Therefore, his dignity served as the last refuge to recover.

For its part, the Barak government disassociated itself from Resolution 520 and declined to initiate any Israeli policy to promote its implementation. In a

letter from an aide in the prime minister's office written on 14 September to the Committee for Israeli-Lebanese Brotherhood, it was pointed out that assistance provided the SLA fighters was divorced from 'Security Council Resolution 520 or any other international decision'. The aide did convey the government's support for their return home, but this was a politically vacuous statement with Israel passive concerning the documentation and mechanics of world diplomacy.[2] Regarding Ehud Barak, Abu-Arz wished him a punishment that 'he should live his life in exile out of his country and separated from his family; for only a person who experiences this could understand that tragedy of our people.'

One of the Israelis to visit Abu-Arz at Rabin Square was Shlomo Lahat ('Chitch'), reserve army general and former mayor of Tel-Aviv. Rather than speak much about Lebanon, the Israeli spoke about his role as chairman of the Committee for Peace and Security that represented hundreds of reserve military officers who, as a leftist group, intended to propose that Jerusalem be the capital of Israel and of the Palestinian State that, according to Lahat, will be established. This was the 'two-state' solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Lahat presumably assumed that Abu-Arz would agree with this idea. But Abu-Arz responded by telling Lahat that, 'I am not an Arab but a Lebanese. And I don't agree with this idea. Jerusalem is the capital just for Israel.' And he added: 'We know the Arabs, we have lived with them and fought against them for hundreds of years. You don't know them.' This rather odd verbal exchange showed that Abu-Arz, despite what had transpired in May, supported Israel's political rights and rejected a concessionary approach toward the Palestinians. His experience of the Palestinians in Lebanon had taught him that compromise is weakness and agreements do not hold political water.

In Israel, Etienne took time to visit the Lebanese scattered mainly in the northern part of the country. He tried to raise their spirits, and his own. MK Ayoub Kara and Abu-Arz' personal assistant arranged meetings for him with two eminent spiritual personalities in Israel: Rabbis Ovadiah Yosef and Yitzhak Kadoori, who expressed warm wishes to the Lebanese in managing their lives in Israel and in returning home when this is feasible. In February 2001, Abu-Arz addressed a delegation of the Zionist Organization of America in Jerusalem, and was received by an audience warm in human sentiment and shameful of Israeli policy. The ZOA presented Etienne Sakr with a plaque of exquisite Armenian artistry, upon which were the words from Psalm 23: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want—Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me…' Abu-Arz had faced death and trusted in God's protection. But he was yet to see the verse fulfilled: 'You prepare a table before me in full view of my tormentors. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.' His cup seemed empty.

He also participated in a Tel-Aviv press conference that launched the publication of a book in Hebrew edited by Aharon Amir on the Israeli withdrawal, *The Black Book—South Lebanon: The Story of Flight, Betrayal, and Disgrace.* The Israeli media, as was customary concerning certain Lebanese items, hardly

reported the event or the appearance of the book. On this occasion Abu-Arz commented on the May events:

> The Israeli public must know what happened. When we [the Lebanese, the SLA] joined with Israel 25 years ago, our goal was to remain in our homes, not to leave them, and to keep our Lebanese identity card. We joined Israel because it was a strong country and one with values—We fought together with Israel. We were not collaborators but allies of Israel.
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> Israel must improve the situation of our depressed and broken people. The government must create the conditions so that we can go home to Lebanon with dignity and security. This is an Israeli obligation. She [Israel] shamefully removed us, yet she must return us to Lebanon with pride and honor. We want to return freely to Lebanon—We hope there will be a strong prime minister after the elections [of early February] because we need a strong Israel.

Etienne Sakr never regretted his alliance with Israel because he conceived of it as a bond with the people and not with the politicians of the country. For him, he separated his own personal loss from the logic and necessity of the Lebanese-Israeli connection. He would not allow his own painful situation to divert his mind from the validity of an alliance between two small peoples in the Arab-Muslim region. He was convinced of its historical imperative despite the tragic results, as the Lebanese had paid a horrific price and gotten nothing in return. Positing the Israeli people rather than Official Israel as the partner of the Lebanese people was his way of conveying the ultimate renewal of the relationship in the days ahead. This was so though Official Lebanon, in its policies and rhetoric, and in the broader cultural domain, had assumed a very hostile disposition toward Israel. The Lebanese were mouthing opposition to Israel, since the withdrawal of May 2000 in particular, in a way never heard in the past. The Syrianization and Hizbullization of the political arena were the forces shaping the anti-Israeli atmosphere in Lebanon.

Later in February 2001, Ariel Sharon, the military architect of the War in Lebanon in 1982, was elected prime minister of Israel. In Lebanon some people said: ‘if Sharon is back, so Abu-Arz will be back too’.

May and Alfred Murr, supporters of Etienne, wrote on the party internet site in early 2001 that they knew him as a promising young man before the Lebanese-Foreigners War erupted in 1975:

> We became friends even before he founded the Party of the Guardians of the Cedars, and our friendship has matured over time. We have missed these past years his voice raised in the defense of righteousness. He and his Guardians of the Cedars staunchly remained faithful to their principles, determined to deck their banner with the pride of the Cedar and crown it with the blood of our martyrs…

> Yet Etienne Sakr was tried and condemned to 17 years of prison! Why? Is it because he never pronounced a word against Lebanon? Is it because he never wrote a sentence that does not glorify Lebanon? Is it because he never did anything that was not for the good of Lebanon?

Turning directly to Abu-Arz they added:

> However much the oppressors may oppress you, it will suffice you that you have God's benediction, that Lebanon looks to you as one who knows the ways of salvation and that the Lebanese love and admire you in defiance of those who wish to disparage and belittle you! The day will come when everybody will declare you a pillar in the edifice of a great Lebanon.

SYRIAN OCCUPATION, ISRAELI MYOPIA, PALESTINIAN *INTIFADA*

The new millennium in history witnessed a period of the liberation of many peoples and the establishment of new states. The remnants of an earlier era nonetheless characterized the situation of Lebanon: it remained virtually the *only state in the world still under foreign occupation.* The United States had used military force to liberate Kuwait and punish Iraq in the Persian Gulf. NATO had used military force in Europe against Serbia and on behalf of victimized Bosnians and Kosovans. However, no one intervened to free Lebanon from the oppressive clutches of Syria in the Levant.

However, there were certain reverberations that created an opportunity for change in Lebanon. President Hafez el-Assad of Syria died in June 2000 soon after Israel had withdrawn from Lebanon. Former President Amin Gemayel returned to Lebanon in the summer from his exile in Paris; there was talk that Michel Aoun might be next. In the period of the parliamentary elections of August-September 2000, and thereafter, Lebanese voices were heard calling for Syrian withdrawal or at least a re-evaluation of Syrian-Lebanese relations. Even earlier, in March, Gebran Tuéni of the major Beirut daily *Al-Nahar* courageously wrote that 'many Lebanese are not at ease with the Syrian policy in Lebanon, nor the Syrian presence in Lebanon'. Those calling for Syrian withdrawal—or a better balance in the bilateral relationship—represented a spectrum from various communities: the Druze chief Walid Junblatt, the Greek Orthodox Albert Moukhaibar (former deputy-speaker of the parliament who died in April 2002), Omar Karami (former Sunni prime minister) and Maronite deputies Nassib Lahood and even Emile Lahoud, Jr, the son of President Emile Lahoud.

Often parallel to the call for Syrian withdrawal was the call for the Lebanese Army to assume its responsibility in the south and exercise its authority over the area from which Israel retreated, that Hizbullah terrorizes. The popular Sunni

deputy Mustapha Sa'ad from Sidon was among those politicians who argued this point in December.

The central public personality in pushing the issue of Syrian withdrawal on to the Lebanese agenda became the Maronite Patriarch, Nasrallah Butrus Sfeir. He declared at a meeting of the Council of Maronite Bishops in September that 'we are not going to be frightened into silence. Nothing will bring this campaign to a halt especially after the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon has ended.' In the same month, thousands of demonstrators gathered in Ashrafiyyeh on the 18th anniversary of Bashir Gemayel's assassination. A few days thereafter, some 2, 000 demonstrators at Mayfouk northeast of Beirut protested Syrian influence and the continued jailing of Samir Geagea. The Maronite Synod held at Bkerke in November was an occasion for a statement favoring Lebanese independence, that is, Syrian withdrawal. In the same month Nabih Berri, Shiite speaker of the House visited the Patriarch in Bkerke and clarified concerning the Syrian question that 'redeployment means withdrawal'. Berri's somewhat elliptical terminology referred to the Taif Accord. The Patriarch himself had referred to the Taif Accord as a basis for Syrian withdrawal; he likewise called for full diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon which would indicate that, finally, Damascus recognizes the sovereignty of its small neighboring country. Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri also made mention of Taif 'as a basis for discussing national issues'. Abu-Arz, on his part, believed that 'the political snow-ball was in motion and could not be stopped'.

