ASSAD AND THE PEACE PROCESS: THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF LEBANON

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FOREWORD

The world is waiting for peace in the Middle East. At present the possibility of a settlement is delayed by differences between Israel and Syria. The two are far apart on how to solve one of the thornier problems of the negotiations--the eventual status of the Golan Heights.

That Syria's President Assad and Israel's Prime Minister Rabin should find themselves in disagreement is not unusual--Israel and Syria have been enemies for years. But that Assad should be able to hold out against Israeli power is quite extraordinary.

Assad has played an extremely astute game of diplomatic intrigue against the Israelis, with successes far beyond anything one might have imagined. This study shows how the Syrian was able to improve his originally weak position in the peace talks by exploiting crisis conditions in Lebanon.

Assad's major weapon against the Israelis has been the guerrilla group Hizbollah. The author claims that the fact that a small group of guerrillas could have such an enormous impact in this international drama reveals changed power relations in the strategic Middle East.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this analysis as a contribution to the debate on the peace process and on this important region.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

STEPHEN C. PELLETIERE received his Ph.D. in Middle East politics from the University of California, Berkeley. In the early 1960s he served in the Middle East as a foreign correspondent during which time he was based in Beirut. Dr. Pelletiere returned to the Lebanese capital in 1970, for a stay at Shemlan, the Arabic language school of the British government. In 1975, when the Lebanese civil war erupted, Dr. Pelletiere was in Cairo, Egypt, conducting research on a Fulbright Fellowship. He interviewed refugees fleeing Lebanon to Egypt, including many United Nations professionals. Dr. Pelletiere has taught at the University of California, Berkeley; at Ripon College, in Wisconsin; and at Union College, Schenectady, NY. From 1982 until 1987 he was an intelligence officer in Washington monitoring the Iran-Iraq War. He came to the Strategic Studies Institute in 1988, and became a full professor in 1992. He has written two books on the Middle East: *The Kurds--An Unstable Element in the Gulf*, and the *Iran War--Chaos in a Vacuum.* He is currently working on a book on the war in Kuwait.

SUMMARY

This study considers the remarkable performance of Syria's President Hafez al Assad, who took what apparently was a bankrupt negotiating stance in the Arab-Israeli peace talks and turned it into a position of strength.

What enabled Assad to make this extraordinary turnaround was a correct analysis of power relations in the Middle East. In particular Assad seems to have been among the first Middle East politicians to recognize the potential of groups like Hizbollah, which has for over a decade now been carrying on a fierce guerrilla war against Israel in southern Lebanon. The study examines why Israeli society is vulnerable to the Hizbollahis, and how this vulnerability has played into Assad's hands.

The study also considers the arguments of those who oppose making concessions to Assad, because, they claim, his position at home is so weak that he would be unable to deliver on any deal that he might make.

The study concludes with a look at the anarchic conditions in Lebanon and ponders whether the radical forces set loose there can ever again be brought under control.

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Introduction.

Syrian President Hafez Assad has established himself as the virtual arbiter of the peace process; whether the process succeeds or fails to a large extent depends on him. Given the difficulties that Assad confronted when the talks first began 4 years ago, it is extraordinary that he has been able to maneuver himself into this position.

This study attempts to show how he did it, and, in the process, clarify the realities of power in the Middle East. According to the author, with the coming of groups like Hizbollah the Middle East power balance has changed, and U.S. policymakers need to appreciate this fact if they are not to be overwhelmed by the new situation that has come into being.

At the start of the peace process Israel appeared to be holding all of the cards, and thus saw itself under no compulsion to make accommodations to its enemies. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Israel's main antagonist, Syria, was bereft of international support; it could not look to Moscow to bolster its weak position.

Along with that, Syria could not hope to coerce the Israelis by holding out the threat of resumed hostilities. After Egypt had concluded a separate peace with the Jewish state, Syria's ability to make war was severely compromised.

Given this situation (Syria's loss of Soviet patronage and its inability to play the war card), the peace process appeared, from the Israelis' standpoint, to be a win-win situation.

However it has not evolved that way. It is now apparent that it is Tel Aviv, not Damascus, that is most anxious for a settlement; the Israeli government is the one that is importuning the United States to move the talks along.[1] Assad has held back, refusing to cooperate unless and until he can obtain his minimum requirement. Assad wants the Golan Heights back (after Damascus lost it to Israel in 1967).

Israel's leaders are loath to hand it over--at least all at once. They have hinted that they might be willing to return it incrementally (the Israeli Defense Force [IDF] could make staged withdrawals from the Heights over a period of, say, 3-8 years). That, for Assad, is not good enough; he wants an almost immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces. The maximum waiting period that he is willing to entertain is 1 year. Assad's position is that Syrian sovereignty must be reestablished over the Heights by the close of 1995. Where did Assad get the idea that he could hold out like this?

The study will argue that Syria's grip on Lebanon is what gives Assad leverage over the Israelis. Lebanon, the arena from which numerous guerrilla groups operate, is crucial to Israel's hopes of making peace with its neighbors.[2] One of these groups, Hizbollah, has proved extraordinarily effective. The Hizbollahis seem able to embarrass the IDF, sometimes with seeming impunity. Assad has used this group--along with others--to put pressure on Tel Aviv, and induce it to bargain on a more or less equal basis at the peace table.

The study starts with a look at Lebanon's unique political environment, since this provided Assad the opening to dominate Lebanon's political life, and subsequently to turn the situation there to his uses.

Lebanon and the Peace Process.

Lebanon is governed by a system called confessionalism, under which all of the major religious sects in the country share in its rule.[3] Each sect puts forward a representative for one of Lebanon's top political posts, and that individual uses his office to dispense privileges to his co-religionists.

Today, in Lebanon, power is shared among the sects on a more or less equal basis.[4] However, as originally conceived, confessionalism favored the politically dominant Christian community. The other sects--the Druze, the Sunni and the Shia Muslims--were involved in decisions affecting the national welfare; however, in the end, the Christians determined the actual decision making. This unique situation, where one group (the Christians), came to dominate was established by the French. They did this as part of the peace settlement after World War I.

The French and British devised the so-called system of mandates at the San Remo conference, one of several international fora called to work out the peace settlement after the Great War. At San Remo, the Allies decided that communities previously controlled by the Ottoman Empire would be reconstituted as so-called mandate territories. Supposedly, the Europeans would tutor the territories, preparing them for self-rule. In fact, to all intents they became the Europeans' possessions.

In the case of Lebanon, the French wanted a Christian entity that would offset the power of the predominant Muslim communities, and so they detached a Christian enclave from greater Syria and made it into a separate state. The Syrians objected to this; however the French, who had been given the mandate for Syria, compelled their submission, and so the arrangement was allowed to stand.

Then, in World War II, Vichy France sided with the Axis powers, and as a result the United States and Britain stripped the French of their mandate over not only Lebanon but Syria as well. Lebanon became independent, but the Lebanese, among themselves, arranged matters so that the same system of rule was preserved; that is, Lebanon remained a Christian-dominated state.[5] And this arrangement was codified by making it a law that the president of the country would always be Christian; specifically he had to come from the so-called Maronite community.[6] Also, because they remained the most numerous group in Lebanon after World War II, the Christians got the most seats in Parliament.

Years passed and the system never lapsed, even though most of the points on which it was premised had changed. The most important shift was in the area of demographics--the Christians ceased to be the most numerous group; the Muslims, and in particular the Shia Muslims, overtook them, but rather than tinker with the system--much less drastically change it--the Lebanese stopped taking a census count.[7] They maintained the fiction that the old numerical superiority of the Christians was still in force. Therefore, the Christians were entitled to run the country.

One might ask why the Lebanese clung to this artificial political construct? The answer would appear to be that under it

the economy did well; indeed, the Lebanese economy, pre-1970s, was a wonder. For a country so tiny, Lebanon was rich, certainly richer than the countries surrounding it. Syria, Israel, Jordan--none were in a league with it. The Lebanese miracle, as it was called, was based largely on this fact of Christian dominance. Because of this, Western businessmen made their headquarters there, and also--and this is most important--they did their banking there. In addition, Lebanon benefited from a steady flow of remittances from Lebanese living overseas. (Another great source of income was the Persian Gulf. We will be discussing this in more detail below.)

As long as money flowed into Lebanon, and as long as everyone was more or less taken care of--that is, had a job and was reasonably secure--the system, even though inequitable politically, survived. However, problems became manifest as far back as 1948 with the arrival in Lebanon of Palestinian refugees of the first Arab-Israeli War. Some 100,000 Palestinians came to Lebanon because they had nowhere else to go. With nothing but a few possessions they had been able to salvage from the wreck of that war, these people were destitute. The Lebanese did not welcome the Palestinians; rather they exploited them shamefully. The Lebanese used the Palestinians as a source of cheap labor, and this persisted until the fateful period of the 1970s.

In 1970, clashes between the Palestinians living in Jordan and the government there produced a new exodus. Another 100,000 fled into Lebanon, and this lot was entirely different from the first, the 1948 cohort.[8] The Palestinian refugees in 1970 considered themselves fighters. In Jordan they had functioned as guerrillas and they were determined to carry on their fight against Israel from their new home in exile.

The newly arrived Palestinians settled in the south of Lebanon, just over the Israeli border since from there they could conduct *fedayeen* raids against the Israeli *nahals* (paramilitary settlements) in Galilee. Ordinarily, cross-border raiding of this kind would be interdicted by the country's rulers. But in Lebanon's case, there was no adequate military to perform such interdiction, and so the raiding went unchecked.[9]

To be sure, the raids were not very effective. Still, they brought fierce retaliation from the Israelis. The latter bombed

and strafed the Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon and, in the process, inevitably some local communities were hit.[10] The communities comprised mainly Shias, the poorest and most backward politically of all the sects.[11] These people were unhappy with having the Palestinians in their midst, especially after the Israeli retaliatory raids commenced, but there was not a great deal that they could do about it. The Palestinians remained a force in the south and--being an enterprising people--gradually took over more and more of the country. They did not seek power within the Lebanese system (for the reason that they hoped one day to return to their homes in the Israeli-controlled territories). However, they created a mini-state in Lebanon. They had their own hospitals, clinics and businesses; they set up schools and established welfare schemes, all to benefit themselves; native Lebanese had no share in this. In this sense the phenomenal growth of the Palestinian community was parasitical. The Palestinians poached on resources of the Lebanese, but did not contribute much, if anything, to the overall society.

