

BACKGROUND MATERIAL



1981

August, 1981

Contents:

Lebanon	Dr. Arnon Sofer	p.3
Main Stages in the Civil War and Lebanese Crisis, 1975 - 1981	Chana Zamir	p.9
Map of Lebanon, by communities		p.12
Map of Lebanon 1981, by areas of control		p.13

These articles and maps appeared in Hebrew in "Skira Chodshit" ("Monthly Review") of May 1981.

Translation by Ilan Israel (Kibbutz Mevo Chama)

This booklet is pulished by:
Merkaz Hadracha, for Youth
Movements Abroad
Ichud Habonim - Dror
Efal, Israel

August, 1981

Lebanon

by Dr. Arnon Sofer Geography Department
Haifa University

A. Physical Background

Lebanon covers an area of 10,400 square kilometres. Its population is approximately three million. Lebanon can be divided into four sections geographically (similar to Israel):

1. The Coastal Plain - in the West, which is cut by the mountain ranges that reach the sea. Its breadth varies between a few metres, and $7\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres. The plain is intensively cultivated, with orchards, banana plantations, and irrigated and unirrigated field-crops.

2. The Lebanese mountain range - which stretches for 160 kilometres, from the El-Kabir river in the north, to the Litani River in the south. Its plateau in the north is 60 kilometres wide, and narrows to 25 kilometres in the south. Its height is between 2-3,000 metres. On the eastern side, the mountain descends steeply, on the western side, it slopes gradually. The slopes are terraced, and olives, vegetables, orchards and a little cereal are grown. The summits are used for ski-ing in winter. The southern continuation of the mountain range is the Lebanese Upper Galilee, very similar to the terrain on the Israeli side of the border.

3. The Rift Valley - to the east of the mountain range, which is the northern continuation of the Jordan Rift Valley. Its length is 120 kilometres, and width ranges from 5 kilometres in the south, to 10 kilometres by Zahle, and 20 kilometres in the north. Its average height is 1,100 metres. This valley serves as Lebanon's granary, and in addition there are orchards and vineyards in the Zahle region.
4. Hermon and the Antilebanon mountains - which are ranges, 2,500 metres in height, running parallel to the Rift Valley and the Lebanese mountain range. The mountains are bare and exposed, and consequently sparsely populated. The border with Syria runs along the summit of Antilebanon.

B. Population

There are two major religious groups living in Lebanon. The Christians and the Moslems, in addition to other groups such as Druze and Jews. The spread of the minorities, and the size of the different groups, is determined by physical factors and political events that have occurred in the country. This has been a slow continuous process as a result of emigration patterns in the Middle East.

1. Greek Orthodox (Christians): They fled from the Aleppo region of Syria, where they were city-dwellers, and upon arrival in Lebanon, settled in the coastal cities (a small group also in Zahle). In these cities, they hold key positions in commercial life. They have very close ties with the Moslems, and relatively weak ones with the Marronites.
2. Marronites (Christians): They were persecuted in Syria, Iraq and South Turkey, and immigrated to Lebanon in a few "waves". They took over the Mountain Range which was sparsely populated.

As they are mountain-dwellers, their main occupation is Middle-Eastern mountain agriculture.

3. The Druze: They arrived after the Marronites and settled south of them in the mountains. The relations between the two communities were, generally, good, until the population growth and the need for new areas to live in led to friction. As a result of this, many Druze wandered to the Hermon Mountains, others to the Druze Mountains in Syria, and others to the Upper Galilee of Israel. (A slow process, that began in the sixteenth century and ended only in the twentieth century).
4. Shi'ite Moslems: They lived throughout the Middle-East, but were persecuted by the Mameluke and Ottoman rulers. They also sought refuge in the Mountain Range. As they did not find a place there, they gathered on the southern coastal plain around the town of Tyre. Another Shi'ite group later moved to the Rift Valley.
5. Jews, Armenians and others: They arrived at different times, and most settled in the coastal cities, especially in Beirut.
6. Sunni Moslems: They surrounded the Lebanese Mountain Range in the valley near Tripoli, in the Rift Valley, and the valleys surrounding Beirut-Sidon.