Other grievances and talking points in the public discussion concerned the hundreds of Lebanese political prisoners in Syria, among them Christian militants and Muslim fundamentalists. In late 2000, 54 were released by Damascus but many others, 93 persons according to Lebanon's General Prosecutor Adnan Addoum, were never heard from. Opposition spokespersons advocated an amnesty for the south Lebanese population, that is members of the SLA, who after all had been abandoned by the state authorities in the 1970s and 1980s and were forced to develop relations with Israel in the face of terrorism.[3] At the same time, President Lahoud called for the 'Palestinian "right of return" [to Israel] in order to free Lebanon of the burden of this difficult domestic problem'. May and Alfred Murr, friends and admirers of Abu-Arz, submitted a detailed memorandum to the Synod of the Churches of the Middle East held at Bkerke in November in which they advocated the distribution of the Palestinian Arabs among the Arab countries. The native Lebanese Christians have been forced to emigrate from their own country: certainly the strangers in Lebanon who caused this tragedy should have to leave. The public atmosphere in Lebanon had clearly opened up to a myriad of previously taboo issues.

On 19 March 2001, Rector Selim Abou of St Joseph's University in Beirut delivered a most eloquent, learned and trenchant speech to the faculty and students of this distinguished institution, which had been established more than 125 years earlier in 1875. If his words were as lethal as swords, Lebanon would be liberated in a moment. Rector Abou analyzed the language of political discourse

concerning Lebanon which allowed the tyrants and sycophants to turn the country into a satellite state of Syria. He elucidated the manipulation of words designed to identify the nation as Syria of which Lebanon was a mere component; and in the linguistic distortion of which it becomes commonplace to argue that sending the Lebanese Army southward would be a service to Israel! The litany of counter-truths includes the one that argues that Syria saved Lebanon from a fratricidal suicide in the 1970s. Sunni criticism of the Bkerke Declaration from September was obtuse because, Abou remonstrated, the true opinions of the Muslims in the *souks* (bazaars) of Tripoli, Saida (Sidon) and Baalbek are notoriously against the economic and military presence of the Syrians in the country. Oblivious to the obligations of Taif and 520 for a Syrian withdrawal, the Lebanese devotees of a pragmatic discourse defend the Syrian status quo as normative. But the vitality of a civil society debate has surfaced and ferments despite the perversion of language and the repressive instrumentalities of power in Beirut and Damascus. Abou emphasized the important role of Walid Junblatt in evoking the national role of the Druze community in Lebanese history and society. When he declared himself and others 'the heirs of a great emir [Fakhr al-Din II] of this [Shouf] mountain', it was clear that the national rather than the communal legacy was the light of Junblatt's political consciousness. In the end, the Rector was confident that the public liberties of Lebanon would be restored because 'the process of liberation is irreversible'. The democratic debate would somehow, he believed, reverse the process that had turned Lebanon into a Syrian province. There was much intellectual brilliance in Abou's speech which resonated with a powerful urge toward the integrity of the specific Lebanese nation.[4] What was missing were the political mechanics as to how the process would be empowered and culminate in freedom. A year later, in April 2002, Father Abou was still publicly denouncing 'the Syrianization of Lebanon'.

In February 2001 Patriarch Sfeir, whom a Guardians delegation had visited in Bkerke around this time, went on an extended tour to the Maronite communities in Canada and the United States and spoke openly about the need to end Syria's presence in Lebanon. Upon his return home in late March, approximately 100, 000 people gathered to greet him at Bkerke. They waved the banned flag of the Lebanese Forces, rang church bells, held pictures of the Patriarch, Geagea, Bashir Gemayel and Michel Aoun. They also cheered the name of Amin Gemayel.

In April, Prime Minister Hariri visited Washington in search of American foreign aid and investment to assist in the economic recovery of Lebanon. He was given a somewhat cold reception and even a small sum of US$20 million was not authorized. The US Congress favored a free Lebanon, and perhaps sensing this led Hariri to nonetheless declare on this occasion that 'the Syrian Army will leave Lebanon eventually'. Meanwhile, in Lebanon pro-Syrian Muslim militants took to the streets, wielding knives and clubs. Police looked on and did not intervene. The fundamentalist movement of usama Bin-Laden was reported to be committed to the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon.

Violent incidents in the northern area of al-Dinniyeh, and Hizbullah militancy in action and rhetoric in the south across Israel's northern border, illustrated the threat. It was reported that the Islamicists planned to assassinate Patriarch Sfeir.[5]

In mid-April the Israeli air force, in response to Hizbullah shelling of northern Israel and the irksome controversy over Israel's control of the Shaaba Farms zone, carried out an air strike on a Syrian radar installation deep inside Lebanon, east of Beirut. This was the first time Israel had hit a Syrian target since 1996. Relations had become tense between Sunni Prime Minister Hariri and Hizbullah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah over the Shiites initiating actions that threatened to lead to a wider military escalation in the country and perhaps region. At the same time, Patriarch Sfeir told President Lahoud that 'Lebanon is in need of reconciliation among all the Lebanese'. This remark was made in the context of his call for a re-examination of Syria's military presence in Lebanon.

In late May 2001 a year had passed since Israel withdrew from south Lebanon and abandoned the SLA. Despite expectations in leftist government circles at the time, Israel's northern border was not quiet and Hizbullah was entrenched with increased Iranian involvement in Lebanese affairs. Israel's *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* on the border were in constant fear of attack. Syria had not opened up peace negotiations with Israel, and the Lebanese authorities were as feeble in the face of Hizbullah and Syria as prior to the withdrawal. Hizbullah had abducted three Israeli soldiers, and not a word was heard of their condition or whereabouts. Meanwhile, the Palestinians were encouraged by the fighting tactics, religious spirit and concrete successes of Hizbullah in Lebanon, and copied them with the eruption of the *Intifada al-Aqsa* against Israel in October 2000. This PLO warfare occurred despite the Oslo Accords which, since their signing in 1993, had committed the Palestinians to non-violence in resolving any dispute with Israel. But the Palestinians had their own way of doing things and there was no doubt that Hizbullah had become a shining example of emulation and instruction for them. It turned out that the May 2000 Israeli withdrawal offered more than a glimmer of hope, not for the besieged Jews, but for the warring Palestinians.

But with a modest inclination to learn, the Israelis would recall with benefit the pattern of Palestinian behavior, with terrorism intermixed with politics, during the long years of fighting in Lebanon. According to Nabil Khalifeh, Arafat was a pathological liar who had signed 72 ceasefires with the Lebanese in a span of 18 months from 1975–76, and then broke each and every one of them.[6] Gaby Nasr had once written in *L'Orient-Le Jour* that *Abu-Ammar,* Arafat's underground name, had agreed to 786 (!) ceasefires with Musa Kanaan from the Lebanese Army from 1975 until 1982. Arafat's credibility in peace-making with the Israelis would presumably not be more compelling than had been his interest in peace with the Lebanese.

Israel's withdrawal as a catalyst to peace, security and normalization seemed a demonstrably foolish failure of self-delusion.[7] It had given Syria a political victory and Iran a religious triumph, as was forecast in a very insightful analysis and warning written in April 1999 by Dr J.R.Albani, spokesman of the

Guardians of the Cedars in France. Having accommodated Arafat and fleeing from Hizbullah, Israel's long-term survival capacity evoked great anxiety among her friends, as the Muslim and Arab countries armed for the final battle against the Jewish state.[8] The good neighbors and allies of Israel across her northern border were replaced by enemy forces.

Of special moment was the extensive regional and international activity, especially the role of Iran, on behalf of the Islamization of the world. The successful Islamic liberation of Afghanistan from the Soviet Union in 1989, the Islamic war against the Black Christian Africans in the Sudan, the Islamic Balkan insurgence in Bosnia and then Kosovo against the Christian Serbs, and the Muslim Chechnyan uprising against the Russians, were significant outbursts of a broad religious and civilizational campaign by Islam against Christianity. So too in Indonesia, the Philippines and Nigeria. Israel was contending with the Islamic assault of *Hamas* (the Islamic Resistance Movement) and *Islamic Jihad* whose explicit goal was the destruction of the embattled Jewish state. Any withdrawal, as by Israel from south Lebanon, or Serbia from Kosovo, was seen by the forces of Islam as a further gain in the interminable *jihad* for complete Muslim conquest. When the Taliban Muslims of Afghanistan destroyed Buddhist shrines, and the Muslims of Palestine destroyed a sacred Jewish burial site, and the KLA Muslims of Kosovo destroyed Christian monasteries, it was glaringly clear that Islam countenanced no tolerance of other religions which, in fact, had long preceded it in history. The Shiite Hizbullan fighters, who fought the Jews and Christians in south Lebanon, were a major element in the war against the faltering infidels.