The Christians, more than any, despised the Palestinians, and were outspoken in their contempt. They, alone among the Lebanese communities, were not awed by the self-proclaimed *fedayeen* fighters. (For a diagram of the various religious enclaves within Lebanon, see Figure 1.) The other groups, the Sunni Muslims, the Druze, and even the Shias--all were mindful of the special political role the Palestinians played; that is, they embodied the Arabs' grievance against Israel; they were the vanguard of the Arab struggle against the Jewish state. The Christians, however, did not think of themselves as Arabs; rather they believed themselves to be the descendants of the ancient

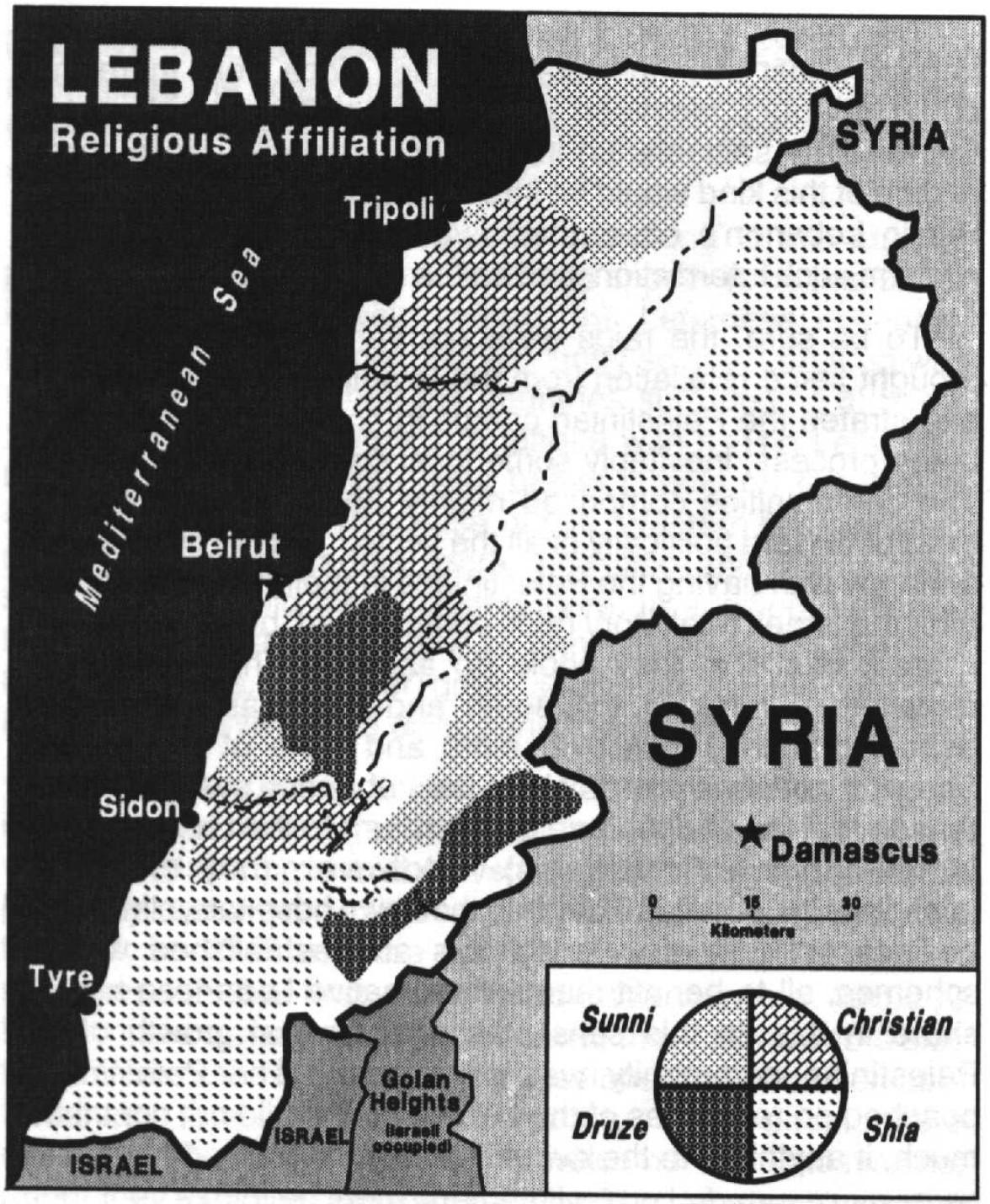
LEBANON
Religious Affiliation
SYRIA
Tripoli
Mediterranean Sea
Beirut
SYRIA
Damascus
0
15
30
Kilometers
Sidon
Tyre
Sunni
Christian
Druze
Shia
Golan Heights
Israeli occupied
ISRAEL
ISRAEL

Figure 1.

Phoenicians. This was somewhat far fetched; still, the Christians believed it.[12] We can see, therefore, why the special character of the Palestinians as the vanguard fighters of the Arabs would be lost on the Christians.

Ultimately, the Christians and the Palestinians came into conflict, and with that the fragile Lebanese system fell apart. Assad was able to exploit this crisis to aggrandize his power position in the area.

Birth of a Movement.

Beginning from roughly the 1960s, various leftist groups in Lebanon had tried to mobilize the population against the country's ruling elite. These efforts consistently were frustrated. The power of the feudal lords was too great; moreover (as we have already indicated) the feudalists' control was bolstered by Lebanon's economy. As long as the economy thrived, the feudalists could ignore calls for reform, much less revolution.

By the 1970s, however, more and more Lebanese had begun to find themselves in strained circumstances. The have/have-not gap had grown, with the Christian and Sunni communities doing well to quite well, and the rest--particularly the Shias--doing not well at all.

At this point the head of the Druze community, Kamal Jumblat, took charge of the anti-establishment agitation. Jumblat, a strange figure (by Middle East lights), was something of a mystic and a genuine reformer; however, he was also a traditional Lebanese warlord.[13] He commanded the Druze, a community renowned for its fighting prowess. As things then stood in Lebanon, the Druze were probably the only sect that could stand up to the Christians militarily. With the Druze leading the newly formed leftist coalition (called, by Jumblat, the National Movement), the Christians found themselves facing a serious challenge.

The aim of Jumblat and the leftists was to destroy the confessional basis on which Lebanese politics was run, substituting for it a form of proportional representation, and also to bring the country into the orbit of the Soviet Union.

This last objective may seem surprising, but in fact it made sense. Since the Christians boasted of their strong ties to the West, it was natural that the enemies of the Christians should seek to ally themselves with the Soviet Union.

The move to bring Lebanon into the camp of the Soviets was something that the leftists originated without, it appears, any encouragement from Moscow. Indeed, it could be argued that the Russians wanted no part of this since--were the move to have succeeded--it would have disrupted the regional power balance and might have provoked a superpower confrontation. (This is an important point which we will develop more fully later.)

Under normal conditions, a power realignment of this scope would probably not have been likely. However, with the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, it became a possibility. The Palestinians in many ways were natural allies of the National Movement forces. Like the latter, they looked to Moscow for support, and, also like them, they saw themselves as underdogs, a people who had been victimized by the system. Starting in the mid-1970s, Jumblat maneuvered to bring the Palestinian/leftist alliance into being.

The Palestinian Factor.

In 1975, fighting broke out between the Palestinians and the Christians. It started in Beirut and, in a matter of days, spread throughout Lebanon, drawing in the National Movement forces. With that the civil war was on.[14]

Originally Syria opposed the war, for much the same reasons that had influenced the Soviets. It foresaw that this could escalate, drawing in the superpowers. Assad argued that neither Israel nor the United States would stand for a "red republic of Lebanon." Once it appeared that such an entity might come into being, Israel (if not the United States) would certainly oppose it.

Nonetheless, within a comparatively short time it did appear that this would happen. The National Movement forces, backed by the Palestinians, pushed the Christians into a trap, surrounding the Phalange militia of the Maronites in the town of Zahle.[15] (See Figure 2.) The Christians held out, thanks in part to the

Israelis, who had for some time been supplying them by sea. Meanwhile Assad summoned one leftist leader after another to Damascus to insist that the seige be lifted.[16] He remonstrated that Israel could not be restrained, and indeed the Israelis had begun to threaten intervention on the Christian side. Assad wanted this "foolishness" stopped. However, Jumblat was adamant that the Christians must be curbed for good and all.

At this point, the Christian President of Lebanon Suleiman Franjiyah appealed to the Arab League for succor, and the League responded positively.[17] Assad's contribution to a League-sponsored operation was to send 30,000 Syrian troops to force the leftists to lift the seige of Zahle.

SYRIA
Tripoli
Mediterranean Sea
LEBANON
BEKA'A VALLEY
Beirut
Zahle
Sidon
Litani River
Damascus
Litani River
SYRIA
Tyre
U.N.
U.N.
U.N. Controlled Area
ISRAEL
Golan Heights
(Israeli occupied)
Israeli Controlled Area
ISRAEL
0
15
30
Kilometers

Figure 2.

Several well-respected and well-informed authors--most notably Patrick Seale--maintain that the United States was involved in this decision; that then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger not only approved Syria's action but induced the Israelis not to oppose it.[18]

Israeli backing for a Syrian thrust into Lebanon would not appear, on the face of it, to be credible. Tel Aviv and Damascus both competed for influence over Lebanon, each claiming it as its sphere of interest. A Syrian invasion, under such circumstances, would not enhance Israel's power position. As it turned out, however, the intervention suited the Israelis very well; it divided the Arab Rejectionist Front. The Front was a coalition of Arab forces actively carrying on the fight against Israel.[19] Syria, by challenging the National Movement, split this grouping--from Israel's standpoint a highly desirable development.

Syria took considerable abuse from the other Arab states for its action. Initially, to be sure, the Arab League had supported the Syrian intervention, assuming that the mere appearance of the Syrian army in Lebanon would cause the leftists to stand down. When this did not happen, and when the leftists commenced to fight the Syrians, Assad ordered his military to crush their resistance. At one point the Syrian army stood by and let the resuscitated Christian forces massacre some 3,000 Palestinians in their camps.[20]

The Arab League further was upset because--after the leftist challenge had been beaten--the Syrians stayed on in Lebanon; they did not withdraw. To be sure, a large expedition like this could not be shut off just like that. The Syrians could not relieve the beleaguered Christians, and then immediately turn around and depart the country; they had to guard against a flareup of the fighting. Still, months after the seige had been lifted, the Syrians were still there, and, not only the Arab League members were upset, but the Israelis as well.

As part of the deal that Kissinger originally had brokered, Syria accepted Israeli-imposed limitations on its activities inside Lebanon.[21] For one thing Syrian forces south of the Beirut-Damascus road could not exceed one brigade (see Figure 2), and, furthermore, Syria was prevented from setting up missile

batteries inside the country. This arrangement, called the Red Line Agreement, kept the peace initially, but then broke down.

The Christians Grow Impatient.

