Kamal Jumblatt:

The Path From System Reform to System Change

By

Wassim Mroueh

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Name of Student: Wassim Mroueh
I.D.# 200501493

Program / Department: International Affairs/Social Sciences

On 01/03/12: has presented a Thesis proposal entitled:

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in the presence of the Committee Members and Thesis Advisor:

Advisor: Bassel F. Salloukh
(Name and Signature)

Committee Member: Fawwaz Traboulsi
(Name and Signature)

Committee Member: Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss
(Name and Signature)

Comments / Remarks / Conditions to Proposal Approval:

Approved

Date: 01/03/2012 Acknowledged by

(Dean, School of Arts and Sciences)

cc: Department Chair
    School Dean
    Student
    Thesis Advisor
**Thesis Defense Result Form**

**Name of Student:** Wassim Mroueh  
**Program / Department:** International Affairs/Social Sciences  
**Date of thesis defense:** 11 July 2013  
**Thesis title:** Kamal Jumblatt: The Path from System Reform to System Change  
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- [ ] Thesis is not approved. Grade NP is recorded

**Committee Members:**

**Advisor:** Dr. Bassel F. Salloukh  
(Name and Signature)

**Committee Member:** Dr. Fawwaz Traboulsi  
(Name and Signature)

**Committee Member:** Dr. Jennifer Skulte Ouais  
(Name and Signature)

**Advisor’s report on completion of corrections (if any):**  
Compl eted

**Changes Approved by Thesis Advisor:** Bassel Salloukh  
Signature

**Date:** 9 July 2013  
**Acknowledged by:** __________________________  
(Dean, School of Arts and Sciences)

**cc:** Registrar, Dean, Chair, Thesis Advisor, Student
Thesis Approval Form

Student Name: Wassim Mroueh

I.D. #: 200501493

Thesis Title: Kamal Jumblatt: The Path from System Reform to System Change

Program/Department: International Affairs/Social Sciences

School: Arts & Sciences

Approved by:

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Bassel F. Salloukh

Committee Member: Dr. Fawwaz Traboulsi

Committee Member: Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiiss

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To my Parents…
Kamal Jumblatt: The Path from System Reform to System Change

Wassim Mroueh

ABSTRACT

Although there is a plethora of work examining Kamal Jumblatt’s political career, none explains a major puzzle in this career: namely, the radical change in his stance vis-à-vis the Lebanese political system and prospects of reforming it. In the early 1970s, Jumblatt began to lose hope in gradually reforming the political system, something he had been calling and working for over the past three decades. From a believer in reforms from within the system, he later became an advocate of a radical change that would do away with the sectarian system altogether. Furthermore, Jumblatt, known as a peaceful person, also championed during the early years of Lebanon’s civil war inflicting a decisive military defeat against the Christian parties opposed to radical political reforms. This thesis explains why Jumblatt made this change in his political stance, its timing, and whether or not it was motivated by any personal ambitions.

Keywords: Kamal Jumblatt, Lebanon, Sectarian system, Political reforms, Civil war
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

OCAL  Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon

FNPPP  Front of National and Progressive Parties and Personalities

LNM  Lebanese National Movement

MP  Member of Parliament

NLP  National Liberal Party

PSP  Progressive Socialist Party

PLO  Palestine Liberation Organization

SSNP  Syrian Social Nationalist Party

UAR  United Arab Republic
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1-Situating the Thesis

Undoubtedly, Kamal Jumblatt was one of the most prominent thinkers and politicians that Lebanon has seen in its modern history. Apart from his intellectual powers and humble lifestyle, Jumblatt made a radical transition from a feudal leader of a minority sect to a socialist figure heading a cross-sectarian secular coalition gathering many parties. Since his early years in politics, Jumblatt raised the slogan of socio-economic and political reform in the country. In 1943, the young Jumblatt was voted MP for the Chouf district. In 1944 he formed, along with several MPs, what was called the “Reform Front,” which circulated a petition calling for adhering to transparency in public administration, and in July of the same year, Jumblatt surprised politicians by calling for the adoption of a secular system and for the abolition of political sectarianism (Safi, 2007 & Khalil, 1984).