Israel's May 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon reminds one of the insightful judgment of the historian Barbara Tuchman in her book *The March of Folly.* Her very first sentence summarized the book's lesson: 'A phenomenon noticeable throughout history regardless of place or period is the pursuit by governments of policies contrary to their own interests.' Arrogance and puerile innocence are particular aspects of the stupidity of policy making that countries suffer from. An inability to admit mistakes is also a grave obstacle to altering course even when failure is a fact. These teachings could be addressed to Israeli governments concerning policy toward Lebanon, in particular after 1982. The various governments of Shamir, Peres, Rabin, Netanyahu and Barak all refused to adopt alternative policies toward Lebanon. In political terms, Israel let Resolution 520 lie dormant and the field of international diplomacy lie fallow. So too Israel refrained from any campaign to revitalize ties of solidarity and cooperation with the Lebanese abroad. In military terms, Israel was unwilling to engage in a robust offensive or revitalize the SLA, and likewise refrained from carrying out directly or indirectly anti-Syrian actions. The years were dissipated in policy paralysis.

In respect of Lebanon, General Antoine Lahad, finally and a full year after Israel's withdrawal and the SLA's dissolution, found the courage to accuse Israel of having 'stabbed him in the back' in May 2000. Ehud Barak hid from him the

date of the withdrawal and brought tragedy on thousands of Lebanese people. Lahad's ostensible loyalty and cooperation with Israel had meant nothing to Prime Minister Barak. While venting his anger on Israel in the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* on 18 May, Lahad displayed his own brand of disloyalty in an item in the Arab newspaper *Sharq al-Awsat* on 21 May. There he was quoted as saying: 'I love Syria and distinguish between Syrian forces [in Lebanon] and Israel's occupation.' That Israel appointed and maintained Lahad as commander does not only suggest policy incoherence, but probably conceals a certain hidden Israeli agenda over the years: perhaps political in form, maybe financial in benefit. The Lahad tale is worthy of a detailed investigation on both its Israeli and Lebanese counts.

But the essential question of Israel abandoning her south Lebanese allies is not only a matter of ingratitude and moral blindness. The Jewish people, suffering the world's animosity over many centuries, is psychologically predisposed to assume that no one could conceivably be positively oriented toward them. The existential situation of being 'a nation dwelling alone' converges with the conviction that 'the whole world is against us' [the Jews]. Can it be that someone out there truly wants to be friends of Israel? Is it possible that the hearts of gentiles are warm toward the Jews? The negative answers to these questions instill disbelief and cynicism into the hearts of the Jewish people, or the Israelis. As a result, Israel tends to treat allies or friends with carefree abuse. This is presumably how the so-called friends or allies will inevitably treat Israel. A lack of gratitude characterized Israeli policy toward the brave Kurds who, though assisted by Israel for a decade from the mid-1960s until 1975, were then abandoned by Israel at a moment's notice. The free Lebanese in the south were abandoned in an hour or two, and the IDF-SLA alliance ended.

A more mature and generous Israeli understanding of the Middle East would, in fact, consider the generally warm feelings and shared interests which bind Israel with a number of minority peoples, including the Druzes, Christians and others. The foundation for this reading of the political map is a common struggle by the region's small peoples in the face of domineering and powerful Arab Muslim forces.[9] Israel's excruciating search for peace with the Arabs significantly preempts the 'minority strategy' from defining policy making in a methodical and principled fashion.

The Israeli Knesset hosted a solidarity meeting with the south Lebanese on 24 May to commemorate their year in the country. Addressed by four members of parliament, including Uzi Landau, Minister of Internal Security, and Yuri Stern, Deputy-Minister responsible for the SLA, the 60 Lebanese in attendance were told of efforts to improve their status and opportunities in order to reasonably get on with their lives in Israel. Abu-Arz, in his brief remarks at the event, asked Israel to help the Lebanese be able to return home. To absorb them in Israel was 'to kill us a second time after you killed us by the betrayal last year'. The Lebanese were caught between the existential need to adapt to life in Israel, get jobs and provide for their families' welfare—and the longing to go back to

Lebanon as free and dignified human beings. Between the daily frustrations and the road home lay a vast stretch of anguish and sorrow.

During many years, Etienne Sakr's personal sufferings in seeking respite and security in his own country and salvation from shame of exile beyond it were carved into his skin and soul. He had been forced to leave behind a number of homes and abandoned possessions, including books, private papers and clothing, scattered from Beirut and Baabdat in the heart of Lebanon, south to Jezzine, down to Deir Mimas and Ayn Ebel, to Israel and elsewhere. His was a life of vision and perseverance and he never once flinched.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12 (4) from 1966, stated that 'No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter into his own country.' But this UN document, like Resolution 520, was buried in oblivion as far as concerned the Lebanese and Lebanon. The United States, in particular Congress, had declared its support for the restoration of Lebanon's independence, but despite this sentiment there was no active policy effort by Washington. Israel abandoned and uprooted her Lebanese allies, and the world beyond showed no concrete and sustained interest in their fate.

Abu-Arz, despite his own daily reality of exile and the persistence of Syrian occupation at home, tried to look for optimistic signs for a better future. He marveled at the resiliency of Lebanon and its strength to live and function after 25 years of war and destruction.[10] In the long history of the country, the Lebanese had proven their stamina and determination to withstand foreign enemies. However, the waves of history can be stormy and sea-changes occur in ways which are not a repetition of the past, but a radical rupture from it. Christian minorities in the Middle East have been overwhelmed and lost all chance of maintaining their integral collective existence in the face of repeated or major Muslim assaults. The trend of history within Christian Lebanon is on the slide, and recovery may be hardly more than a wish or illusion. Past glory and bravery in *Jabal Lubnan* reflected traditional sources of religious faith, national rootedness and a military spirit. The menacing enemies then would seem less formidable than the combined antagonism of the contemporary ruthless Syrian regime and fundamentalist Iran. The likelihood of Lebanon recovering its independence and national wholesomeness can come as a result of regional or international forces, perhaps more than through domestic consolidation of a liberation struggle against Syrian occupation and Iranian penetration. The decline of the Christians and the sapping of Lebanon's integrity are signs of decay that should awaken a realistic judgment from those who dream and hope of return. According to the Guardians motto, 'keep your eye looking always at the first point in the circle of the impossible, otherwise you remain insignificant and your country will live in the insignificance'. Returning home to a free Lebanon was for Abu-Arz the first point in the circle of the impossible. His consistent argument was always that Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon was the *sine qua non* for remedying all the ills of the country. With Syria out, the Lebanese would be free

and the emigrés would return home. Lebanon was held captive but, according to him, not lost at all.

In a personal vein, a film called *Brave Heart* fascinated Abu-Arz. He had watched it many times and seemed to relish its dramatic hero and tale. The movie was about the struggle of the Scots led by William Wallace against the English. It was clear that Etienne identified with the uncompromising patriotic commitment of Wallace for freedom. Many Scotsmen vilified Wallace and preferred peace and surrender to fighting the English. Private interests drove the traitors to oppose Wallace, like the Lebanese leaders who seemed interested in money and office-holding more than in their country. In the end, the English tortured Wallace to death and cut out his heart. Wallace was offered mercy if he accepted the English king's rule, but he refused, and left an enduring mark on Scottish resistance against the English. For his part, Abu-Arz never diverted from the path of struggle and never asked for mercy from the Syrians.

In his long struggle Etienne Sakr radiated the features and ways of a great man according to the portrait drawn by Nietzsche: the long logic in all of his activity, without fear of opinions, in his intercourse with men always intent on making something out of them.[11] He had struggled against exhaustion and mediocrity. He had gone to the mountains of Akoura and Jezzine to raise the flag of resistance when lesser men conceded or left the political stage. His was a noble stance *vis-à-vis* Israel, embittered toward his unreliable and unappreciative ally, yet unwilling to utter a word of reproachment against the Israeli people, only against their politicians. Yet Etienne could teach the Israelis of their shortsightedness no better than he could teach his own Lebanese of theirs. With a kind of Old Testament moral vigor, Abu-Arz exuded the authority of absolute standards by which people cannot easily live. And maybe this is the root of the problem: 'the hard timber of humanity'—Emmanuel Kant's expression—blocked Etienne Sakr from his own and his country's victory. Ahead of his time and a rank or two above the general mass of people, he rejected the common level though he lived and worked with common people his whole life. He was unable to elevate people, or enough of them, to his level of commitment and performance.