As time passed, the Christians grew impatient over Syria's continued Lebanon stay. The Maronite militiamen of the Phalange pleaded with Israel's then prime minister Itzhak Rabin to help them oust the Syrians (and the Palestinians). Rabin temporized, unwilling to become involved militarily. At the same time, he did extend various forms of aid to the Phalange. He enhanced its military strength by supplying it with arms, and also undertook to have Phalange youth receive military training from the IDF.[22] Then, in 1977 the Israelis did an about face and commenced planning for an intervention. This was the year that Menahim Begin, the head of Israel's Likud Party, took over as Israel's prime minister. Likud, unlike Israel's Labor Party, was expansionist. Its leaders dreamed of extending Israel's borders, ostensibly to make the country more secure.[23] To be sure, after 1973 those borders had been shrinking, since Israel's setback in the fourth Arab-Israeli war. As part of a peace settlement with Egypt, Israel had agreed to surrender the Sinai Peninsula. In return, however, it compelled Egypt's President Anwar Sadat to sign a separate peace. As a result of this action, relations between Egypt and Syria--partners in the 1973 war--became strained. The Syrians felt themselves bereft, because without Egypt they could not hope to stand up to Israel militarily; the balance of power in the Middle East had swung back to Israel, whose power position was now virtually unassailable.

After this, Assad had to rethink his options. Thus when the Palestinians and Lebanese leftists began to battle the Christians again, he backed them. This vascilation may seem odd, but in the Middle East it is commonplace. Ideology is not as strong a factor as some make it out to be. In fact, a point we will make in the study is that Assad consistently has respected the balance of power, and sought where possible to maintain it. Where he has moved militarily, it has generally been for reasons of state.

Not so in the case of Israel under Likud. In 1978 and again in 1982 Menahim Begin actively sought to disrupt the power balance by invading neighboring Lebanon. Indeed one could argue that having failed to impose his authority over Lebanon in the

first attempt, Begin deliberately created the conditions for a second invasion in 1982.

In its first, 1978, incursion into Lebanon, Israel committed 30,000 troops and displaced more than 200,000 Lebanese who fled in a mass exodus to Beirut. It also seized territory as far north as the Litani River (see Figure 2). Although Begin claimed to be acting with cause, Washington opposed the invasion, and, as a consequence, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance--at the behest of then President Jimmy Carter--pressured Tel Aviv to pull back.[24] Afterward Carter supported emplacement of United Nations forces in the south. Nonetheless, Israel did not completely pull out of the country, but kept troops in a narrow strip along the border, thus creating its own security zone.

This zone reflected Begin's policy; the Israeli prime minister never gave up an asset. He had invaded Lebanon, and was bound to have something to show for it. Thus, despite the displeasure of the United States, Begin kept the extreme southern portion of the country. This action, however, ultimately proved Israel's undoing, because it alienated the Lebanese Shia community.

Until this point the Shias had kept out of the National Movement, even though one would have expected them to join since they were arguably the most oppressed community in Lebanon. At the same time, however, (as pointed out above) they were hostile towards the Palestinians, whom they could not forgive for turning their homeland into a battleground by making it a staging area for raids on Israel. The Shias would have nothing to do with a coalition of which the Palestinians were a part.

Nonetheless, after the Israelis invaded in 1978 things began to change, and it was activities of the IDF that soured the Shias on the Israelis. The IDF began cooperating with local Christian communities in the south, effectively by-passing the Shias.[25] Since the latter were by far the most numerous group in the area, this slight was resented. The Shias believed that Israel would turn over control of their area to their Christian rivals. Having just seen the Palestinians driven off, they were dismayed by this new development. Subsequently, several important Israeli politicians have looked back on Israel's treatment of the Shias and pronounced it a major error.[26] At the time, however, the

backward, desperately poor Shia population was not seen as a threat to the Jewish state, or even a factor worth considering. So, despite the community's protests, the Shias were ignored.

That the Shias potentially were harmful to Israeli interests ought to have been apparent. The community had undergone a profound change (since the 1970s). Elements of it had begun mobilizing militarily and had created a militia. To be sure the appearance of militia was not unusual, not in Lebanon in those days when every sect had its own fighting force. The Shias, however, had for years refrained from forming such a group. That they had now done so ought to have alerted the Israelis to trouble ahead, since the community's outstanding grievance was the loss of their southern territory to the IDF.

The newly formed militia of the Shias was called Amal, an acronym for *Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnaniya* (Lebanese Resistence Detachments), and it was not long before it was locked in combat with both the IDF and a newly created Israeli surrogate force, the South Lebanon Army (SLA). This unit, comprising mainly Christians, was the Israelis' gendarme in the southern region, which Tel Aviv now had taken to calling its "security zone." Thus, it appeared to the Shias that the Israelis were moving to permanently annex their homeland, and this is what triggered the hostilities between the two forces. Once Amal and the Israelis clashed there was then nothing to prevent the Shias from joining the Lebanese leftists, which increased the strength of the latter significantly. Still, the Israelis do not seem to have recognized the danger of the situation that they were getting into.

The Onslaught of Terror.

Just as many Israeli leaders failed to perceive the dangers evolving in Lebanon, so, too, were the Christians blinded. They continued their agitation for Israel to invade, and, when the latter procrastinated, the Christians, in effect, forced the issue. In 1981, the Phalange leader, Bashir Gemayl, apparently thought himself strong enough to challenge Assad. He ordered the construction of a highway across the mountains from the Maronites' stronghold outside of Beirut to Zahle in the Beka'a Valley (See Figure 2).[27] This road, had it been completed, would have enabled Bashir to dominate the Beirut-Damascus road, the main corridor through which Syrian troops must pass to enter

Lebanon. Hence, Bashir's road-construction activity was a flagrant provocation. With this in mind, on April 25, 1981, Assad sent helicopter gunships loaded with troops to clear the Phalangists off the ridge line where the road was being built. On April 28 he repeated this operation, and the Israelis shot the helicopters down.[28] The Israelis maintained that--under the Red Line Agreement--Syria was not allowed to provide air cover for its troops. Syria counter-argued that the helicopters were ferrying, not providing air cover for the units. An angry Assad reacted by bringing missile batteries inside Lebanon, which, of course, was a clear violation of the Kissinger- brokered deal.

Not long after this, the Israelis, in response to a terrorist incident, sent their forces back into Lebanon, and this time they went all the way to Beirut.[29] They did not, however, enter the Lebanese capital, because, were they to have done so, they would then have had to confront the leftists and Syrians in the narrow streets of the city. This almost certainly would have meant large numbers of casualties, which the Israelis were not prepared to accept. That Israel could not complete its invasion of Lebanon by conquering Beirut was unfortunate for its interests. Effectively, it stalemated the whole invasion operation, and eventually the United States was brought to intervene with American troops. The Israeli forces then withdrew.

President Ronald Reagan brokered a "solution" whereby the Palestinians agreed to leave Lebanon once and for all. Lebanon's Parliament, which recently had elected Bashir Gemayl president, then signed an accord with Israel that amounted to a separate peace. It appeared that the Israelis had won the day, an extraordinary sequel to their success at Camp David. Syria looked to have lost in its closely contested struggle with the Jewish state.

However, in rapid succession a series of events occurred that were completely to reverse the situation. There were several vicious bombings, in which not only Israelis but Americans were targeted. The greatest loss of life was at the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut where 241 U.S. servicemen died. In another explosion 67 Israeli troops perished in the city of Tyre. As a consequence of this latter bombing a great hue arose in Israel to bring the IDF home. Israelis were increasingly unhappy over "Begin's war," as they called it. The casualties were too high.

Along with that, Israel's reputation was tarnished by the affair. Images of the IDF using phosphorous and cluster bombs against Lebanon's civilian population took their toll on the nightly television news.

Then Bashir himself was blown up, and the leftist coalition launched a full-scale assault on the Christian-dominated Lebanese army. With that Amin Gemayl, Bashir's brother--who had taken over the presidency--went to Damascus where he tore up the accord so recently signed with Begin. In the short space of a few weeks the situation was completely reversed. Now it appeared that Assad, not Begin, was the winner. How did this happen?

The Force of the Shias.

The group that carried out the terrible bombings was a relative newcomer to the Lebanese area, Hizbollah (the Party of God). Hizbollah was drawn from the Shia community; it was not, however, an arm of Amal. This was a totally new organization, one that had been formed by the Iranians.

In 1982, a band of Iranian Revolutionary Guards arrived in Lebanon from Tehran. They undertook to mobilize the Shia community. They provided arms training and weapons, and additionally they delivered extensive social services. Eventually, the Iranians took the cadres that they had trained and formed them into a new organization, Hizbollah.

The Iranians had just engineered a successful religious revolt at home, the first genuine revolution in the Middle East since the Algerian insurrection in 1962. As a part of this revolution, elements of the Iranian community committed themselves to undertake a worldwide *jihad* in behalf of Islam. This revolution motivated the Iranians to invade Iraq in 1982, and it was also behind their decision to intervene in Lebanon.

At the time, Iran's intrusion into Lebanon was viewed as an extraordinary event. What motivated the Iranians to do so puzzled many. Even today, opinion widely differs over this. If one puts to one side Iran's motives however, and concentrates only on results, the move was significant. For one thing, it unleashed terrible forces previously pent up within the Lebanese Shia community, among them a penchant for martyrdom, which has always

been a feature of Shia Islam, the sect of which the Iranians, like the Hizbollahis, are a part.

The insidious nature of the martyrdom tactic is that it is practically unbeatable. In all of the worst bombings, the victims were helpless to defend themselves. Shias simply forced themselves into areas where American or Israelis were massed, and then detonated bombs, either strapped to their persons, or loaded on trucks which the suicide bombers drove.[30]

Faced with an enemy that would resort to such abhorrent tactics, the Americans and then the Israelis retreated. The Israelis moved first, pulling the IDF back to their security zone in the south. Soon afterward, the Americans departed; U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger withdrew them entirely from the theater.

One could say, then, that what had turned the tide in Lebanon was terror. At least it seemed that way from Assad's perspective. He drew three fateful lessons from what had occurred.

The Lessons Learned.

The first lesson that Assad absorbed involved the Israelis. He saw that they were reluctant to take casualties. This was revealed when they refused to go into West Beirut. Rather than fight the leftists house-to-house in the back streets and alley ways of that sprawling metropolis, Israel stood off and, in effect, called on the United States to broker a solution. It repeated this pattern of retreat after the bombing of IDF headquarters in Tyre. Over a period of years the IDF surrendered practically all of its conquests in Lebanon, except for the narrow security zone.

The Israelis' performance convinced Assad that their much-vaunted military might was limited. The IDF depended on its technological edge; once that edge was lost it became vulnerable. To be sure, the Israelis are prepared to sacrifice in an imposed war, such as in 1973, but "Begin's war" was not perceived in this light. To much of the Israeli public, the invasion was an undisguised power grab, of which they wanted no part. When the casualties began to mount, the public demanded a withdrawal.