C. "Little Lebanon"

The inter-community tension, especially between the Druze and the Marronites, reached a

peak in 1860. After European intervention, there was a decision to initiate a special autonomous region in the Mountain Range. This province became known as "Little Lebanon", whose borders ensured a clear majority to the Christians.

The population of "Little Lebanon" in 1913 comprised:

Marronites and other Christians	78%
Druze	12%
Shi'ite Moslems	6%
Sunni Moslems	4%
Total	100% -
	415,000 people

D. Greater Lebanon

"Little Lebanon" existed from 1861 until 1914. In 1920, after the First World War, "Greater Lebanon" was established, this time under French Mandate.

The following areas were annexed to Little Lebanon: the Tripoli region (Sunni Moslem); the Rift Valley (Sunni and Shi'ite Moslems) and the Lebanese Upper Galilee (Shi'ite). A total of 335,000 new inhabitants were added, the majority non-Christian, so that the Christian majority was brought into question.

Christian Communities:

Marronites	29%
Greek Orthodox	10%
Greek Catholics	6.3%
Armenian-Georgians	6.2%
Protestants and others	2.2%
Total	53.7%

Moslem Communities:

Sunni	20.8%
Shi'ite	18.2%
Druze	6.3%
Others	1%
Total	46.3%

E. The Settlements in Lebanon

Most of the settlements are small villages (1,000 to 1,500 inhabitants), arranged according to topography, along the valleys, and in the mountains where the slopes permit. There are only a few large cities in Lebanon, and except for Zahle and Baalbek, are not found in the valleys or mountain areas.

Zahle dwells on the eastern slope of the Mountain Range and is considered the jewel of the valley. Its choice wines are well-known, and as it is on the Beirut - Damascus route, it has also developed its commerce, and its restaurants have great reputation. Most of its inhabitants are Catholics, but a quarter are Marronite, and there are also many Sunni Moslems.

Small townships are found in the agricultural areas, such as Bint Jbeil in Lebanese Galil, Nabatiya, north of the Litani River, and others.

F. The Lebanese Rift Valley

Most of the valley is flat, and on both sides, there is a North-South route (Baalbek - Zahle - Marj Ayoun) along which the settlements have grown. Many east-west roads join up the two major routes, and also serve to link the Rift Valley to Damascus on the one side, and to the Lebanese Mountain Range, and from there to Beirut, Tyre and Sidon on the other.

There is abundant rainfall, which should provide for good agriculture, but because of its height, temperatures remain low, especially in the cold winter, and the area is only sparsely populated.

Near Baalbek, there is a watershed between the Orontes River, flowing north into Syria, and then the main river, the Litani, flowing in the middle of the Rift Valley, as well as a dam, and a reservoir. This is the first of a series of eight dams that were planned along the length of the Litani, for irrigation and to provide hydro-electric power. Parallel to the Litani is the Hatzbani River (one of the sources of the Jordan River).

Main stages in the Lebanese crisis,

<u>Period</u>	<u>Main Characteristics</u>
April-December 1975	An incident between the militia of the Phalangists and one of the Palestinian organizations signifies the beginning of the Civil War. Battles erupt throughout the country, but without a decisive result. The country's institutions fall apart, including the army, which took no part in the fighting.

Civil War and the 1975-81.

Syrian Intervention

Syria gives support, aid and arms to the Moslem camp, the left and the Palestinians

Rival Camps

At the beginning of the decline, two rival camps appear. They fight each other primarily on Lebanese issues, such as the character of the future Lebanon and the place of the Palestinians within it.

One camp supports the "status quo" (this camp was soon called "the Lebanese Front"), largely made up of Maronite Christians, and its fighting force is largely the Phalangist militias, the militia of the National Liberal Party, and other militias which spring up immediately prior to, and during, the hostilities. President Franjieh is associated with this camp, but during his presidency, most of his activity on their behalf was behind the scenes.