Perhaps we have touched on a personal virtue which turns into a political liability. Did Etienne Sakr wear a mask? His was apparently a commendable self-revelatory personage, or was it? Mystery is an aspect of the man, though it is hard to gauge how significant it was in deciphering his role. He adopted the particularly Palestinian political practice of using a patronymic *nom de guerre, Abu-Arz,* though he exuded a profound revulsion toward the Palestinians. He was by birth a man of south Lebanon, yet was intent on cultivating his national and Beirut persona even when he lived in the south during the decade of the 1990s. He is a man of exquisite charm and taste and thought, without this concealing his unrestrained animosity for the enemies of Lebanon and what must be done to overcome these predators. He had the circumspection of a spy with the conviviality of a politician. But he really saw himself as a statesman, and hardly

anything less than that. He certainly ended up filling the role of the unarmed prophet.

Abu-Arz told of a time when visiting his family outside of Lebanon, when he was watching television with his son Arz. Etienne asked rhetorically about a program of dancing and singing on the TV screen: 'How can they be so happy and we aren't?' Arz answered by saying: 'But their lives are empty. They don't have meaning in their lives.' Arz had thereby given a stamp of approval to his father. Maybe Lebanon would one day do the same.

Then in mid-June, a political bolt struck the political arena as the dialectic of oppression and liberation advanced in a small way. Syrian units and soldiers carried out a partial military withdrawal from the city and area of Beirut, specifically from some Christian neighborhoods. Syrian tanks left the Baabda Palace and the Ministry of Defense at Yarze. No explanation was offered; it just happened. Was the withdrawal a sly reversible maneuver, a public-relations gesture to improve Syria's image, or perhaps indicative of the potency of the domestic Lebanese political campaign against Syria? Maybe one should see in it Bashar Assad's weakness. However, the Syrians could reduce their public military presence, but rule Lebanon through their rather ubiquitous but less visible intelligence network *(mukhabarat)* spread throughout the country. Time would tell. Abu-Arz was cautious, yet hopeful, in interpreting this new development in Lebanon:

> The partial withdrawal indicates that Bashar Assad is weak because a totalitarian regime never offers gestures. He is not like his father. The broader political scenario has to be considered. Prime Minister Hariri is a 'Saudi' (he has Saudi citizenship and made billions of dollars in business in Saudi Arabia). He opposes the Syrians in Lebanon, while Syria is financially dependent on aid from Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Hariri is close to President Chirac of France, who has spoken up against Syria's presence in Lebanon. The Saudis, it is known, have great influence in Washington, and together with the Americans would both like to see the Syrians leave Lebanon.
>
> This is the beginning of the end of Syria in Lebanon.
>
> Prime Minister Hariri, a Sunni, is from Lebanon's national point of view much better than President Lahoud, a Maronite. Lahoud is exceptionally pro-Arab and anti-Israel. The fact that a Muslim serves Lebanon's interests better than a Christian proves I am right about Lebanese nationality. There are good Lebanese and bad Lebanese, regardless of their confessional identity.

In the following spring of 2002, Syria carried out a further military pullback from a command post in the Sidon area. It certainly seemed that Bashar Assad was implementing the Taif Accord in concentrating Syrian troops in the Bekka area alone. At this time, some Lebanese who had been found guilty of 'collaboration

with Israel' saw their verdict overturned. One of them, the journalist Habib Younis, had been affiliated with the Guardians Party and with Abu-Arz personally. Meanwhile, Hizbullah continued firing into Israeli territory while refusing to observe a cease-fire proposed by the United States government. The complex set of circumstances could reasonably eventuate in some Israeli military operation against both Hizbullah and Syrian forces in Lebanon. Then, political change in Beirut would be necessary in order to open up the road home for Etienne Sakr.

On 24 July 2001, Etienne's daughter Carol appeared on a Beirut MTV program with Karim Gemayel in which she was interviewed about her father. Her appearance was dignified, informative and with visible strains of emotional pain that caused her to pause at times to fight back the tears. She capably presented Abu-Arz as a special and genuine person, correct in pursuing his straightforward path for 30 years. According to Carol, it is expected in Lebanon to declare Syria a sister and Israel an enemy. If not, then you are considered an enemy. Her positive presentation of her father was contrasted with the Lebanese politicians in Beirut and their 'cowardliness, shortsightedness and blind submission to the real enemy'. When Karim Gemayel raised the charge that Abu-Arz was an Israeli agent, Carol responded that he was a Lebanese patriot and that the true agents are those Beirut politicians who serve Syrian interests. The irony was that the agents are in power and the patriots, like Etienne Sakr, are removed from the country.

In the course of this long and moving interview, Carol Sakr—herself an accomplished and well-known singer—defended her father's loyalty to country and party. Abu-Arz supported peace between Lebanon and Israel, but why was this wrong when two Arab countries, Egypt and Jordan, had after all signed peace treaties with Israel? This position in no way compromised his commitment to Lebanon's independence, while the primary obstacle to the country's independence was Syrian occupation, and certainly not Israel, which had withdrawn from Lebanon in May 2000. Carol, voicing her father's demand, declared that the implementation of UN Resolution 520 would liberate Lebanon from foreign presence. Regarding the Guardians, Carol explained that Abu-Arz had remained loyal to his principles and rejected any accommodation with the collaborationist regime in Beirut: he owed this to the fallen martyrs who had fought for a free Lebanon, not a satrap of Damascus.

Asked about the period of Aoun-Geagea warfare in the late 1980s, Carol Sakr defended her father who supported the Army-Aoun camp because Geagea had accepted the Taif Accord, while rejecting unifying the Lebanese Forces with the national army in order to jointly face the Syrians. She could not f orgive nor forget the humiliation suffered at the hands of the LF which had invaded the Sakr home and violated the family's dignity when they came to arrest Abu-Arz in 1989. Carol ended the interview by charging that politics is about lies, but that truth will prevail. The war will end with victory. Meanwhile, this young and determined woman did not deny the personal tragedy that her father endured. She wanted her father home, as his daughter, and she wanted him home for

Lebanon too. But she rejected the idea that he would return by being granted an amnesty. This would be an insult because he had committed no crime.

Carol's sister Pascale, also a famous Lebanese singer, had sung songs of liberation when it was still possible to express national sentiments and yearnings. Pascale sang of the courage the Lebanese got from Jbayl (where they fought the Umayyads), heroism from Anjar (where Fakhr al-Din defeated the Syrians), and truth from Beirut (where jurisprudence and philosophy were elucidated). She sang of Lebanon's face that looked toward the Mediterranean Sea and of her culture coming from the eyes of the sailor. Like her father, Pascale Sakr knew that Lebanon does not look to the desert, but seeks civilization from other than the Arab peoples.

For Abu-Arz the long struggle was not over, nor was it lost. He was a great symbol of that struggle, though not its primary political leader. But he was its singular conscience. He had paid a heavy price for his dedication to a free Lebanon, and it hardly seemed appreciated. In Beirut, party statements by the Guardians of the Cedars or news about them were censored from the national press. Yet on the party's Internet site from 21 May 2001, for example, it was possible to learn that the central directorate of the Guardians held its weekly meeting in Beirut and issued a communiqué that declared 'our allegiance to the Lebanese nation not excluding an inch of its soil or a person of its people'. The statement further referred to 'the depraved policy conducted by its government' which allows foreigners to fight their feuds on the Lebanese battlefield. Moreover, the binding of 'the Lebanese track with the Syrian track is a devilish heresy imposed by the Syrian regime to prevent Lebanon from returning to a stable situation on the economic and security levels'. Though the party leader was in exile, the ideology of Abu-Arz has not been silenced.

In Israel, Abu-Arz was given no credit, was hardly offered a platform, and remained a virtual unknown ally for the Israeli population. 'The doors of Israel are closed to me; I've done what I could', he said referring to the seats of power, full of ungratefulness and haughtiness in Jerusalem. And he mused that maybe a war will change everything, for Israel and for Lebanon, and for the better. 'Then we'll go home.'

In early August, perhaps sparked by the courageous widely discussed television interview that Carol Sakr gave in late July, significant political events transpired. The Maronite Patriarch visited Walid Junblatt in the Shouf as an expression of Maronite-Druze reconciliation and solidarity against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Their meeting, oozing with warm inter-communal sentiments, aroused nostalgia of the historic mountain communities standing, as they had at times in the past, as defenders of Lebanon's independence. Then, Junblatt traveled to the south and was greeted by the Christians in Marj'ayoun. Abu-Arz and his doctrine of Lebanese nationality were vindicated by this trans-communal alignment of forces against the Lahoud-Nasrallah-Assad Syrian connection. Hopes were expressed for the return of Christian refugees to the Shouf area.