Jumblatt’s stance vis-à-vis every Lebanese president was tied to the latter’s commitment to reform. Rampant corruption during the tenure of Beshara al-Khoury (1943-1952), Lebanon’s first president following independence, was among the main reasons behind Jumblatt joining the opposition campaign against Khoury, culminating in forcing the president to step down in the middle of his extended mandate in 1952. Jumblatt’s accusations against President Camille Cahmoun (1952-1958) for reneging on promises to implement reforms, curb mounting corruption and for aligning with western powers shaped his opposition against the president during the 1958 civil strife (Safi, 2007 & Traboulsi, 2011).

Shortly after the end of the 1958 civil war, and the election of then-army commander General Fouad Shehab (1958-1964) to presidency, Jumblatt believed that socio-economic and
political reforms can be introduced to the Lebanese system from within. “The true reasons for the Lebanese revolution,” Jumblatt lectured shortly after the end of the 1958 crisis, “are still present and can only be addressed in a revolutionary style, at least in its spirit and course…at the end, only men with a new mentality and way in addressing matters can dare to prescribe the proper…cures,…but if the Lebanese situation was addressed…with the spirit of sectarianism, compliance and compromise, it is as if we are burying…the seeds of revolution in Lebanon” (Jumblatt1987: 104). Among the reform initiatives outlined by Jumblatt were administrative reform manifested in administrative decentralization, the formation of a Civil Service Council immune to political meddling, the gradual abolishment of political sectarianism, compulsory elementary education, free secondary education and the economic development of the rural areas (Jumblatt, 1987).

Jumblatt threw his full weight behind Shehab’s reform initiatives through his capacity as an education minister, public works and design minister, and interior minister (Safi, 2007). Despite these bold reform initiatives, developmental projects in the rural areas and the establishment of state institutions, both Jumblatt and Shehab came to the conclusion that reform in Lebanon was difficult if not impossible to implement in the presence of a political class with influence in the state and enjoying the support of “Le mur de l’argent” (wall of money), which both Jumblatt and Shehab used to describe it in French to refer to the country’s oligarchy. As Jumblatt commented shortly before his assassination in 1977,:“there was no one who truly thought about the life of the masses. President Shehab began to stir interest in this direction but was not able to accomplish his work. He is known to have said at the end of his six-year term that: ‘If the wealthy continue to preserve their privileges against everything and everybody, then a social revolution will break out in Lebanon’” (Jumblatt, 2002, p. 148).
Shortly before President Suleiman Franjieh (1970-1976) assumed to presidency, Jumblatt described Lebanon as a “ruined building.” “We do not want a president to be a guard on this building,” declined Jumblatt, “but a president who makes a new plan for the state and who is capable of rebuilding it” (Safi, 2007, p. 434). He stressed that the economic and financial systems along with the social and educational systems in the country were in need of a major overhaul. But for Jumblatt, “change should start… from the political system (Safi, 2007, p. 434).

A deteriorating socio-economic situation, the failure of successive cabinets to honor promises of reform amid mounting tensions among the Lebanese over the armed presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon followed. With the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, Jumblatt announced the main items of the reform agenda of the Lebanese National Movement(al-Haraka al-Wataniya al-Lubnaniya) (LNM), a coalition of leftist groups that fought alongside PLO Forces against the Kataeb, the National Liberal Party (NLP) and their allies, known as the Lebanese Front. The agenda reflected Jumblatt’s decision to do away with the entire political system. It called for abolishing political sectarianism manifested in the distribution of public sector posts based on sect, amending the Personal Status Law to allow for an optional civil marriage and the drafting of new electoral law based on proportional representation with Lebanon designed as one electoral district. As battles turned more violent, Jumblatt became a champion of a military solution as a means to impose this reform agenda, and lost faith in any reform process undertaken under the current system (Traboulsi, 2011).

This thesis investigates the reasons and motivations that drove Jumblatt to move from demanding reform of the Lebanese political and socio-economic system from within, to his call for the complete abolishment of the Lebanese sectarian system. While a substantial literature examines Jumblatt’s life, his stances and political positions, little has been written about the main
reasons and motivations behind this shift in his goals and vision. This study thus fills a major gap in Lebanon’s intellectual history and in studies examining Jumblatt’s thought more specifically.