The other camp was a heterogeneous coalition of parties and personalities. It opposes the "status quo", and demands far-reaching changes and reforms in the Lebanese political system, especially by eliminating the community basis of the Lebanese government.

PeriodMain Characteristics

January-
February
1976

Syria openly intervenes in the Civil War, and brings forces (mainly disguised as the Palestinian Liberation Army - PLA) to fight alongside the Moslems, the left and the Palestinians. Maronite leaders' appeals for assistance remain unanswered. The U.S. sees Syria as a stabilizing element, whose involvement will help preserve security in Lebanon and the area as a whole. With Syrian pressure, a cease-fire is achieved, and in its wake Syria forces on Lebanon a "Constitutional Document", including moderate reforms of the political system.

At this stage, on the battlefield, the anti-status-quo forces have the upper hand, but this is not reflected in the Constitutional Document which the Syrians dictate.

March-
May
1976

The "First Upheaval" of Syria's policy in Lebanon evolves from Syria's gradual estrangement from the anti-status-quo camp, which does not accept Syria's definition of a political solution for Lebanon. Parallel to this is a strengthening of ties between

Syrian Intervention

Direct Syrian involvement provides her with a dominant role (which will become greater) in Lebanon. Assad, from this time, follows a political line demanding preservation of a united Lebanon. His aim is to keep Lebanon weak and under Syrian domination.

The practical application of this policy is the "Constitutional Document". The Syrian argument is that Lebanese independence must be preserved, as well as its territorial integrity, and that Syrian security depends on a peaceful Lebanon.

The Syrian estrangement from the Moslem, left and Palestinian groups, and closer relationship with the Christians, does not imply a change of Syrian policy in

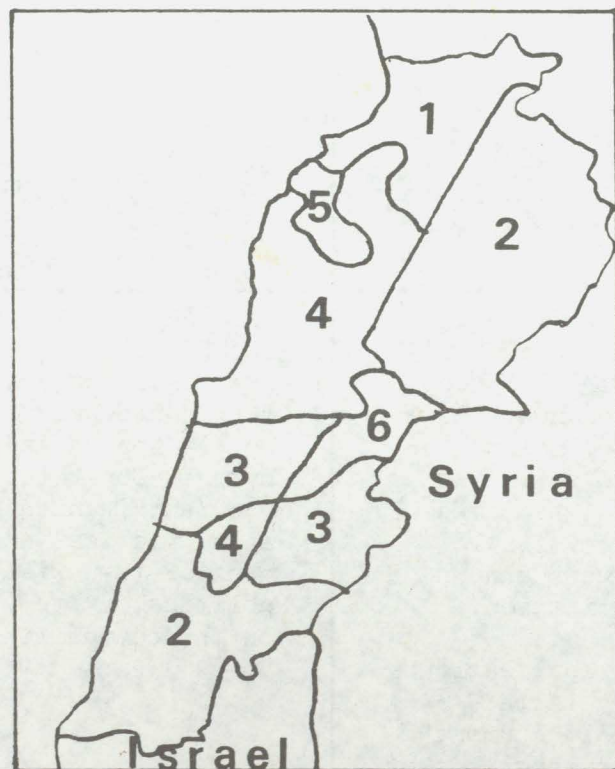
Rival Camps

At the head of this coalition is Kamal Junblat, and most of its members are Moslems (but there are some non-Maronite Christians), leftist and Palestinian organizations. The Palestinians are the main fighting force in this camp.

As a result of Syrian intervention, the anti-status-quo camp gains territorial victories, but is soon disappointed by the "Constitutional Document", which it sees as a practical enforcement of the existing political system, based on the communities.

The Lebanese demands of the rival factions, about the future of the country are pushed aside, as most of their effort is spent redefining their relationship with Syria.