Assad's second lesson involved the United States. Washington suffered losses similar to that of Israel, and it, too, pulled out. Lebanon was not of vital interest and so Washington was indisposed to sacrifice in its behalf. This revelation shocked the Christians (indeed all the Lebanese), who had assumed the opposite to be true. The Lebanese had always assumed their country was a bastion of the West. Indeed, in 1958, the United States had sent Marines to defend Lebanon from communist takeover, and after that the people of Lebanon had prided themselves on being special allies of Washington.[31]

When Washington pulled up stakes and withdrew over the horizon, the rightists in the country were appalled. The implications of the move were quite sobering. In fact, it meant that Lebanon ceased to be an autonomous country. As pointed out earlier, Lebanon had no adequate military of its own. The central government had no means of imposing its will throughout the country. The only effective instrument for keeping order therefore was the Syrian army. Assad had not withdrawn his forces, which were settled down throughout the country; indeed, the Syrians were treating Lebanon as if it were a province of theirs. This was a situation that affronted many Lebanese, particularly the Christians, but were the Syrians to leave--what then? Would not the land be torn with anarchy?

The final lesson was in many ways the most disturbing. The appearance of Hizbollah upset all of the familiar understandings that previously had prevailed in this part of the world. For one thing, it had always been the case that dissidents survived by allying themselves with powerful patrons. Hizbollah did not do that. To be sure, it was allied to Iran, and secondarily to Syria. But Iran, in the 1980s, was not viewed as particularly powerful, and, this being the case, one had to wonder, why were the Hizbollahis willing to make common cause with it?

Assad seems to have appreciated the appeal of Iran, and its revolution, for the founding members of the Hizbollah movement. Clearly, the attraction was ideological--Khomeini's message spoke to the fervent young Muslims. Later in the study we will discuss this more. Here it is sufficient to note that for Assad, the Hizbollahis were potentially useful. Their violent ways in particular appealed to him.

Here was a group which--if its ideologues were to be believed--was ready for anything. Motivated by deep contempt for the world as it existed, the Hizbollahis were set to sweep away the whole edifice of power.[32] To them, existing power arrangements and the blocs that supported them were anathema, fit only to be destroyed. In this respect, the radicals seemed uncontrollable. Left to themselves, there seemed no limit to the destruction that they would wreak.

Assad looked at the Hizbollahis in contrast to the Israelis. The latter were great conservers of life--at least the lives of their own soldiers. The IDF was certainly not profligate in this regard; if it could, it would conserve the life of *every single Israeli soldier*. The Hizbollahis, on the other hand, craved martyrdom, and would willingly sacrifice themselves, if only to confound their enemies.[33]

To Assad, this must have seemed a perfect setup. Pit the Hizbollahis against the IDF. The guerrillas, by their willingness to employ suicidal tactics, might prove a match for the IDF, which preferred to stand off and bombard the enemy with aircraft and long-range artillery.[34] Given the IDF's technological superiority, this type of warfare was ideal for it. At the same time, however, in war it is impossible to avoid small unit actions, and here the Hizbollahis came into their own.

As long as Israel held south Lebanon, the IDF was compelled to patrol the area, the terrain of which favors guerrilla operations. Cut with *arroyo*-like formations, southern Lebanon affords excellent cover for ambush parties. They can lay concealed in trenches no more than a few feet deep, and then, leaping out, fire at passing patrols.

To be sure, such operations took their toll on the guerrillas, armed as they were with rocket propelled grenades (RPG), the range of which is only 150 meters. They had to attack at close quarters which meant they rarely could escape, and Israeli helicopter gunships would hunt them down. Despite initial high losses, however, the Shias continued to press home their assault, displaying considerable courage.

Starting about 1989, we witness Assad turning increasingly

to the Hizbollahis, having apparently determined that they were the perfect foil to use against the IDF.

The Changed Situation in Lebanon.

After the explosion at the U.S. Marine Corps barracks and America's pullout, the situation in Lebanon fundamentally changed. The Christians practically laid down their arms. As stated above, the American departure disillusioned them. It was not merely that they had lost a potential military ally; something much more disturbing had occurred.

Prior to the outbreak of the civil war, Lebanon was the banking center of the Middle East. As the war escalated, depositors transferred their wealth out of the country. The most serious defection was that of the Gulf monarchs, who now sought the security of the financial centers of New York and London. Without the monarchs' financial contributions the Lebanese banking system could not survive.[35]

If Lebanon were to regain its erstwhile status (as the Middle East's banker), it had to coax back that Gulf money. Had America maintained its support of Lebanon, this probably could have been accomplished. But, with the Americans gone, virtually no hope existed of recouping Beirut's preeminent position. As a consequence, the Christians, who had been foremost in directing the country's finances, now began to emigrate, the pattern of Lebanese life for centuries. In despair of making their fortunes at home, the Christians sought new lives for themselves overseas.

Of course, the Palestinians, too, had departed--the one great plus for the Israelis. The *fedayeen* fighters had been forced to leave by the deal brokered between them and the Reagan administration. Some Palestinians remained, to be sure, the far leftist groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). However, these became virtual puppets of the Syrians. Indeed, all of the diehard Palestinian fighters who remained behind in Lebanon were compelled by the Syrians to relocate their headquarters to Damascus, where they came directly under Assad's control.[36]

The Lebanese government, too, became a victim of Assad's takeover since it no longer controlled much of anything.

Practically every important action it took had to be cleared with Assad; in that respect Lebanon's president became a kind of factotum running between Beirut and Damascus. This almost total subservience of the Lebanese to the Syrians was to have great significance once the peace talks between the Israelis and Arabs commenced in 1990. It meant, in effect, that Assad controlled the Lebanese delegation, which could take no independent position, but had to constantly defer to the Syrian president.

At this stage (in 1989), Assad probably did not foresee the opportunities that were open to him. If he congratulated himself at all, it was probably on having faced down the Israelis. The fact that he could actually capitalize on his victory, to aggrandize himself even further, almost certainly was not apparent at this stage. The realization of how well off he was did not come until the next year.

The Standoff.

In 1989, Syria and Israel confronted each other in Lebanon like a couple of schoolboys standing inside a circle, each demanding that the other quit the circle, or face being ejected. Neither would make the first move, and so the confrontation simply dragged on.

Israel was adamant that it would not withdraw from the south of Lebanon until Syrian forces had pulled out of the north. Assad maintained that, inasmuch as his forces originally had been invited into Lebanon by the Lebanese government, they were there by right. It was Israel that had invaded the country, and therefore it must be the first to depart.

There is no telling how long this situation might have continued, with Lebanon effectively partitioned into separate spheres of interest, one Israeli-controlled, the other under the domination of Damascus.[37] In 1990, however, the United States announced that it intended to open peace talks between the Israelis and their Arab neighbors, and this proved the catalyst to move towards a resolution of the impasse.

Assad knew, going into the peace talks, that his position was weak. His army was so far inferior to that of Israel that he could not hope to take on the latter militarily. Further, he

lacked friends in the international arena, after the Soviet Union had fallen. He therefore had no way of pressuring his enemies to bargain with him in earnest.

At the outset of the talks, Israel adopted the stance that it had no need to achieve a peace with its Arab neighbors. It held all the territory that it wanted.[38] With these holdings it felt secure. Why should it bargain with the Arabs? It had peace--or, if it did not, it had security, the next best thing. Israel therefore determined that it would make no concessions. If there were to be concessions, they must come from the Arab side.

As events have subsequently shown, this was in practically all cases a solid strategy. It certainly has paid off with respect to the Palestinians. Yasir Arafat, leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), has had to make significant concessions to the Israelis just to get them to sit down with him.[39] Jordan's King Hussein has effectively made peace with Israel, on the latter's terms. Only Syria is continuing to hold out, and here, it would appear, Israel's strategy has broken down.

Playing the Lebanon Card.

Prior to the start of the peace talks, Assad had been assisting the Hizbollahis to carry on a low-level guerrilla war in the south of Lebanon, in cooperation with Iran. The latter resupplied its clients with arms and provisions, flown to Damascus in regularly scheduled runs and off loaded to the Hizbollahis, who then transhipped them south through the Beka'a Valley.[40]

The war in the south never developed into much, because the Hizbollahis for a considerable time lacked the expertise to accomplish anything. Although brave certainly, their courage, against a superior force like the IDF, did not go very far. For a long time the Hizbollahis did not constitute anything more than a minor irritant to the IDF.

Starting in early 1993, however, the picture began to change. The operations of the Hizbollahis increased in intensity as the guerrillas displayed more and more proficiency.[41] Along with that, they had been supplied with some extremely

sophisticated weapons, like the Russian-made AT-3 (Sagger) wire guided missile, with a range of between 500 and 3000 meters. With these, they overcame the handicap they had suffered previously; when armed only with RPGs, they had been forced to initiate actions under almost suicidal conditions.

As the war in the south escalated, the Israelis suffered two concerns. First, their surrogate force, the SLA, was losing heart; there had been significant defections to the side of Hizbollah. Indeed, in one incident a whole SLA unit went over to the Hizbollahis, and afterward several of the defectors appeared on Beirut television to explain why they had abandoned the Israeli cause.[42] Along with that, IDF soldiers were being lost in unacceptable numbers.

Therefore, in spring 1993, the Rabin government decided to check the rapidly deteriorating situation. It determined to attack Lebanon. However, this would not be a ground invasion, in the manner of past such attacks. The IDF would rather bombard the south and target it with air strikes, the idea being to create chaos in the southern region,[43] thus to bring the Beirut government to the point of collapse. To spare their client, the Syrians would then have to agree to call off Hizbollah.

The Israelis named this exercise Operation Accountability, because to them it was Assad who should be held accountable for the guerrillas. In this latest flareup of guerrilla violence he was particularly suspect because of certain events that had occurred outside Lebanon in connection with the peace conference.

Coping with Breakdown in the Talks.

In spring 1993, the U.S.-sponsored talks had practically broken down.[44] In the Arabs' eyes, the Israelis were stonewalling. Indeed, the Arabs despaired of going on with the talks; the Israelis were so unyielding. It was either walk out, the Arabs felt, or give in to Tel Aviv's demands.[45]

Rather than walk away from the talks, Assad apparently determined to show Israel there was a price for behaving in this fashion. By stepping up the guerrilla war--and killing a significant number of IDF soldiers--Assad was, in effect, offering a *quid pro quo*. Israel could expect to suffer more such

costly guerrilla actions, unless it agreed to be more forthcoming towards the Arab side.