The anti-Syrian student demonstrations that erupted in the streets of Beirut in mid-August sparked a flurry of developments within Lebanon and beyond. While the security forces were quick to arrest between 150–200 of these young Christian and apparently some Muslim students, and some were sent off for trial by a military court, the Syrians brought more troops and tanks into Lebanon. In Paris, opposition elements set fire to the Lebanese Consulate and anti-Syrian demonstrations were held elsewhere, as in Ottawa and Montreal in Canada. The army clampdown in Beirut illustrated that the occupation regime feared that the situation could get out of hand. In parliament a majority of the deputies rejected a presidential proposal to extend the right of the government to detain suspects in police custody for longer than 24 hours. Yet Syrian pressure effectively turned the vote around a few days later. The political turmoil in the country continued to engender popular activities, like the Conference on Freedoms and Democracy that convened in the Carlton Hotel where many of those present, some scheduled to be tried by the military court, unleashed a scathing critique of Lahoud's regime which, some said, was destined to collapse. Meanwhile, foreign governments and human rights groups denounced the rough treatment meted out to the activists, and questioned whether a fair trial was possible in the political atmosphere prevailing in occupied Beirut. Meanwhile, forced confessions of 'collaboration with the Zionist enemy' were extracted from the arrested militants.

The role of Abu-Arz and his party members in this outburst of patriotic agitation remained somewhat obscure, though evidence of his involvement was not lacking. The 'talk of the town' in Beirut was that Abu-Arz was behind the opposition activities, though without raising the party flag, and it seems that among the protesters arrested was no small number of Guardian members or sympathizers. Blaming surreptitious Israeli intervention, which served as the official explanation for the turmoil, was expected to divert public attention from the real agonies weighing upon the political and economic situation in Lebanon. Israel is a demonic mantra in the sorcerer's net: mentioning Abu-Arz inevitably follows. One of the Guardians arrested, Habib Younes, a senior journalist with the highly respectable *Al-Hayat* newspaper, received coverage as accused of 'collaborating with Israel' and 'discrediting the state authority'. He was to fend off this charge by declaring himself, as he had in a television interview a few months earlier, a Lebanese and not an Arab or Syrian, and leave the matter at that. Media reports suggested, though the press itself was in fear of being muzzled, that Abu-Arz was acting behind the scenes to provoke dissident actions against the regime in Beirut. *Al-Safir* ran a long article detailing the history and ideology of *Herraas Al-Arz* in its issue of 25 August. More than an indict ment, this survey piece provided extensive exposure for the party. A picture of Etienne Sakr accompanied the article. The author referred to a recent communiqué sent by Abu-Arz to his sympathizers in Beirut where he called for national unity among all the communities in opposing the Syrian presence in Lebanon. He continued to profoundly believe that he was personally embedded in the sub-consciousness of

the people, for he represented their deepest yearnings. At the same time, cornered between hope and despair, he could not even make a phone call to his family in Beirut for fear of telephone tapping by the *mukhabarat* security apparatus. Carol Sakr, made vulnerable by her 24 July television appearance, was still free.

When Lebanon is free again, and the third republic which will replace the 1989 one of Taif is inaugurated, it should have as its leader someone who symbolizes a free Lebanon. Not someone who compromised his values or fed his ambitions, or oppressed rivals or engaged in party partisanship. But someone who carried Lebanon in his heart, and for whom principle outweighed pragmatism all the time. Someone who can give Lebanon a fresh and clean start because he preserved the freshness of his principles and the political purity of his ways in the struggle and resistance against invaders. Someone who fostered national unity rather than dividing the delicately balanced national cloth of communities. Perhaps when Lebanon is free again Etienne Sakr, the conscience of Lebanon, will become the president of the republic.

ABU-ARZ: AWAITING THE RETURN

Etienne Sakr: this is the man and his measure—in a world of cynics and thugs, cowards and collaborators, terrorists and tyrants, and for those who love and admire him as worthy of guarding the sacred cedars of Lebanon.

Hermann Hesse had written to his dear friends in an essay 'Zarathustra's Return' in 1919, after one war was over and another was ahead, that building personality or character was the basis for national rejuvenation. First, 'let me sing you the song of solitude. Without solitude there is no suffering, without solitude there is no heroism.' Hesse went on:

> It is hard, my dear friends, to live without a mother; it is hard to live without home and people, without fatherland and fame, without the pleasures of a life in a community. It is hard to live in the cold—Nevertheless, blessed is he who has found his solitude, not the solitude pictured in painting or poetry, but his own, unique, predestined solitude. Blessed be he who knows how to suffer! Blessed be he who bears the magic stone in his heart. To him comes destiny, from him comes authentic action.

For Abu-Arz, and for his Lebanon, solitude, suffering and authenticity are very much the historical and spiritual ground of their special destiny.

In July 2002, Abu-Arz considered leaving Israel to take up his exilic residence elsewhere. He would thereby remove the political taint from his person. It would be a step toward freedom, not in the full political sense, yet at least in the emotional liberation and psychological escape from Israel and the humiliation of asking—*always asking*—for something seldom granted. Just like a minority community is stunted in its self-expression and shrunken in its self-confidence

when living subject to a majority host people, so on an individual plane Abu-Arz could not but be weakened by staying in Israel. He was not on his own turf, he was not in charge of his person. This in no way denied the dignity with which he still conducted himself, or ignored his ongoing efforts in different directions. He kept in close contact with his people in Beirut, in America and elsewhere, and actively promoted certain ideas in Israel. When a Belgian court in 2001 considered trying Ariel Sharon for the massacre at Sabra and Shatilla in 1982, Abu-Arz distributed a list of Palestinian massacres carried out against the Lebanese from 1976 and thereafter. When the political will of Israel seemed to falter in the face of the Palestinian *intifada* from October 2000 and thereafter, he beseeched his Israeli friends that the most important task is to strengthen the morale of the army in contending with terrorism. The Israeli army stood between war and the abyss.

Not being in Israel would have the advantage of separating Abu-Arz, and his image, from the Jewish ally, and from so much incriminating denunciation against Israel emanating from 'legal Lebanon' in Beirut and Arab capitals everywhere. Etienne Sakr was the most patriotic of all the Lebanese and that elemental truth could shine more brilliantly outside Israel, than were he to remain there. And yet, perhaps, his alliance with Israel could prove to be politically validated and personally beneficial if circumstances led to developments whose consequence would be—as in the French case of de Gaulle—returning home triumphantly with the liberation.

That being said, Abu-Arz had a consummate sense of depositing his name and his legacy in the annals of Lebanon's modern history. Courageous in war and unblemished by politics, he never put personal interest in place of the public interest. He spoke the truth and loved his people, struggling for a Lebanon free of foreigners, false immigrants, and aliens. He was a homeland in a person and a person the size of a homeland. Like a proud cedar he would bend only to God. Vindicated in his lifetime or not, Etienne Sakr trusted that Lebanon's restoration, revival, and reform would sometime in the future be guided by the light of his teachings and inspiration, which would never die.

Afterword

Israel and Lebanon

The Bible relates in the first Book of Kings that Solomon the son of King David approached Hiram, the king of Tyre, to assist in building the Temple in Jerusalem. Hiram had loved David and agreed to send the cedar trees of Lebanon and his skilled craftsmen to help build the earthly sanctuary for God. Together, Solomon's and Hiram's men cut the stones and prepared the wood for erecting the holy edifice. Peace reigned between the two kings and their countries.

This historical narrative bound and symbolized Israel and Lebanon as the holy lands of the ancient Middle East. While the Jewish people worshipped in Jerusalem, the Phoenicians worshipped in Baalbek. The impressive and edifying temples attested to faith in higher forces, and demonstrated that the world of the spirit is essential for the special existence of small peoples surrounded and threatened by imperial neighbors.

The peoples of Israel and Phoenicia faced Assyrian and Roman invasions in their small homelands. Yet they dedicated their talents and energies to studying law, promoting learning and philosophy and engaging in peaceful relations. But foreign conquerers would not leave them to quietly carve out their niche in history. Many Lebanese left or fled their homeland, the Jews were expelled more than once from theirs. The Muslims arrogated the Temple site in Jerusalem based on a koranic allusion, while the ancient Romans and modern Europeans claimed that the Temple at Baalbek was not Phoenician at all.

Victims of historical falsification and cultural imperialism, the Jewish and Lebanese peoples cling nonetheless to their honorable past and link it to their recovery and tenacious struggles in contemporary history. Lina Murr Nehme, a Beiruti author, argued in her 1997 learned and passionate study *Baalbek: monument phénicien,* that the Jews and Lebanese both share a tragic history. The Turks decimated a third of the Lebanese people in World War I as the Germans exterminated a third of the Jewish people in World War II. Now, we may add, both suffer the aggression of Arab-Muslim forces who are unwilling to accommodate a sovereign Jewish state or a sovereign Lebanese state in their midst. The legacy of the ancient Phoenicians in the domain of culture, architecture, sculpture and navigation, has in modern times been supplemented with the Lebanese contribution in the region to the principles of nationalism, intellectual freedom and the liberty of the press. This, like the heritage of ancient Israel in religion,

morality and law, now complemented with advances in science and technology in our times. These are but two small peoples, yet exuding enormous human dynamism and inventiveness. Their spirits are resilient, and their fight for identity and survival unrelenting. And, moreover, it is as if the two peoples are bound in a common fate from biblical to contemporary history. For if, as Arab propaganda would argue, the Temple never stood in Jerusalem, then Hiram and the ancient Phoenicians who actually built the Temple never existed in Lebanon.