THE COMMUNITIES



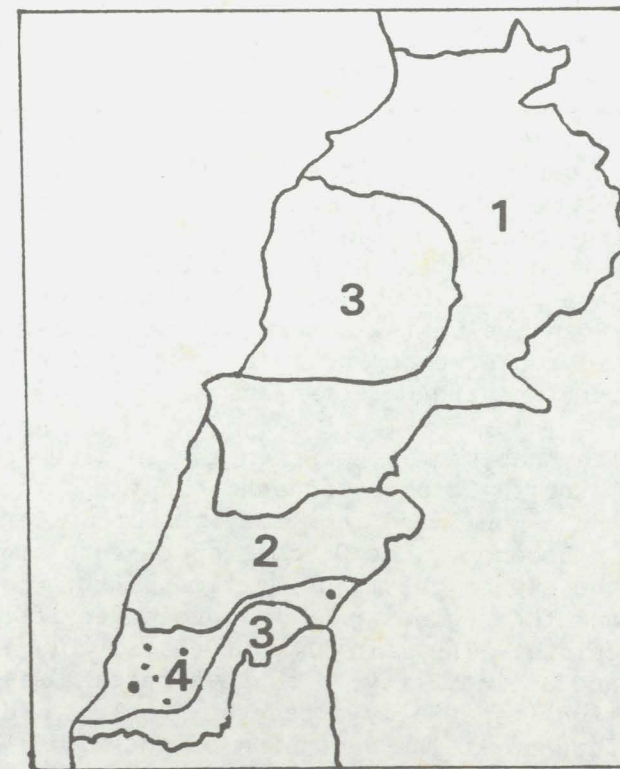
Key: Moslem

- 1. Sunni
- 2. Shi'ite
- 3. Druze

Christian

- 4. Marronites
- 5. Greek Orthodox
- 6. Mixed

AREAS OF CONTROL, 1981



Key:

- 1. Under Syrian control
- 2. Under PLO control
- 3. Under Christian control
- 4. UNIFIL area

(Black dots signify PLO concentrations in UNIFIL area).

<u>Period</u>	<u>Main Characteristics</u>
	<p>Syria and the "status quo" camp, which saw in the "Document" the lesser of the evils at the time. In this period, Syria enables a candidate to her liking, Elias Sarkis, to be elected President, and brings an increasing number of Syrian troops into Lebanon.</p>
June-October 1976	<p>Massive Syrian forces, which entered Lebanon in early June, fight this time alongside "The Lebanese Front". After a certain "freeze" during the summer (whose most dramatic event was the capture of the Palestinian camp, Tel-el-Zatar, in Beirut) came a comprehensive Syrian offensive in the autumn, whose end saw a considerable weakening in the opposition of the left and the Palestinians.</p> <p>Two Arab summit conferences (in Riad, and in Cairo in October) brought about a cease-fire, and a continued legitimation for Syrian presence in Lebanon. The October agreements signified the end of the major battles in the Civil War and the beginning of the prolonged Lebanese crisis. The main characteristics of the crisis are an inability to achieve rational reconciliation (especially after the problems which faced Lebanon at the beginning of the Civil War became exacerbated during it) and the problem of Syrian hegemony in Lebanon. The authority of the Lebanese government is purely nominal, and Lebanon has been divided de facto into a number of units, in which each area is controlled by a different group - be it Syria, the "Lebanese Front", or the Moslems, the left and the Palestinians. A vacuum is created in the South, where different forces attempt to control the area.</p>

<u>Syrian Intervention</u>	<u>Rival Camps</u>
<p>Lebanon. Sarkis' election gives Syria a legitimate reason for increased involvement, at the side of her military forces which are being stationed in Lebanon.</p>	
<p>Massive Syrian forces in Lebanon (at one stage, estimated at 40,000 men) spread throughout the country, with the exception of the South (because of the Israeli "red line"). In the October agreement they receive legitimation, and finance from other Arab states, and are henceforth called the Pan-Arab Deterrent Force. A small number of soldiers from other Arab states join the Syrian forces, but are soon withdrawn, leaving the Syrians as the sole pan-Arab representative.</p>	<p>The fighting between Syrian troops and their former allies of the left, the Moslems and the Palestinians, leads to a disintegration of the coalition, and the withdrawal of pro-Syrian elements in it, who cease fighting, but do not join Syrian troops.</p>