This being the case, Rabin decided to respond in kind. By by-passing the guerrillas and seeking to destabilize the Lebanese government, he was saying to Assad--we hold *you* responsible for this situation, and *you* must correct it or we will create such pandemonium in Lebanon that the country you claim as your client will fall apart.[46]

The shelling of southern Lebanon continued for a week, and did in fact cause considerable suffering among the Shias. However, when the shelling stopped, and the few IDF infantry units that had been deployed inside Lebanon were withdrawn, the Hizbollahis returned to the south, and within a matter of weeks had resumed their operations. Indeed, in August 1993 the guerrillas ambushed an Israeli patrol, killing nine IDF soldiers, the largest loss of Israelis in a single engagement since 1982.[47]

After this Rabin did nothing. Indeed he accepted the fact that Syria could keep up the war in the south while the peace talks went on.[48] This was a most unexpected development. One would have thought that Israel would have withdrawn from the talks immediately. If, as the Israelis had been maintaining, they did not need a formal peace with their neighbors, why then were they going on with the negotiations? Indeed, Israel not only did not pull out of the talks, it tried to pressure Damascus-- through the United States--to come to an agreement. Secretary of State Christopher's repeated shuttles between Damascus and Tel Aviv and the subsequent meetings between President Clinton and Assad were all at the behest of the Israelis, to try to break the deadlock.[49]

In other words, it now appeared that the situation had reversed itself. Assad was holding out in the talks while the Israelis had become the petitioners. How had this developed?

Involving the Gulf States.

Only recently has it become apparent how much Israel needs peace, for the reason that only with peace can Israel's economic situation be improved. This became clear with the convening of the Casablanca Conference in Morocco in November.[50] Israel sent a huge delegation to this conference, which lobbied for the

creation of a regional bank. This bank--the money for which would largely be subscribed by the Gulf states--would fund projects to develop the whole Middle East region, Israel included.[51]

Although the United States supported Israel's push for the creation of such an agency, the plan foundered (for the time being, at least) on the reluctance of the Gulf states to commit the necessary funds. The monarchs pleaded that the time was not ripe, since there was still war in the region.[52]

The only war in the area is the one between the Hizbollahis and the IDF in southern Lebanon (that and the escalating conflict carried on by Hamas inside the occupied territories).[53] Since backing from Assad allows that fight to continue, he, therefore, is the key to ending the conflict. There can be no real peace in the area (that is, one in which the Arabs accept Israel's *de jure* existence), without the Syrian president's cooperation. If Assad gets a settlement on the Golan, it seems certain Israel will get one in Lebanon, after which things will return to calm.[54]

Effectively, then, Assad has succeeded in equalizing the contest between himself and the Israelis at the negotiating table. He has something that Israel wants--an end to the fighting which would then open the area to development by the regional bank. The banking scheme to be sure is visionary, but it could be realized if the Gulf monarchs' concerns were addressed. This being the case, the Israelis are motivated to make concessions to Assad, to get on to the phase of economic development.

As with all complex situations, however, it rarely happens that there is a neat solution. Just so in this instance. There is an outstanding objection to making peace on Assad's terms. Skeptics within the Israeli establishment claim that Assad is so insecure at home, he could not deliver on a peace deal, were one to be made with him.

The Question of Syrian Stability.

Syria is not a rich country, nor has it ever been, at least in modern times. While it has oil, it is heavy oil which is not in demand for export. Syria can, however, provide for its own fuel needs.[55]

The major drawback to Syria's development is the country's economic system. Patterned after that of communist Eastern European governments, Syria's system is among the most controlled in the Middle East, if not the world. Every aspect of the economy is subject to government oversight (except for agriculture). The public sector is heavily bureaucratized, and looks into every detail of the economy's operation.[56]

Politically, too, the society is overcontrolled. Assad sits at the tip of a great pyramid of power. He is reputed to make decisions governing the most minute details.[57] He oversees all important appointments; no one achieves high position in Syria who has not first been vetted by Assad.

In this respect, Syria is a great deal like its sister Ba'thist republic, Iraq, but whereas Iraq is a highly controlled society where (until recently, at least) things were efficiently managed, Syria is inefficiently run, and the reason is corruption. Syria has the unenviable distinction of having probably the most corrupt government in the Middle East, as judged by Middle Easterners. The people of Syria are aware of this, and reportedly are unhappy with the situation, but recognize that they are powerless to rectify it.

Corruption is traceable, in part, to the French, who, as already discussed, held the mandate for Syria after World War I. They were responsible for developing the country's governing arrangements. Specifically, they installed an Alawi elite in power.[58] Alawis are an obscure Middle Eastern sect which orthodox Sunnis regard as heretical. The French made the Alawais the rulers of Syria, a position they have maintained ever since by means that are quite ruthless.

This makes for a bad situation. The overwhelming majority of the country's population, being Sunni, distrusts--and has contempt for--the country's rulers. To offset this scarcely repressed hostility, the leadership maintains an extraordinary solidarity. Assad, of course, is Alawi, as are all of his division commanders, his chiefs of security, and top air force officers. By looking out for each other, the sect members have withstood numerous challenges (but not always effortlessly, as we shall see below).

Corruption has also affected Syria's involvement in Lebanon, where the Syrians are known to be trafficking in drugs.[59] Indeed, the area where the drugs are grown is under their control, as is the port from which the drugs are shipped out of the country. Meanwhile, in all stages of the drugs' movement inside Lebanon, Syrian commanders take their cut.[60] This corruption is so widespread it has affected the military's performance. The Syrian army is not well-regarded.[61] It is badly disciplined, ill trained, and not up to the standard of the Israelis. Practically speaking, the Syrian army's major task is to guard the regime. Of the several divisions in the army, half are quartered close to the capital. In the capital, the command is divided, with one top commander reporting to the army staff, the other directly to Assad. Until Assad's brother, Rifaat, overstepped himself in 1983, there was even a third layer of protection.[62] Rifaat commanded the so-called Defense Companies, whose only mission was to protect the president.

Interestingly, Assad seems to stand above and outside of all this corrupt dealing. The Syrian people appear to tolerate him. His personal lifestyle is seemingly impeccable. He lives a life secluded from public view. His wife is modest and self-effacing. His children are well-behaved and mannerly, in public at least.

The great tragedy of Assad's life was the recent death of his son, Basil, in a car accident. Assad had been grooming Basil to succeed him. This had not been an easy task. The average Syrian was unwilling to see the office of president manipulated in this way. Syria's military leaders were not much taken with the idea either. Hence, Assad invested considerable capital in positioning Basil to inherit the rulership. Principally, he cultivated the Syrian power elite, promoting individuals who were disposed toward Basil, and sidelining those who were not.

Until recently it was widely perceived that Assad had succeeded in his mission. The public appeared ready to accept Basil. They recognized his good qualities, which, in fact, were numerous. He had gone through university as an engineer and gotten his degree. He did well in the army, and had established a reputation as a reformer.[63] None of the corruption that tarnished other officers rubbed off on him.

And then he died in the car accident, leaving his father

bereft.[64] Now Assad is attempting to put forward his other son, Bashir. But Bashir lacks the charisma of Basil. In fact, Bashir had to be summoned home from London, where he was studying to become an eye doctor, to begin his leadership training. He came reluctantly, it was said, and now is not doing well as commander of a tank unit where Assad has placed him.

The issue of succession is a pressing one as Assad is known to be in ill health. In 1983, he apparently had a heart attack, and this led to a crisis of sorts. While the president was recuperating, the men around Assad fell to fighting among themselves, and his brother, Rifaat, came close to leading a coup d'etat.[65] Assad, however, recovered in time to calm the unrest, and ultimately exiled Rifaat to Paris, where he has remained ever since.

These problems--the difficult succession, the corrupt men around Assad, the president's ill health--all would appear to buttress the argument of those who oppose making a deal with the Syrians. However there are counterarguments, one of which the author finds compelling--there is no effective opposition in Syria; Assad does not have to worry about subversive forces conspiring against him. There was an opposition at one time, but Assad crushed it, and the manner in which he did is quite revealing.

Purging the Brotherhood.

Held down by the Alawis for years, Syria's majority Sunni sect long ago adopted a stance of resignation. They departed from this, however, in 1982 when elements of the community led a fierce rebellion against Assad's government.

In 1982, Syria's situation was particularly dismal. Assad had just allied the country with Iran in the Iran-Iraq war.[66] This alienated the Gulf monarchs, Syria's principal financial backers. Then he took the country into Lebanon, to oppose the Israeli invasion. One of these moves, by itself, would have strained Syrian resources. The two taken together practically broke the economy.

To be sure, the Sunni rebellion did not develop overnight; it had been simmering for some time. Since at least the 1970s the

Muslim Brotherhood, the most powerful Sunni opposition group in the Arab world, had been combatting Assad's government through acts of sabotage.[67]

In Syria, the bulk of the Brotherhood's membership comprised middle class elements, as well as less well-off *petit bourgeois*. The strongholds of the Brotherhood were located in the north of Syria, in Hama and Homs. The discontent originated there, and by 1979 it had spread fairly widely. In June of that year an extraordinary event occurred, the murder, gangland style, of some 69 Alawi officer cadets at the Aleppo military school.[68]

After that, the dissidence erupted into outright revolt. Militants associated with the Brotherhood assassinated a number of Syrian leaders; several Ba'thist headquarters were bombed, and there were running gun battles between the Brothers and Syrian security forces in the capital. This, for Assad and the other regime leaders, was the final straw.

In February 1982, Assad's brother, Rifaat, marched north to Hama with his Defense Companies and ringed the city, after which he proceeded to bombard it for 3 weeks. Then the companies moved into Hama and went house-to-house rooting out resisters.[69] The conservative toll of dead was set at 20,000. The companies wreaked similar destruction on Homs and Aleppo, which would appear to indicate the actual toll was higher. After the purge, the Brotherhood ceased to be active. Periodically, reports are heard of a Brotherhood revival, but these never seem to develop into anything; signs of overt dissatisfaction with the regime are meager. For example, it is claimed that the fundamentalists are gaining support, and the evidence cited is the increase in Muslim dress by Syrian women. This is interesting certainly; but, by itself, it does not appear to be significant.

It seems unlikely that a resurgence of opposition will develop in Syria, when one looks at the record of recent events. For example in 1993, the country experienced a disastrous summer drought, with a virtual shutoff of water to all the major cities. In the capital, water was out 8 hours a day for weeks. Without water, restaurants shut down, laundries failed to operate, food rotted in the stores--there was even a threat of cholera. Israeli newspapers ridiculed the Syrians editorially, saying it was hard to take seriously a regime that could not supply water to its

capital.[70]

In the end nothing came of this. In Algeria, a similar episode (in 1979) produced the revolt of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which many now fear will topple Algeria's ruling junta.[71] What appears to be working in Assad's favor is the relative prosperity of the country; the agriculture sector, in particular, is doing well, and government officials have boasted that as long as the country can feed itself (with a surplus for export), they have no fear for the security of Assad's regime.[72]

Thus, the issue of whether Assad is threatened at home (and whether, therefore, it is a good idea to negotiate with him) is undecided; one can argue either way. If one wants to negotiate with the Syrian president, a case can be made for this; if one does not, a case likewise can be made.