Etienne Sakr, a son of Lebanon and a descendant of the Phoenicians, provided in the politics of war a vision immersed in an ancient bond of friendship. Abu-Arz brought the Lebanese-Israel equation to the fore of his country's consciousness. For this he has been vilified and denounced as an agent. 'When Israel is strong, Lebanon is strong', he wrote, 'but when Syria is strong, Lebanon is weak.' If Lebanon will be freed from the clutches of Syria, then Lebanon and Israel would together show the Arab East, and the entire world, that impervious to the perils of history they still represent millennia of national continuity in the annals of the holy land, and can contribute in the future to the civilizational advance of all peoples, near and far.

Appendix

The Massacres and Crimes Committed by the Palestinians and the Syrians Against the Lebanese (1975–90)

[Note: This is not a complete list.]

20 May 1975: Palestinians from the Tel el-Zaater camp attacked the Dekkwaneh neighborhood in East Beirut killing tens of civilians.

10 September 1975: The Christian village of Deir Ashash in the north of Lebanon was attacked, with the slaughter of three very elderly priests and forcing inhabitants from their homes.

11 September 1975: The Christian village of Beit Mallat was attacked, leaving seven people killed while ten were kidnapped.

9 October 1975: The Christian village of Tal Abbas in the northern Akkar region was attacked with 15 people killed. A local church was set alight.

30 October 1975: The village of Naameh was attacked and tens of civilians were killed. (In 1948 the convents of Naameh sheltered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.)

13–15 January 1976: The Christian towns of Damour and Jiyya south of Beirut were attacked. Initially 50 civilians were slaughtered in Damour, among which was the entire Canaan family. Executions of people followed and the cemetery was excavated. More than 300 inhabitants were killed and the churches were vandalized. Women were raped and little children hacked to death.

15 January 1976: Palestinians assaulted Kab Elias, a Christian-Muslim village in the Bekka. Sixteen Christians were killed and 23 injured. The exodus of Christians to Zahle, East Beirut and Jouniya began.

19 January 1976: The village of Hosh Barada in the Bekka was attacked and destroyed. Tens of residents were executed.

21 January 1976: The Christian town of Damour was still under assault, 260 more people were massacred. (582 people in total.)

10 March 1976: The al-Khiam barracks in southern Lebanon were attacked, and more than 30 Lebanese soldiers were executed.

16 May 1976: Edward Saab, chief editor of *L'Orient-Le Jour,* was assassinated.

31 May 1976: The Syrians invaded Lebanon by openly employing their army, attacking the Akkar region, sacking towns and villages, killing over 50 civilians.

1 June 1976: American Ambassador Francis E.Meloy, Jr. was assassinated in Beirut along with his Economic Assistant and Lebanese driver.

4 July 1976: Chekka south of Tripoli was attacked, with the slaughter of 176 Christians.

1 August 1976: Palestinians attacked the Christian villages in the Jezzine area. Tens were massacred, girls were raped.

18 October 1976: The Syrians shelled Ashrafiyyeh and Furn el-Shebbak in Beirut and Jouniya north of the capital; 25 civilians were killed and tens injured.

20 October 1976: The southern village of Ayshiyyeh was attacked and 54 people were killed inside a church set alight—men, women and the elderly.

16 March 1977: The Druze leader Kamal Junblatt was assassinated along with his bodyguards.

28 June 1978: Tens of young people were killed and others kidnapped from the village al-Qaa, Ras Baalbek and Jdeided el-Fakhina.

April-June 1978: The Syrians shelled the Christian area of Beirut for 90 days. The shelling killed and injured hundreds of civilians and caused destruction of Ashrafiyyeh in East Beirut.

1 February 1979: The Ashrafiyyeh neighborhood in Beirut was shelled, killing 60 civilians and wounding 300.

August 1979: Villages of Niha, Deir Bella, and Douma in northern Lebanon were shelled by the Syrians with tens of casualties.

22 January 1980: The Syrians and Palestinians invaded Sidon, Jezzine and the southern Bekka. Civilians were killed, women and girls were raped.

13 February 1980: The Syrians invaded the village of Knat in the north.

23 February 1980: The daughter of Bashir Gemayel (Maya) was killed in a car bomb attack.

24 February 1980: Journalist Selim Lowzi, publisher of *Al-Hawadeth* magazine, was assassinated by the Syrians and his body mutilated near Beirut airport.

22 July 1980: Riyad Taha, head of the Union of Journalists Press Syndicate, was assassinated.

24 December 1980: On Christmas Eve, the Syrians shelled the Christian town of Zahle in the Bekka Valley. Tens were killed and injured.

1–2 April 1981: East Beirut, specifically the Ayn al-Rummaneh neighborhood, was shelled at the time when students were leaving school. Hundreds were killed and injured. Zahle was shelled by the Syrians, hitting Red Cross targets in the city.

3 September 1981: The French Ambassador in Beirut, Louis DeLamare, was assassinated by four Palestinians under Syrian orders.

15 December 1981: The Iraqi Embassy in Beirut was destroyed by a truck full of explosives; 30 people were killed, 120 injured.

27 April 1982: Sheikh Ahmad Assaf was killed by the Syrians.

1 May 1982: The Syrians assassinated Father Philip Abu-Sleiman.

24 May 1982: The French Embassy in Beirut was bombed. Nine people were killed and 26 were injured.

14 September 1982: President-Elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated in his party headquarters, 26 people were killed with him.
December 1982: The Syrians shelled and destroyed part of Tripoli. Hundreds were killed, others deported to Syria.

18 April 1983: The American Embassy in Beirut was bombed by a truck full of explosives planted inside the building. Sixty-three people were killed and 123 injured.

2 September 1983: Palestinian and Syrian forces launched a massive attack against Souk al-Gharb that overlooks the presidential palace at Baabda.

6 September 1983: The Syrians invaded Bhamdoun on the Beirut-Damascus highway.

9–10 September 1983: The Syrians massacred 84 civilians at Maaser elShouf and massacred another 100 Christian civilians in the village of Bireh.

11 September 1983: The Syrians massacred 15 civilians in Maaser BeitEddine.

12 September 1983: The Syrians massacred 11 civilians in Fawara, 12 people at Ayn el-Hor, 12 others in Bourjayn, 36 people at Chartoun while 41 others were deported to Syria.

14 September 1983: The Syrians massacred another 85 civilians in Maaser el-Shouf.

22 September 1983: The Catholic Center of Information in Beirut reported that in 62 Christian villages in the Shouf 1,500 civilians had been massacred in recent days.

26 September 1983: From Aley, the Syrians shelled the French Residence in Beirut.

12 October 1983: Syrians shelled Tripoli, killing 60 civilians.

23 October 1983: Syrians executed a suicidal attack at the United States Marine Headquarters in Beirut, killing 241 and injuring 144 others. On the same day, a similar attack at the French paratroop HQ left 56 dead and 32 injured.

16 November 1983: Syrians shelled Beirut neighborhoods Sin el-Fil, Ashrafiyyeh, Hazmieh, Mkalles, Jisr el-Basha, Ayn al-Rummaneh and others.

22 November 1983: Reports that 100,000 Christians had fled regions of Aley and Shouf, 85 churches were destroyed, and 56 villages in the Shouf and 32 in Aley were razed to the ground.

1 December 1983: Sheikh Halim Taqieddine, head of the Druze communal court, was assassinated.

5 December 1983: A car explosion in West Beirut killed 20 civilians.

18 January 1984: Professor Malcolm Kerr, president of the American University of Beirut, was assassinated on campus.

1 February 1984: The Syrians shelled East Beirut. Six were killed and tens injured.

2–11 February 1984: The Syrians brutally shelled Matn, Kesrouan, and further north in the Mountain. Forty-eight were killed and 153 injured on the first two

days, and 12 killed and 116 injured on the third day. Houses and hospitals were hit and partially destroyed. In Yarze, tens were killed and injured.

13 February 1984: The Syrians committed a mass massacre in Ras el-Nabeh, East Beirut. Seventy victims were found and transported to the morgue of the American University Hospital.

13 March 1984: The Syrians shelled East Beirut. Twenty-seven were killed and 125 were injured.

26 March 1984: The Syrians shelled East Beirut. Five were killed and 20 injured. The following day, a French diplomat was shot in West Beirut and severely wounded.

3–29 April 1984: The Syrians shelled East Beirut. Ten were killed and 79 were injured.

3–4 May 1984: The Syrians shelled East Beirut, killing 29.

12 May 1984: The Syrians shelled East Beirut, as 19 civilians were killed and 72 were injured.

14 May 1984: The Syrians shelled the school of Notre Dame de l'Annonciation in Ashrafiyyeh, East Beirut. One student was killed and 21 others were seriously injured.