PeriodMain Characteristics

November
1976-
December
1977

At this stage, Syria institutionalizes her presence in Lebanon with the help of three factors: President Sarkis, representing their legitimacy; Syrian troops, destroying all opposition to their government's policy in Lebanon; and pro-Syrian Lebanese groups, which give them support. The rehabilitation work progresses very slightly, there is no sign of national reconciliation, and the Palestinian problem remains unsolved (despite the July conference in Shtura, which attempted to resolve the differences between the Palestinian organizations and the Lebanese government). The only area where significant fighting continues is the South, which serves as a microcosm for the Lebanese problem.

January -
October
1978

In this period, the second "reversal" of Syrian policy occurs. A series of clashes between Syrian troops and the "Lebanese Front" (especially the militia of the Liberals) leads by summertime to major battles, in which Syrian forces shell East Beirut, and take control of areas in the North. Against the background of the shelling, President Sarkis resigns, but changes his mind, and from this time, Sarkis begins to come closer to the "Lebanese Front" parallel with his attempts to break free, even in a limited way, of accepting Syria's dictates. Syria now concentrates her attention on the Lebanese Prime Minister, as her "representative" in the Lebanese government. The violent

Syrian Intervention

Syria stops at nothing to ensure her hegemony in Lebanon; Syria concerns herself with the physical liquidation of her opponents in Lebanon (and it appears, was behind the murder of Kamal Junblat), and dictates policy to the government, such as press censorship, and specific political appointments. Yet, Syria fails to manoeuvre the Lebanese government into signing a defence pact with her.

The second "reversal" of Syria's position in Lebanon, which brings to an end the slightly strange alliance between Syria and the "Lebanese Front" is created after the refusal of the latter to accept Syrian dictates and the Front's attempt to get the Syrians to withdraw her troops from Lebanon, in an attempt to shake off Syrian "trusteeship".

The new alliance that Syria now prefers is as wide as possible a coalition of pro-Syrian elements, like Fran-

Rival Camps

The left-Moslem-Palestinian coalition, which was badly damaged during the fighting, loses its backbone after the murder of Kamal Junblat. Under the leadership of his son, Walid, this camp begins a slow rapprochement with Syria. The pact between Syria and the "Lebanese Front" still exists, but here voices appear, calling for a lessening of Syrian involvement in Lebanon.

The conflicts within the rival camps become more pronounced than those between them.

The "Lebanese Front", which until this time had been characterized by its homogeneity, begins to disintegrate with the violent clashes between the Phalangist militias and Franjiah's (in which Franjiah's son and heir was killed). Franjiah leaves the Front.

In the leftist forces,

Period

Main Characteristics

confrontation between Syria and the "Lebanese Front" ends after American intervention, but the Syrian-Front alliance is not renewed.

In South Lebanon, Israel acts in "Operation Litani". When Israel withdraws, the south is under the control of Major Haddad's militias, and a new element enters the scene - UNIFIL.

November
1978 -
December
1979

In this period, very few changes take place in Lebanon, where all the parties stick to their traditional positions. No progress is made towards national reconciliation, and attempts to rehabilitate Lebanon never progresses beyond the initial steps (including the ratification of a law for reorganizing the army). Most attention is focused in the South, and military escalation continues. Under increasing Syrian pressure, the Lebanese government tries to improve its authority in the South. The sending of a Lebanese Army battalion to the South in April is the immediate background to Major Haddad's proclamation of the "Free Lebanese State." Syrian hegemony is unchallenged, but Syrian interest in Lebanon declines, and President Sarkis can take a few independent initiatives, including bringing the problem of South Lebanon to the Arab Summit Conference in Tunis.

Syrian Intervention

jieh, Karami and Walid Junblat. The Bet-ad-Din Conference in October, of the Arab states contributing to the Deterrent Force, gives a renewed backing to legitimate Syrian presence.