Taking it all into to account, however, the author favors making an agreement, mainly because of what is happening in Lebanon with the Shias.

A Community on the Move.

The Shia community in Lebanon is a dynamic one. It has been growing and developing politically since at least the 1970s. Restless and assertive as it is, the community has the potential to harm not only the interests of Israel but also those of the United States.

At present Hizbollah is one of the leading forces in the Shia community; unquestionably it is the dominant party in the south.[73] However, the basis of this dominance seems to be little understood, in the West at least. The Western media consistently portray Hizbollah as a lot of fanatics, in the pay of Iran. Certainly fanaticism is a large part of what Hizbollah is about, and certainly Iran is financing the party's activities. But the party's strength does not derive exclusively--or even primarily--from the ideological commitment of its followers or from their willingness to take Iranian subventions.

Hizbollah serves the community. It sounds bizarre to state it this boldly, but this is the essence of the relationship between it and the mass of Shias. From 1982, when Iran's

Revolutionary Guards first arrived in Lebanon, the radicals have been consolidating their power base by dispensing services the community needs. Essential services which are unavailable must be gotten somewhere, if the community is to survive.

Once Israel declared the south a security zone, the area practically lost contact with Beirut, i.e., the central government. Hence, the government cannot provide for it. Indeed, the Lebanese army cannot even operate south of the Litani River.[74] This means that the southern Shias are on their own, in an environment where the SLA and IDF are constantly harassing them.[75] The Shias do not receive social services from the Israelis, no protection, nothing. All this they get from Hizbollah.

In return for serving the community, the party demands military service from its youth. This is a purely feudal relationship, no different from that which prevailed in the days when the warlords were in power.[76] It is a way of life that has characterized Lebanese society for centuries. Moreover, it is an efficient arrangement, well-understood by the Lebanese. What makes the party powerful, then, is the patronage it has to bestow. It would not be nearly so threatening if it depended on ideology or even on pay-offs from the Iranians.

Further, it seems likely that the party will continue to grow. Indeed, in recent national elections eight candidates put forward by Hizbollah took their seats in the Parliament. This must be taken as an indicator of the party's strength.

The message to the Israelis should be plain--something must be done to check Hizbollah's power, or else deflect it away from its present radicalism. It seems to the author that Syria is offering a way of accomplishing this. Assad apparently is willing to cut off the guerrillas' supply line through the Beka'a Valley, in effect shutting down their operations. In return, he wants Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights. After that, Syria will pull its troops out of northern Lebanon, if the Israelis abandon their security zone. This will enable the Lebanese army to take over the south, at which point, presumably, the Shias will get back their land and the fighting will cease. The Shias have been struggling for over a decade to repossess this territory and once they have it they should have no need to go on fighting.[77]

But opposing this deal are some Israeli politicians (mainly from Likud) who are saying that Hizbollah is anti-West, and anti-Israel, and that, therefore, there should be no thought of making a deal with it. This is probably true, but it is largely irrelevant. The important thing is not that the party be friendly towards the West, but that it not actively fight against Western interests.

The Israeli politicians opposed to making peace with Assad should be challenged to say how *they* intend to resolve this difficulty. In this regard it is interesting to reemphasize that many Israeli hawks are members of the Likud Party. That party's record in the past has not been reassuring. Likud invaded Lebanon, twice. Its "solution" to the Palestinian problem was to drive the Palestinians out of Israel into Jordan, and let King Hussein take care of them.[78] In a word, Likud's answer to most challenges facing Israel is force.

Force does not come cheaply; using it is a costly proposition, and Israel is not a wealthy country. It seems unlikely that Washington will help Israel pacify Lebanon. Indeed, it would be ironic if the United States, after developing the Weinberger Doctrine to prevent such involvements, would then thrust itself back into the very arena where the doctrine was born.[79]

Thus, if Likud is thinking of reinvading Lebanon, it might want to pause and consider. It should examine its perceptions about the Hizbollahis, particularly from whence they derive their power. It is incorrect to assume (as many Israelis seem to do) that the party is the tool of the Syrians--or even of the Iranians. The party draws strength from the Shia community, which has been aggressively on the move for years now. Since at least the 1970s, the Shias have been pushing forward, determined to make a place from themselves in Lebanese society. To hold back such a community is no easy task. It certainly cannot be done without enormous expenditure of resources, which at present are in extremely short supply.

What Assad Wants.

There are those in Israel (and in the West as well) who maintain that Assad is the one who is holding up the peace

process. The claim is made that Israel will make peace in a minute, but Assad's demand to have the Golan restored him in a year is unrealistic.

It is hard not to credit Assad's compunctions. He has no reason to believe, were he to agree to a staged return, that this would ever be completed. Likud Party leaders in Israel have said that they will not be bound by any deal that Rabin enters into with Assad. Were they to be returned to power (they have said), they might reject it.[80] Under such circumstances, Assad must focus on achieving concrete gains which cannot subsequently be overturned. Getting the Golan back, with the chance to repopulate it, would be a notable achievement, and not something that the Likud politicians could later on repudiate.

What about Israel's claim that the Heights are strategic, and that to abandon them would be to expose itself to attack? In times past the Golan was an ideal observation post; it was also--for the Syrians--a good staging ground for a surprise attack. But no one seriously believes that the Syrian army could, by itself, stage an attack on Israel, not under today's conditions. It would be suicide, given the discrepancy in the nations' strengths. Also, Israel has the most sophisticated monitoring equipment available and does not need the Heights for this any longer. In effect, then, the claim that the Heights are strategic can no longer be sustained.[81]

The Prospect for the Future.

For the Syrians--and indeed for the entire Middle East--there are signs of a great revival. After the long, draining experience of war, an opportunity exists for all the area states to move forward. Syria, in particular, is well placed to advance. Assad shrewdly threw his support behind the Allied coalition during the Gulf War.[82] This won him the gratitude of the Kuwaitis and Saudis. Both these immensely rich regimes are willing now to assist in developing Syria's economy. This is significant, given the situation discussed above--the animus of the Syrian Sunni community against Assad. The Muslim Brothers, the major opposition group in Syria, receives its backing mainly from the Gulf.[83] Were the Saudis to call upon the Brothers to support the Syrian president--and promise, in return, to finance Syrian development--it is likely the Brothers would go along. Certainly,

the Saudis would strive to gain such backing; it is clear that they want to see the Arab-Jewish conflict ended. At the same time, the Saudis are influential in Lebanon, where a similar push to rebuild is now underway. In Lebanon, the newly-appointed prime minister, Rafik al Hariri, is heading an ambitious program.[84] Hariri is a long-standing friend of the Saudi royal family. He has won significant pledges of aid from them, which has led to other pledges of support from Europe and elsewhere. With over $1 billion dollars committed so far, the campaign has already commenced.

A scheme of such magnitude will produce jobs, many of which will go to the Shias. With improved career chances will come hope, and that, more than anything, is what the community needs right now. The author believes that, were the Shias able to mend their lives and fortunes, they would not fight with anyone. Indeed, the recent decision of Hizbollah to field a slate of candidates in the elections would appear to support this view. The party (or at least a portion of it) appears to be turning its back on Iran's crusade against the West, and preparing to assume a role in Lebanese politics.

This brings us to the last issue we need to consider, the question of U.S. policy in regard to this problem.

Recommendations.

This question of what stand to take on the issue of negotiating a peace treaty with Assad is a difficult one. However, it can be worked out, provided one knows how to approach the problem. We can best illustrate this by citing the recent visit to the United States by a delegation of Likud Party politicians.

The Likud delegation came to lobby the U.S. Congress against supporting a settlement with Assad.[85] Why, the Likud figures argued, should Israel deal with an Arab head of state whose regime supports terrorism? It is certainly the case that in the past Assad was involved with various groups which clearly were terrorist. The question is, is he so involved today?

The Likud delegation cited Assad's connections with Hizbollah, which the delegates regard as indisputably a terrorist

organization. This is a matter of debate. Hizbollah *was* terrorist in the early 1980s when it seized hostages, blew up embassies and assassinated politicians--all that was the work of men outside the law, killers, thugs.

What is going on now in southern Lebanon, however, does not fall into that category.[86] The guerrilla war is not terroristic, in the sense that it targets IDF units and their SLA clients, and, by and large, avoids involving civilians. This, however, is beside the point. How to characterize Hizbollah is not important; rather the focus should be on what the party can *do*.

The great difference between Hizbollah now and the way it was in the early 1980s is that now it has the support of the Shia community. Terrorists can plant bombs and shoot people from around corners, and the community need never be involved, or even approve of their actions. However, it is a different matter when carrying on a guerrilla war; such activity cannot commence, much less be sustained for any period, without considerable support from a broad area of the population.[87]

Earlier we explained that Hizbollah gained support by providing the Shias with essential services. These services, to be sure, are quite primitive. The clinics of Hizbollah are mere store fronts; the schools are conducted in people's homes. Nonetheless, for the time being this satisfies the community because it has nothing better. The youths have no jobs, the families have no security. Indeed, in the case of the Shias actually living in the security zone, these people do not even have any internationally recognized status.[88]

Hence, it should be obvious that what is really involved here is economics. The problem of Hizbollah, and of Syria's making peace with Israel, is not about terror (as the Likid politicians would like U.S. policymakers to believe) but about economics. How are the peoples of the area, namely the Arabs, to make any kind of life for themselves under the difficult conditions that presently prevail?

The youth of the area are not going to remain passive much longer. Indeed, they are already starting to revolt, and Hizbollah is positioned to exploit the crisis as it develops. We mentioned above that the party had fielded candidates for the

parliament, and that this should be seen as a move toward moderation. At the same time, however, another wing of the party has rejected this approach, and has continued to call for an all-out fight against the Zionists. Effectively, it seems, the party is split into radical and moderate wings.[89] Both are well organized and prepared to act; however, the leadership apparently is delaying making a decision as to which course it will follow. In the author's opinion Israel and the Arab governments have, perhaps, another year to work out the modalities of a peace settlement, so that they can then move to restoring the area's economy. If there is no definite sign by the end of 1995 that things are improving--that is, that there is a credible economic revival underway--Hizbollah and all of the other radical religious groups can be expected to react, becoming much more radical and more violent. Once this occurs it is hopeless to assume that the region will return to the path of moderation any time soon.