11 June 1984: The Syrians shelled East and West Beirut to provoke an internal religious confrontation, leaving 105 civilians killed and 250 injured in the west side; 19 were killed and 107 were injured in the east side.

16 July 1984: The Syrians controlled villages in North Lebanon with 30 resistance fighters killed and 150 injured.

9 August 1984: A car bomb exploded in West Beirut. Three were killed and 25 were injured.

21 August 1984: The Syrians attacked the city of Tripoli as 30 Sunni resistance fighters were killed and 125 civilians were injured.

20 September 1984: A booby-trapped car exploded near the American Embassy in East Beirut, 25 civilians were killed.

27 September 1984: Three Christian soldiers were found massacred in Zghorta, in the north of Lebanon controlled by the Syrians.

21 March 1986: A booby-trapped car from Syria exploded in Furn el-Shebbak, East Beirut. Thirty civilians were blown to pieces; more than 132 civilians were seriously injured.

21 May 1986: A booby-trapped car from Syria exploded in East Beirut. Seven civilians were blown to pieces; more than 100 civilians were seriously injured.

29 July 1986: A booby-trapped Mercedes car from Syria exploded in Ayn el-Rummaneh, East Beirut. Thirty civilians were blown to pieces; more than 128 civilians were seriously injured.

30 July 1986: A booby-trapped Mercedes car from Syria exploded in Barbir, West Beirut. 22 civilians were blown to pieces; more than 163 injured.

18–19 September 1986: The Military Attaché of the French Embassy in Beirut, Christian Gautière was assassinated. Richard Gimpel, a French employee

in an Arak factory, was assassinated. Lieutenant Jacques Meurand, who was sent from France to investigate the case, was also assassinated.

22 November 1986: The Syrian Army arrested and tortured hundreds of Lebanese from the city of Tripoli. Tens of civilians were found dead in the streets of the city and others were deported to Syria.

30 November 1986: The Syrian Army accused civilians of collaborating against them; 34 civilians were executed.

7 October 1986: Sheikh Subhi el-Saleh, Vice-President of the Islamic Center in Lebanon, was assassinated by Syrian agents.

2 August 1987: Syrian agents assassinated Doctor Muhammad Shoukeir, President Amin Gemayel's special advisor, inside his home in West Beirut.

9 May 1989: The Mufti of the Republic, Sheikh Hassan Khaled, was assassinated along with his bodyguards for opposing and denouncing the Syrian occupation.

March 1989: The Spanish Ambassador Pedro Manuel de Arestigui was killed with his father and sister-in-law, along with Lebanese writer Toufic Youssef Awwad. The Syrians used a 240 mm mortar to shell his quarters at the Spanish Embassy in Baabda, East Beirut.

22 November 1989: President René Moawad was assassinated along with 22 others by a roadside bomb in West Beirut. Two bombs exploded, one in the trunk of his car and the other on the side of the street while his motorcade passed through on Independence Day.

13–14 October 1990: The Syrian Air force bombarded the Presidential Palace while the Syrian Army shelled with heavy artillery and attacked Beirut and its environs. Thousands of civilians were massacred; women and girls were raped and ripped open; children were slaughtered and cut into pieces. Hospitals, schools, monasteries, houses and churches were shelled, destroyed and burnt down. Shelters were attacked and people were massacred; priests were strangled or butchered. Hundreds were deported to Syrian prisons where many are detained to this day. In the area of Hadeth, the 19 young volunteers who tried to defend their homes were placed against the wall of al-Sayydeh church and shot. In the region of Dahr el-Wahsh, the Syrian Army attacked and massacred the civilians and murdered 76 Lebanese soldiers who surrendered. The Red Cross found them naked, tied up and shot in the head. One of them survived. A nurse at the Public Hospital of Baabda, who saw the arrival of the corpses in the Red Cross ambulances, declared to a journalist, 'I counted between 75 and 80 soldiers. Most of them had a bullet in the nape of the neck or in their mouth. They carried marks of cords around their wrists. They were almost naked, wearing only underwear. Some of them had their eyes extracted, others had an arm or leg torn off. All had been shot in their heads. There can be no doubt about their execution.' In the village of Bsouss, on the night of 13–14 October, the Syrians attacked the village, expelled its inhabitants and executed 15 people.

20 October 1990: Syrian agents assassinated Dany Chamoun, leader of the National Liberal Party, along with his wife and two children, in their home.

In the 1990s, with the consolidation of Syrian occupation of Lebanon, assassinations continued. Dr Michel Salhab, the Secretary-General of the National Bloc Party, was eliminated as was Sheikh Nizar al-Halabi, spiritual leader of the Islamic Projects Society (Jami'iyat al-Mashari'i al-Islamiah). Abu Mohjen, a Palestinian related to Mounir al-Maqdah from Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp, executed him.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Philip K.Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: Macmillan, 1970 10th edn), pp. 204–5.
2. See Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1988).
3. Charles Corm, *La Montagne Inspirée* (Beirut: Les Editions de la Revue Phénicienne, 1934).
4. *Al-Hayat,* [Arabic] Beirut, 19 July 1975.
5. Kamal Junblatt, *I Speak for Lebanon* (London: Zed, 1982), p. 36.
6. Mikhayil Mishaqa, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage, and Plunder: The History of the Lebanon in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 44–5.
7. Caesar E.Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1830-1861* (London: Center for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 2000), p. 556.
8. From the writings of Maronite Patriarch Yusuf al-Dibs (1833–1907), in Ra'if Khuri, *Modern Arab Thought: Channels of the French Revolution to the Arab East* (Princeton, NJ: Kingston Press, 1983), pp. 163-7.

CHAPTER 1

1. Reuven Erlich, *The Lebanon Tangle: The Policy of the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel towards Lebanon—1918–1958* [Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 2000), esp. pp. 249-51.
2. Quoted in Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), p. 50. Ajami is himself of Shiite descent apparently from the village of al-Khiam in south Lebanon.

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1. Tabitha Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), chs. 6–7.
2. Barry M.Blechman, 'The Impact of Israel's Reprisals on Behavior of the Bordering Arab Nations Directed at Israel', *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* XVI, (June 1972), p. 163.

3. Conversation with Shula Cohen, who was arrested in Lebanon as an Israeli spy, Jerusalem, 25 March 2001.
4. Yehuda Z.Blum, 'The Beirut Raid and the International Double Standard: A Reply to Professor Richard A.Falk', *American Journal of International Law,* vol. 64 (January 1970), pp. 73–105.
5. Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949–1993* (Oxford: Clarendon Press and Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1997), ch. 13, pp. 329–57.

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1. See Raphael Israeli (ed.), *PLO in Lebanon: Selected Documents* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).
2. Detailed information on the first stages of the war in Lebanon is found in *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* (11 June 1976), pp. 27765–73.
3. This discussion is drawn in part from two Guardians of the Cedars publications: Etienne Sakr, *Al-Kalima—Al-Sayf* [The Word—The Sword] [Arabic], 1985, and *Extracts from the National Alertness,* 1987.
4. From Ha'dia La'ham Barakat, *Hizb Herraas Al-Arz: Al-Ru'iya, Wa Al-Hadaf, Wa Al-Mawkif* [The Guardians of the Cedars Party: Views, Goals, Positions] [Arabic], 1987, p. 73; and correspondence from Viktor Cederberg, 11 July 2001, who founded and operates the Guardians Internet site.
5. Internet source, Usama Ayoub, 12 March 2001.
6. Internet source, Carol Sakr, 25 January 2001.
7. *Extracts from the National Alertness,* pp. 27–8; and in conversation with Etienne Sakr.
8. From a Guardians pamphlet *Toi Pour Qui Le Fusil Devint Notre Foyer* [You For Whom The Gun Became Our Home] [French], n.d.
9. In conversation with Noel Sakr, 13 December 2000, Jerusalem.
10. In telephone conversation with Salam Eid, 2 January 2001.
11. This quotation and other subsequent ones appeared in the party pamphlet *Le manifeste aux Libanais et les Cinq Communiqués* [French], for the months of September-October, 1975.
12. Telephone conversation with Joseph Karam *(Alloush),* 25 January 2001.
13. Conversation with Fady Fadel, 10 January 2001.
14. *Al-Kalima—Al-Sayf,* p. 4.

CHAPTER 4

1. Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon* (Harvard MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), ch. 2, pp. 47–65.
2. Interview with Sharbel Barakat, Jerusalem, 6 June 2001.
3. A certain demonization of Abu-Arz appears in William Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium* (London: Flamingo, 1998), p. 199, and in Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War,* 2nd ed, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 85–6. The siege and fall of Tel el-Zaater are discussed, but with no mention of the Guardians, in Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for*

State, pp. 395–8; Petran, *The Struggle Over Lebanon,* ch.14; Naomi Joy Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975–76 Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), ch. 8; and Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation* (London: I.B. Tauris and The Center for Lebanese Studies, 1993), pp. 222–3. One source which mentions the Guardians in connection with Tel el-Zaater is David Kimche, *The Last Option: After Nasser, Arafat and Saddam Hussein* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), p. 130.