During this period, there is a certain Syrian change in relationship to the Lebanese issue. At the beginning of the period, Syria reinforces her troops in Lebanon, remains the only element of the pan-Arab force, and tries to convince the Lebanese to sign a defence pact by the summer. Syria's interest wanes (due to her preoccupation with domestic troubles, and overall regional issues). Yet Syrian "trusteeship" of Lebanon remains stable. The distrust between Syria and the "Lebanese Front" grows, though the fighting hardly flares up, and at the same time, Syria moves closer to the left-Palestinian elements.

Rival Camps

there is a tightening of ranks, following Syrian-Iraqi temporary rapprochement, which leads to a more lasting alliance between pro-Iraqi and pro-Syrian leftish elements in Lebanon.

In the "Lebanese Front", there are clashes and power struggles between the Phalangists and the liberals which end in announcements of unity (which are not achieved in practice). However, the front does not disintegrate, and its policies remain. The leftist camp is also troubled by a power struggle, in which a "center" element tries to concentrate more power and influence in its hands.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Main Characteristics</u>	<u>Syrian Intervention</u>	<u>Rival Camps</u>
January-June 1980	<p>This period is characterized by Syrian reassessment of her involvement. Syria considers removing her troops from Lebanon, but finally re-deploys them in areas of Lebanon bordering Syria (especially in the Rift Valley) and a small withdrawal. These Syrian moves lead to fears of a renewed outbreak of civil war, and paradoxically Syrian standing in Lebanon increases. This serves as the background for a short dialogue between Syria and the Phalangists, which breakdown in the summer, and renews the pressure on the Lebanese government for national reconciliation, which is not achieved.</p>	<p>Syria gives her blessing to the military strengthening of the left, and declares her intention of protecting the Palestinians in Lebanon (its actual expression is in air-battles between Israeli and Syrian planes).</p> <p>Syrian re-assessment over Lebanon has far-reaching implications for Lebanon internally, regarding the government's relations with the Syrians. Even the strongest opponents of Syria prefer that she retain her troops in Lebanon, and not withdraw until the Lebanese army is capable of replacing them. Syria's re-deployment is aimed at pressurizing a national reconciliation, by which Syria hopes to lessen her military involvement in Lebanon, while retaining her political hegemony.</p>	<p>In the "Lebanese Front", the struggles between the Phalangists and the liberals continue. Bashir Jumail, at the head of the Front's armed forces, proposes a line of demarcation which would allow political pluralism, but military unification of all elements in the "Lebanese Front".</p>

Period

June
1980 -
April
1981

Main Characteristics

This period began with a radical reshuffling of the "Lebanese Front", with the militias of the Phalangists controlling the militias of the liberals, which led to a military unification of the Front, and turned it into the strongest Maronite force in Lebanon (and possibly the strongest single Lebanese force). From this point on, the spokesmen of the front claimed to speak for all Christians, not just the Maronites, and published the first comprehensive platform for Lebanon of the future. This takes practical shape when the "Lebanese Front" attempts to increase its influence to include the Rift Valley, especially the town of Zahle. As the Rift is crucially important in Syria's military strategy, a new confrontation ensues between them. This rapidly turns from a question of Syrian - Lebanese relations to the Syrian - Israeli "missilecrisis", in which the major powers become involved, and Lebanese issues take a back seat.

Syrian Intervention

In this period, there is a change in Syria's arguments to justify her continued and deepening involvement in Lebanon. Syria deserts the claims of preserving Lebanese stability and legitimacy (at the same time as the new U.S. administration forms a policy in which Assad is not seen as a peace-keeping factor in Lebanon). Now Syria argues that she is protecting the Palestinians from any attacks, and also that Syrian security is dependent on Lebanese security. To implement this policy, Syria bombs Zahle and the surrounding area, and takes over sections of the Lebanese mountain range, and brings missiles into Lebanese territory.

Rival Camps

The links between the Lebanese Christians and Israel, and Israel's public announcement that she intends to protect the Lebanese Christians, gain much publicity, and are expressed by Israeli activity against Syrian forces in Lebanon.

MERKAZ HADRACHA
ICHUD HABONIM-DROR



מרכז הדרכה

איחוד הבונים-דרור