1.2-Research Questions:

What prompted Jumblatt to shift from his demand to reform the Lebanese political system from within to calling for and attempting to abolish the Lebanese political system altogether? More importantly, the question addresses a topic which has not been examined thoroughly so far. Was this a tactical move on Jumblatt’s part or was it a strategic decision he reached after losing hope in any incremental reforms? This question is important in and of itself because it helps uncover Jumblatt’s calculations that prompted this shift in demands and maybe thoughts. When did this shift occur and why? Thus, this thesis interrogates Jumblatt’s shift and whether he really sought a point of no return. Finally, why did Jumblatt resort to violence although he was an admirer of Gandhi and peace in general?

1.3-Methodology

This thesis seeks to explain the shift in Jumblatt’s position by examining the incremental transformations of his stances on prospects of reforming the sectarian system vis-à-vis his practical experiences and changing domestic and regional conditions. According to Igor Timoviev (2009) and Fawwaz Traboulsi, the socio-economic and political situation prior to the outbreak of the war was in favor of a revolution and Jumblatt’s call for an overhaul of the system might have been addressing such a “revolutionary audience.” “Rebellion was in the air we breathe, as they say, so that all young people wanted change (Timoviev, 2009, p. 365).” Following the 1958 strife, in his book Haqiqat al-Thwara al-Lubnaniya (The Truth about the
Lebanese Revolution), Jumblatt writes that Lebanon was in need of men with a “new mentality” to address the country’s mounting problems. “At the end, only men with [a] new mentality and way in addressing matters can dare to prescribe the proper… cures,” which might be an implied reference to Shehab, the newly elected president and whom Jumblatt believed was the proper person to effect change (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 104).

The research for this thesis is based on primary and secondary sources. A number of interviews were conducted with Jumblatt’s comrades who accompanied him during crucial periods of his life to understand the transformation of his thought vis-à-vis the viability of political reform in Lebanon. In turn, the transformations of Jumblatt’s own ideas about the viability of political reform in Lebanon are revealed by examining his own writings. Interviews with Jumblatt’s comrades and a close reading of his own writings help uncover how his ideas about reform in Lebanon developed with respect to changing domestic, social, economic and political conditions. Research for this thesis is also based on a survey of secondary literature written on Jumblatt.

1.4-Map of the Thesis

The thesis comprises five chapters. After a brief introduction, the second chapter touches on the thought of Jumblatt. The third chapter goes through efforts by Jumblatt to introduce socio-economic and political reforms to the Lebanese system from within, mainly during the tenure of Shehab between 1958 and 1964. It also addresses Jumblatt’s role in leading social movements in the country up to 1974. The fourth chapter sheds light on his rebellion against the political system between spring 1975 and up to his 1977 assassination. The final chapter summarizes the previous chapters and spells out the conclusion of this research.
2.1-Introduction

One of the most fascinating aspects of Jumblatt’s life is his radical transition from feudalism, which had marked his family for centuries, to socialism, free from the tyranny of the Soviet Union’s communist regime (Timoviev, 2009 & Khalil, 1984). Jumblatt’s socialism was evident in his distribution of land he owned to peasants, and in his formation of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) whose main aim was to promote social justice and equality in Lebanon (Khalil, 2010). He struggled to implement these two items which were on the top of his reform agenda, along with his call for establishing a democratic secular political system, a goal that would cost him his life. Although he believed in Lebanon’s Arab identity, he was a staunch defendant of the peculiarities of the small country, and rejected any form of unity with other Arab states as long as their regimes remained undemocratic. This chapter focuses on Jumblatt’s main ideological principles and explains his vision of Lebanon. It opens with Jumblatt’s early life and socialist thoughts, turns to his vision of Lebanon and the Arab world along with his calls for reform and closes with his attempts to abolish the Lebanese sectarian system during the first two years of the civil war, ending with his assassination.

2.2-First Socialist Thoughts

Jumblatt was born on December 6, 1917, in his home town of Mukhtara to a powerful and feudal family in Mount Lebanon. His mother, Nazira Jumblatt, better known as “Sit Nazira,”
became the head of the Jumblatts after the 1921 death of her husband Fouad, Kamal’s father. In 1926, Jumblatt joined the Aintoura School, founded by the Lazarists fathers, where he received his elementary, intermediate and secondary education. There, he lived under a disciplined system and excelled academically. He had to wake up every day at 5 am. Studying sessions started at 7.30 am and lasted until the evening. According to his school colleagues, Jumblatt had a tendency towards isolation, meditation, reading and research. He was fond of metaphysics, mystification and asceticism. To him, a healthy body was of extreme importance, as a person thinks and behaves in line with his diet (Matni, 2010 & Khalil, 1984).