4. Telephone interview with Haim 'Arev, 24 February 2001.
5. Telephone interview with Salam Eid, 2 February 2001.
6. Nicolas Nasr, *Faillite Syriènne Au Liban 1975–1981,* Tome II (1979–80) (Beirut: Dar el-Amal, 1983), p. 596.
7. A basic primer on the subject of revolutionary armed struggle is the book by Regis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America* (orig. in French) (New York: Grove Press, 1967).
8. Telephone interview with Oded Zarai, 21 December 2000, Tel-Aviv.
9. A number of Israelis who were officially involved in establishing and conducting relations with the Lebanese in the 1970s and 1980s told the author that Abu-Arz was without a doubt a most friendly and reliable contact and partner who contributed significantly to Israeli interests. Information from interviews with Ya'ir Ravid (by telephone, 5 November 2000), Yitzhak Lior (by fax, 15 January 2001), and David Kimche (by fax, 25 February 2001).
10. Richard B. Parker, 'Kawkaba and the South Lebanon Imbroglio: A Personal Recollection, 1977–1978', *The Middle East Journal,* 50, 4 Autumn 1996, p. 550.
11. Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* p. 144.
12. The United Arab Emirates News Agency on 12 January 1982 quoted Khaled al-Hassan, adviser to Yasir Arafat, from an interview in Bahrain in which he said that 'There will be no existence for either the Palestinian people or for Israel unless one of them disappears—The PLO has no right to discuss recognition of the enemy Zionist state.'
13. Related to the author by Shmuel Evyatar, June 18 2001, Jerusalem (also by Aharon Amir, 18 October 2000).

CHAPTER 5

1. Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* pp. 236–7, 290.
2. Interviews with Shaul Nurel, 15 November 2000; David Kimche, 25 February 2001; and Shmuel Evyatar, 9 September 2000.
3. I analyzed these matters in my article 'Lebanon's Future', *Midstream* (January 2000), p. 5.
4. Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon,* p. 374.
5. Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety-Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp. 254, 276.
6. Letter from David Kimche to the author, 25 February 2001.
7. *Monday Morning,* Beirut, 17–23 January 1983.
8. Abu-Arz recalled that Amin was sad when Bashir was elected president in August. Amin was the older brother and perhaps his father's favorite son. Bashir's assassin

came from the PPS village of Dhour Shweir near Bikfayya, and Amin apparently visited there before the murder—A hint that elements from the *Kata'eb*-Lebanese Forces may have been surreptitiously involved in the bomb blast that killed Bashir is suggested by Robert M.Hatem, *From Israel to Damascus: The Painful Road of Blood, Betrayal and Deception* (USA: Pride International Publications, 1999), p. 57.

9. Conversation with Colonel Sami Shidyak, 14 June 2001.
10. In Hadiya La'ham Barakat, pp. 195–6.
11. Written testimony from Ambassador Yitzhak Lior to the author, 15 January 2001.
12. Interview with General Antoine Lahad, 8 February 2001, Tel-Aviv.
13. Instances of *Kata'eb*-related anti-Christian behavior were not unknown. According to Oded Zarai, the Gemayels sold weapons to the PLO in 1982–83. Interview with the author, 21 December 2000.
14. Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism: The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1995), esp. ch. 11.
15. Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon,* pp. 309–12.
16. Thomas L.Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989), p. 183.
17. *Al-Sharia,* Beirut, 13 April 1987.
18. John Lewis Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys,* vol. I, (1st publ. 1831), (London: Henry C.Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1967), p. 133.
19. Telephone conversation with Hanna Atiq *(Hanoun),* 19 May 2001.
20. Interview with Shmuel Evyatar, 26 October 2000.
21. Conversations with General Michel Aoun, 3 and 8 July 2001, Paris.
22. Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* describes the horrors on pp. 648–9.

CHAPTER 6

1. See M. Nisan, 'The Syrian Occupation of Lebanon', in *Peace with Syria: No Margin for Error* (Shaarei Tikva Israel: Ariel Center for Policy Research, December 2000), pp. 49–69.
2. *Liban 'La situation des droits de l'homme'* (Paris: Amnesty International, Editions Francophones, November 1997).
3. Conversations with Guardian members Joseph Karam *(Alloush)* and Tony Abu Jamra, who were SLA officers.
4. Claude Hajjar, Guardians website www.gotc.org, 7 June 2002.
5. Report by Nabil Khoury, 'Lahad Shuts Down Christian Headquarters in Jezzine', *Israeli and Global News,* 15 October 1998 (Internet site of Free Lebanon, 16 October).
6. Interview with General Antoine Lahad, 8 February 2001, Tel-Aviv.
7. The speech by Abu-Arz at the Ariel Center seminar in June 1999 was later printed in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz,* 30 April 2000.
8. The author (M.N.) attended this meeting.
9. In Israel this subject has been superbly and sensitively surveyed by Aharon Amir (ed), *The Black Book—South Lebanon: A Story of Flight, Betrayal, and Disgrace* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2001). I analyzed the withdrawal in 'Did Israel

Betray its Lebanese Allies?' *Middle East Quarterly,* VII, 4 (December 2000), pp. 31–9.

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1. Malcolm H.Kerr, 'Political Decision-Making in a Confessional Democracy', in Leonard Binder (ed.), *Politics in Lebanon* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), ch. 11, pp. 187–212.
2. John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton, 'Nationality', in *Essays on Freedom and Power* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), pp. 160–1.
3. Clifford Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution', in his edited book *New States, Old Nations* (New York: Free Press, 1963), pp. 105–57.
4. Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), p. 167.
5. Clement Henry Moore, 'Prisoners' Financial Dilemmas: A Consociational Future for Lebanon?' *American Political Science Review,* 81, 1 (March 1987), pp. 201–18.
6. Simon Haddad, 'Sectarian Attitudes as a Function of the Palestinian Presence in Lebanon', *Arab Studies Quarterly,* 22, 3 (Summer 2000), pp. 81–100.
7. Thomas L.Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem,* p. 240.
8. Hilal Khashan, *Inside the Lebanese Confessional Mind* (Lanham, MD/New York/ London: University Press of America, 1992), pp. 60–3.
9. Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon,* ch. 11 in particular.
10. Maurice Barrés, *La Colline Inspirée* (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1962), (1st publ. 1913).
11. From the Guardians program *Le Liban Nouveau* [in French], 1976; and *The Political Program of the Party,* Internet site www.algonet.se/-arz/guardians/ ideology, 24 November 1999.
12. Conversation with Nagy Najjar, President, Foundation for a Free Lebanon, 20 January 2001.
13. Conversation with Asa Yarkoni, 21 January 2001, Israeli officer who served in Lebanon in the 1980s. He related that the Israeli tie with the Guardians was more than a functional relationship, but especially intimate and honest accounting for the party's strong pro-Israel orientation. Yarkoni believed in the value of building up Abu-Arz and his party, and considered that part of Geagea's hostility toward Abu-Arz was because he considered him a threat to the Lebanese Forces connection with Israel.
14. Kahlil Gibran, *The Wanderer* (London: Heinemann, 1966), (1st publ. 1932), p.41.

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1. Amnon Shomron, 'The Betrayed and Forgotten Friend', *Mekor Rishon* (Israeli Weekly newspaper) [Hebrew], 8 June 2000.
2. Letter to Irit Kobo from Avner Lushi, Assistant to Danny Yatom, Chief-of-Staff of the prime minister's office responsible for security affairs, 14 September 2000.
3. *Monday Morning,* Beirut, 18 December 2000.
4. *L'Orient-Le Jour,* Beirut, 20 March 2001.

5. Report by M.Kahl, dated 30 January 2001, on internet site webmaster@free-lebanon.com
6. Nabil Khalifeh, 'Reflections from Beirut', *The Jerusalem Post,* 8 June 2001.
7. Daniel Pipes, 'Israel's Lebanon Lesson', *The Jerusalem Post,* 23 May 2001.
8. 'La Syrie se prépare-t-elle a une nouvelle guerre contre Israel?' prepared by Dr J.Albani, spokesperson for the Guardians in France, 27 April 1999.
9. See M.Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self-Expression* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 1991); 2nd edn 2002.
10. Israeli journalist Oded Zarai referred to the secret of Lebanon in terms of its national character and strength to exploit circumstances for survival and renewal. He recalled: 'I was once at the Alexander Hotel in Beirut when there was 24-hour shelling of Ashrafiyyeh. But after the damage was done, everything was repaired. The flowerpots again decorated the gardens. This is Lebanon's magic. Lebanon will return to be Lebanon as it was before the 1975 war. No foreign power can remain there indefinitely by force.'
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