U.S. policymakers should consider adopting a pragmatic approach to the problem of peace with Assad, and insist that Israel and Damascus make peace, *as soon as possible*. Then the United States should support the agreement and promote it with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and whatever other international lending bodies can be induced to contribute toward this effort.

The worst thing U.S. policymakers can do at this juncture is to assume that Assad is under the gun, that he must give way and agree to peace on Israel's terms. Assad is not the petitioner here. If necessary he will change strategies and find ways to carry on the war--even the possibility of a Baghdad- Tehran-Damascus axis should not be ruled out.

ENDNOTES

1. See "Rabin Charges Syrians Are Stalling in Talks," *The Washington Post*, June 1, 1994; "No Swift Embrace Seen For Syrians and Israelis," *The Washington Post*, May 19, 1994; "Israel Seeks Stepped-Up Syria Talks," *The Washington Post*, June 22, 1994; "Israel Stresses Role of U.S. as Mediator," *The Financial Times*, May 9, 1994; "U.S. Hints at Better Ties if Syria Signs Peace With Israel," *The New York Times*, October 25, 1994; "Israelis Look to Clinton for Progress With Syria," *The New York Times*, October 25,

1994, and "Christopher's last chance," *Middle East International*, July 9, 1994.

2. When the peace talks commenced 4 years ago, Israel confronted claims by three Arab states and the Palestinians. It has subsequently concluded a peace treaty with Jordan, and is negotiating a so-called Declaration of Principles with the Palestinians which presumably will lead to a peace. The two remaining claimants are Syria, which wants the Golan Heights back, and Lebanon, which wants Israel to withdraw the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) from southern Lebanon.

3. For background on Lebanon's confessional system, see George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 360 f.

4. Under prodding by the Saudis, the Lebanese recently agreed to modify their system of rule, giving more power to the Muslims. This compromise, known as the Taif Agreement, made the governing arrangements somewhat more equitable, but there is still widespread dissatisfaction that the agreement did not go far enough.

5. The agreement whereby this decision was taken was known as the National Covenant, and it was concluded primarily between the dominant Christian community and the then-powerful, but numerically less significant, Sunni Muslims. See Lenczowski.

6. The Maronites are a Christian sect unique to Lebanon. They derive their name from their eponymous founder Saint Maron, a fifth century hermit and saint who originally lived in Syria. See Jonathan Randall, *Going All the Way*, New York, NY: Viking Press, 1983, p. 34.

7. In the 1940s, the Shias probably made up around 38 percent of the population. Today, it is probably closer to 47 percent.

8. For background on this see Lenczowski, p. 470 f.

9. The Lebanese lacked an army for several reasons, the most important being they didn't want to pay for one. Moreover, what army they did have was barely cohesive since it was made up of

units comprising the various sects, and the loyalty of these was to their co-religionists not to the central government.

10. For background on this see Augustus Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987, p. 64 f. Also Robert Fisk, *Pity the Poor Nation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 74.

11. The Muslim religion is made up of two great branches--the Sunnis and the Shias. The Sunnis comprise the overwhelming majority. The Shias are a smaller, much more radical group. They are primarily based in Iran, with two important colonies--one in Iraq, one in Lebanon.

12. There is an element of truth in this. Historically, Lebanon was the home of the Phoenicians, who, being great traders, spread over the Mediterranean and founded Carthage, the great enemy of Rome, in what is today Tunisia. Nonetheless, over the centuries these original Phoenicians intermarried with Arabs, and the Lebanese of today are, to all intents, Arab.

13. The Druze, while nominally Muslim, are so eccentric in their beliefs as to be regarded by most Muslims as heretics. Jumblat was a student of Indian mysticism, and a fierce radical, of the old-style leftist persuasion.

14. In December 1975, Christian militiamen rounded up some 200 Palestinians in Beirut and massacred them. See Patrick Seale, *Asad* (sic), Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 176-177.

15. The founder of the Phalange was Pierre Gemayel, who, in the 1930s, travelled to Europe and was impressed by the fascist movements there. Hence, the name Phalange, after the Spanish fascist organization.

16. See *Asad*, p. 276 f.

17. Franjiyah's power base was the far north of Lebanon, on the Syrian border. He traditionally had been an ally of Damascus, and it is quite likely that his appeal for aid to the Arab League was prearranged with Assad.

18. See *Asad*, p. 278.

19. The Rejectionist Front has changed names over the years, and similarly its composition has shifted. However, it has always comprised Arab states actively fighting Israel. In the late 1970s it was made up of Syria and Lebanon, Egypt (which was in the process of opting out of the struggle), Jordan (which was only nominally involved), Iraq (which was also largely out of it), Libya and Algeria (both of which provided financial aid but not much more), and of course the Palestinians.

20. See Fisk, *Pity the Poor Nation*, p. 85 f.

21. See *Asad*, p. 278.

22. *Asad*, p. 288-289.

23. The Likud Party has always been much more aggressive and expansionist than its rival, the Labor Party. Partly this can be explained by the nature of its constituency--many supporters of Likud are devout Jews who wish to see the Biblical prophesies regarding Israel fulfilled, to the letter; that is, they wish to see the recreation of so-called *eretz* Israel, of Biblical days, which would encompass considerably more territory than Israel claimed in the mid-1970s.

24. See *Going All the Way*, p. 208 f.

25. According to Randall, the hand-off to the Christians was another of Begin's defiant moves against President Carter. On the last day of Israel's agreed upon stay in Lebanon, Begin made the announcement that the "security zone" would become the responsibility of a renegade Christian major from the Lebanese army, Antoine Lahad. See *Going All the Way*, p. 210.

26. See Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, p. 111.

27. See *Going All the Way*, p. 224.

28. *Ibid*., p. 231.

29. For background on the events leading up to the invasion, see *Pity the Poor Nation*, p. 196 f. The perpetrators of the

terrorist incident were members of the Abu Nidal organization, sworn enemies of Arafat's Fatah organization. Arafat condemned the killing (of an Israeli diplomat in London), and swore this was a deliberate provocation to provide Israel with the excuse to invade.

30. For comments by the Israelis on this, see "Palestinians Arrest 100 Islamic Militants After Bicycle Bombing," *The New York Times*, November 13, 1994, in which an Israeli cabinet minister discusses the impossibility of guarding against such attacks.

31. For background on this see Lenczowski, p. 360 f.

32. For a discussion of the appeal of this ideology to young Muslims, see Stephen Pelletiere, *Hamas and Hizbollah: The Radical Challenge to Israel in the Occupied Territories*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1994.

33. The best reporting on this aspect is by Robert Fisk in *Pity the Poor Nation*, p. 460 f.

34. Which is precisely the tactic the Israelis used in their invasion of Lebanon in 1982. In 1993, in Operation Accountability (to be discussed below) they attempted to refine this approach. They relied on air strikes, artillery barrages and tank attacks, but used very little infantry.

35. See Randall, *Going All the Way*, p. 283.

36. Assad actually presided over the formation of a renegade movement within the Palestinian resistance, the so-called Group of Ten. These were mainly far leftist Palestinian organizations which rejected any compromise with Israel. The hardliners, by and large, remained behind in Lebanon and Syria to carry on the fight against Israel after the PLO left for Tunis.

37. Both sides, Syria and Israel, were able to live with this arrangement. For Assad, it created a situation which partially fulfilled his desire to reestablish Greater Syria. For the Israelis, having a security zone in the south gave them a buffer against the guerrillas, or so they thought. The loser, of course, was Lebanon, which ceased to be an autonomous state.

38. Itzak Shamir, Likud leader and prime minister of Israel when the conference call issued from Washington, balked at attending, and much pressure had to be applied before he would agree to do so. Shamir argued that Israel could only lose by going to this conference, since its security was already taken care of at home.

39. See "Palestinian Religious Militants: Why Their Ranks Are Growing," *The New York Times*, November 8, 1994; also, "Last tango in the Middle East," *The Financial Times*, Weekend, July 30-July 31, 1994.

40. See "Christopher to Pressure Syria To Block Cargo to Hezbollah," *The Washington Post*, July 31, 1993.

41. The SLA had been under attack by Hizbollah and several other guerrilla groups for a number of months prior to the eruption of the crisis. The IDF had entered the zone in force to suppress the guerrillas, and during this incursion seven Israeli soldiers were killed in four separate attacks. Stung by these losses, the IDF then bombarded Shia villages north of the security zone, which--inasmuch as they were located inside Lebanon--ought to have been off limits to reprisals. However, Rabin claimed the towns were serving as staging areas for the guerrillas. After this, Hizbollah, in retaliation for Rabin's retaliation, rocketed Israeli towns in northern Galilee, killing two Israelis. See "Attacks and Expected Reprisal," *Middle East International*, July 23, 1993.

42. This event occurred just after Operation Accountability. See "SLA Leader Comments on Defections, Peace Process," *AFP*, November 29, 1993, *FBIS-NES*-93-227.

43. See "Israel Bombards Targets in Lebanon," *The Washington Post*, July 27, 1993; "Israeli Warplanes Pound Guerrillas," *The Washington Post*, July 26, 1993; "A blow for compromise and conciliation," *The Financial Times*, July 31, 1993; and "Rabin faces his greatest challenge," *The Financial Times*, July 31, 1993.

44. See "The 'peace team' returns empty-handed," *Middle East International*, July 23, 1994; "Ninth Round Ends in Middle East

Talks," *The Washington Post,* May 14, 1993; "U.S. Move Fails to Win Support in Mideast Talks," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1993, and "U.S. Expresses Dissatisfaction with Mideast Talks," *The New York Times*, June 26, 1993.

45. See "Palestinian Sees Talks Losing Their Luster," *The Washington Post*, August 8, 1993.

46. See "Israel Bombards Targets in Lebanon," *The Washington Post*, July 27, 1993.

47. See "Killing of 9 Israeli Soliders Sets Off Bitter Dispute," *The New York Times*, August 23, 1993; also "Guerrillas in Lebanon Kill 8 Israeli Soldiers," *The Washington Post*, August 20, 1993.

48. Rabin brokered a deal with Assad (mediated by Secretary of State Christopher) in which he claimed that Assad had agreed to "rein in" the guerrillas. When immediately afterwards nine IDF soldiers were killed by the Hizbollahis, Rabin was asked to respond in the Knesset. He said that, whereas the deal with Assad forbade the guerrillas to rocket Israeli settlements but did allow them to operate in the security zone, technically there had been no breach of the agreement (since the killings occurred in the zone). This set off a firestorm in the Knesset, with Likud politician Ariel Sharon demanding that Rabin break off the peace talks and launch a new invasion of Lebanon to "enlarge" the zone. Rabin weathered this ordeal, but Israel's negotiating position in the talks was severely damaged. By allowing Assad to continue talking while the guerrillas kept up their operations, Israel imposed an unfortunate constraint on itself. The longer the Hizbollahis are allowed to carry on their war, the more proficient they are certain to become, and also they gain an opportunity to destroy the SLA. The SLA militiamen must now ask themselves what is to happen to us, if Rabin makes a deal with Assad? They are strongly motivated to make their peace with the Hizbollahis now rather than later; once the Syria-Israeli deal is made (assuming it is) it will be too late to switch sides. Another point that has been raised relates to the morale of the IDF soldiers. Many Israeli soldiers, it is feared, are unwilling now to risk their lives in Lebanon, since they believe Tel Aviv eventually will surrender the area. Recently, the Hizbollahis overran an IDF post, and took videos of the captured bunkers. The

IDF was forced to shell its own position, before it could regain control. This event is now being investigated in the Knesset. For earlier Hizbollah activity see "Attacks and Expected Reprisal," *Middle East International*, July 23, 1993. For the more recent incidents see "Rabin Criticizes Soldiers at Lebanon Post Raided by Guerrillas," *The New York Times*, November 2, 1994; "Lebanese Militants Fire Rockets In Northern Israel," *The Washington Post*, October 22, 1994; "Hezbollah (sic) Attack on Israel Post Sparks Fighting in S. Lebanon," *The Washington Post*, October 30, 1994; and, "The erosion of Israel's 'deterrent capacity'," *Middle East International*, November 18, 1994.

49. The fact that President Clinton has now had two highly publicized meetings with Assad (one in Geneva, Switzerland, the other in Damascus) is a big plus for the Syrian leader, who afterall is still regarded by the State Department as a supporter of international terrorism. Indeed, one could say that with these meetings, Assad has shown the world that he has turned his previously weak position in the talks into one of strength. See "Israelis Look to Clinton For Progress With Syria," *The New York Times*, October 25, 1994.

50. Israel virtually depends on the United States for its financial survival. Currently the bulk of foreign aid appropriated by the U.S. Congress goes to Israel and Egypt (the aid to Egypt indirectly benefits Israel, since it is an inducement to the Egyptians not to resume fighting with the Jewish state). As long as there was a Cold War, Tel Aviv could justify such treatment on the grounds that it was supporting Washington in the war against communism. Now that the Soviet Union is no more, Israel does not have the same strategic significance for the United States. With opposition to foreign aid increasing among the American people, the Israelis must be concerned that this aid will considerably diminish. The idea of a regional development scheme (a "new Marshal Plan for the Middle East") seems to be one way of attacking this problem. See "Mideast Common Market: Desert Mirage?" *The Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 1994; "Wary of Expense, Arabs Block Plan For Mideast Bank," *The New York Times*, November 2, 1994; and, "U.S. Says Many Arab Lands Back Aid Bank," *The New York Times,* November 3, 1994.

51. Before 1973, the Gulf monarchs would never have

bankrolled the Israelis, even indirectly. After the Arab oil embargo, however, they began investing their petro dollars downstream and now have a material interest in preserving the health of the world financial system. Thus they are closer to Israel and the West than they are to many Arab states. The problem is complicated, however, by the Saudis' special status as the guardian of the holiest shrines of Islam. The Muslim religion is explicit in prohibiting usury, or deriving profit from funds lent out at interest. Hence the Saudis' increasing involvement in such activities opens them to censure from the masses of the faithful, who may begin to question the fitness of the House of Saud to be the protector of the faith.

52. The monarchs' objections are probably justified. Afterall, they have seen all this before. Numerous times it has appeared that one or the other side has prevailed in the war, only to have the tables turned. The monarchs cannot afford to take a stand, only to find out later that this was a false dawn and the war is starting up again.

53. The Hamas revolt is of course tied to the activity of the Hizbollahis. Both groups bolster each other, although the Hamas fight seems to be *sui generis*, in the sense that the Palestinians are carrying on without any obvious support from either Iran or Syria. For background on Hamas see Pelletiere, *Hamas and Hizbollah*.

54. This assumes that both Syria and Israel pull their troops out of Lebanon. If either one refuses, the Hizbollahis will go on fighting that party. We will discuss this below.

55. This information and much of what appears in this section on Syria's domestic situation was supplied by Western sources inside the country during a recent visit of the author to Damascus.

56. To become viable economically Syria will need to privatize much of its industry. Problems have developed, however, due to the notorious corruption afflicting the Syrian bureaucracy. The state officials expect to be bribed by Westerners wanting to do business in Syria. We will discuss this problem below.

57. It has been pointed out to the author that practically every Arab government in the Middle East operates this way. This is true, and it concerns the Israelis, who ask, what will happen to the peace if Assad dies? It will be some time before his successor is sufficiently secure in power to carry through whatever deal Assad has made.

58. Like the Druzes, discussed earlier, the Alawis are technically Muslim, but their religious practices are so strange that the mass of Muslims reject them.

59. See *Going All the Way*, pp. 106 and 136.

60. Lately Assad has been moving to cut down, if not totally eliminate smuggling. This appears to be a deliberate attempt to improve his international stature preparatory to making peace with the Israelis.

61. See Fisk, *Pity the Poor Nation*, p. 203.

62. Rifaat attempted to seize control of the government in this year during a bout of illness suffered by his brother. See below.

63. It was Basil who spearheaded the effort by his father to crack down on the Syrian army's involvement in drug trafficking.

64. During his visit to Damascus in 1994, the author was impressed by thousands of posters, displayed seemingly everywhere in which the visage of the young Basil was depicted. It bordered on iconography. Interestingly, however, as one got farther from Damascus the posters disappeared.

65. For details see *Asad*, p. 419 f.

66. Assad almost certainly did this for geo-political reasons. He felt that Iraq, by involving itself in this war with Iran, had abstracted itself from the only real conflict confronting the Arabs, viz., that with Israel. For further discussion on this, see Stephen Pelletiere, "Turkey and the United States in the Middle East: The Kurdish Connection," in *Turkey's Strategic Position at the Crossroads of World Affairs*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War

College, 1993. Also, in regard to subventions from the Gulf states, for years Syria received these regularly as a member of the so-called Rejectionist Front, the alliance of countries actively fighting Israel.

67. See Hanna Batatu, "Syria's Muslim Brethren," *Merip Reports*, November/December 1982, and Fred Lawson, "The Hama Revolt," *Merip Reports*, *Ibid*.

68. See *Ibid*., p. 332.

69. See *Asad*, p. 421 f.

70. When the author was living in Cairo in 1969-70, the water was shut off for a few hours each day in the extreme heat of summer. The population put up with it, but this was in the era of Nasser, when there were no obvious extremes of wealth, and one could tell oneself that everyone--rich and poor alike--were suffering in this way.

71. For a discussion of the water riots in Algeria, see Stephen Pelletiere, *Mass Action and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Revolt of the Brooms*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1992.

72. See "The Fertile Crescent Blooms Anew," *The New York Times*, November 6, 1994.

73. The other major current among the Shias is the Amal Party referred to above. We have said little about this. Readers wishing more information on it should see *Hamas and Hizbollah: The Radical Challenge to Israel in the Occupied Territories*.

74. Not only the Israelis prevent the Lebanese army from repossessing the south; Assad is equally adamant that it stay out of the area. Assad wants to be able to control Lebanon's vote in the peace talks. If Beirut could get back southern Lebanon, it is almost certain it would immediately make peace with Israel, leaving Assad isolated, and with a much weakened bargaining position.

75. The best source on the SLA treatment of the Shias is *Pity the Poor Nation.*

76. The best source on the activity of these warlords is Randall, *Going All the Way*.

77. The author assumes there is still time to turn off this movement by satisfying the community's economic needs. If the community's hopes are dashed, however, this opportunity may well be lost.

78. It could be argued that Likud, by its erstwhile policies towards the Palestinians and Shias, created the very conditions that it seeks to answer by force. Every time Israel invades one of its neighbors, it creates more refugees. A proportion of these dependably will join up with the guerrillas, including Hizbollah. For a discussion of Likud policies toward the Arabs, see *Hamas and Hizbollah: The Radical Challenge to Israel in the Occupied Territories*.

79. Of course, the essence of the Weinberger Doctrine is that the United States should not become involved militarily anywhere in the world without strong support of the American people. It is doubtful any administration could easily get such support in the present political environment.

80. See "Likud Leader Puts Accord in Doubt," *The New York Times*, January 5, 1993.

<%-3>81. For a discussion of the Heights strategic value to Israel, see Dore Gold, *US Forces on the Golan Heights and Israeli-Syrian Security Arrangements*, Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, August 1944.

<%-3>82. The Syrians, along with the Egyptians, both agreed to fight alongside the Europeans and the United States against Iraq, for which both were well-rewarded.

<%-3>83. See Stephen Pelletiere, *Shari'a Law, Cult Violence and System Change in Egypt: The Dilemma Facing President Mubarak*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1994.

<%-3>84. See "The modern face of an ancient city," *The Financial Times*, October 17, 1994.

<%-3>85. Rowland and Evans, "Likud's 'Gang of Three'," *The Washington Post*, November 17, 1994.

86. There is still the matter of incidents like the blowing up of the Jewish cultural center in Argentina. That certainly was the work of Hizbollah, and that was terror. However, the Hizbollahis claim the attack was provoked by the Israeli kidnapping of a Hizbollah leader. Similarly, Hamas claimed, when it blew up the bus station in Tel Aviv recently, that this was in retaliation for the massacre by a right wing Jewish extremist of upwards of 29 Muslims during a religious service in Hebron. In effect, the guerrillas are claiming to retaliate in kind--terror for terror.

87. This should be obvious. In the case of southern Lebanon, the guerrillas operate in territory over which the IDF has control. The Israelis have the will to coerce the community into telling them who are the guerrillas in their midst, and yet the resistance goes on. This can mean only one of two things--either the guerrillas have so terrorized the people they dare not talk, or else they support the guerrillas. Either way the movement is successful, inasmuch as it has gained the ability to operate among the people, which is the test of any such movement.

88. Guilain Denoeux in *Urban Unrest in the Middle East: A Comparative Study of Informal Networks in Egypt, Iran, and Lebanon*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993, says (p. 116) that ". . . the clientelist system in Beirut proved incapable of assimilating the constant flow of Shia rural migrants, largely as a result of a key provision in the electoral law, according to which one votes not where one lives, but in the constituency of one's birthplace . . . under such circumstances, no Beirut *za'im* (ward boss, ed.) would perform for a constituency that was in no position to reciprocate through its vote."

89. For background on the split, see Kenneth Katzman, *Hizbollah: A Radical Militia in Lebanon*, Washington, DC: CRS Report for Congress, October 7, 1993.

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