Majoring in medicine was a serious option for Jumblatt who aspired to relieve the pains of those who were suffering. But at the same time, his leadership skills were emerging and in the middle 1930s he started to write articles in “al-Maarad” magazine owned by then MP and Minister Michel Zakkour. In 1937, Jumblatt published in Aintoura’s La Revue Magazine, inspired by the famous French magazine La Revue du Monde (Matni, 2010). But in 1938, he decided to major in law upon the wish of his mother and advice of his friends. He left for France in the fall where he joined the Sorbonne University in Paris. There, he lived in a monastery for the Lazarist fathers and was not attracted by the nightlife of Paris like many other Arab and Lebanese students. But Jumblatt was forced to return back to Lebanon following the 1939 outbreak of World War II where he continued his studies at Saint Joseph University in Beirut and graduated a lawyer in 1940. Jumblatt was elected an MP in 1943, replacing his deceased brother-in-law Hekmat Jumblatt (Khalil, 1984 & Khazen, 1998).

According to Mohsen Dalloul, who served as PSP’s vice president, Jumblatt did not want to work in politics in his early life. “When his brother-in-law passed away, there was no one to succeed him, thus, his [Jumblatt’s] mother thought about him [running for parliamentary
But he refused and…proposed that others run for the post,” Dalloul says.¹ He adds that upon the request of Jumblatt’s mother, Najib Abu Sawwan, who went to school with Jumblatt, convinced him to run for elections.² Dalloul notes that Jumblatt was an avid reader. “The owner of Librarie Antoine told me that: he [Jumblatt] used to call me and ask for new releases in London, Moscow, Paris and Washington,” he explains.³

Devoting most of his time to reading and studies, Jumblatt acquired his first socialist principles during his short stay in France (Matni, 2010). In a 1966 interview, Jumblatt said that during his youth, he was inspired by Blaise Pascal, Henri Bergson and Teilhard de Chardin. He was also impressed by the Old and New Testaments along with the Quran. “Then came [my interest in] the Sufists and spiritual Christians who trigger[ed] my passion. I was also affected by [Maurice] Blondel although his thoughts contradict those of Bergson” (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 32). “I was also inspired by William James,” he added (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 32).

Karl Marx was a person of great significance to me. I also did not ignore German thinkers who paved the way for the rise of the Nazi Ideology. This is not because I share anything with their [Nazi] partisans or followers but because I think that there are some ideas in their books which can be beneficial, especially those highlighting the necessity of the presence of an elite, excluding of course the racist element (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 32).

This shows the wide variety of thoughts and ideologies that Jumblatt was exposed to in his early life.

During his stay in Paris, Jumblatt read books, research and reviews; he also attended a number of lectures convened by senior Sorbonne professors. He held talks and meetings with famous socialist thinkers in France and other European states that contributed to enhancing his socialist thought. In Lebanon, he interacted with people and parties of different political,
ideological and nationalist orientations, such as the Lebanese Communist Party, the Kataeb, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), the Lebanese Bloc, the Constitutional Bloc and many others. Two years after the outbreak of World War II, Jumblatt delivered his first socialist speech during a ceremony to inaugurate a bridge destroyed during the war in the village of Jdaidet al-Chouf near his hometown. Jumblatt noted that

In our view, bread and labor are not only means to avoid a severe food crisis, or to end a proclaimed unemployment crisis, but we consider them to be a prophecy of what tomorrow’s world is going to be: bread and labor for everybody, along with justice and dignity, are the true independence and freedom for people and the group (Safi, 2007, p.60).

This indicates Jumblatt’s vision regarding the goals that any socio-economic system in a country should achieve. His comments came after passing by workers every day taking part in reconstruction work and hearing them singing despite their exhausting work. The only explanation he had for their happiness was that they were pleased to be working and securing food for their families amid a severe food shortage during the war. In the same speech, Jumblatt outlined some of the goals he planned to achieve in the future: independence from the French mandate, freedom, justice, bread, education and labor.

The first half of the 20th century witnessed the rise of the Soviet Union. However, Jumblatt was strongly opposed to its dictatorship. In his book Ad-Dimogratyi al-Jadida, (The New Democracy), Jumblatt considered that “every initiative to serve justice that does not embody a humane view will mean collective massacres and the confinement of millions of people as proved by totalitarian attempts, whether fascist or communist” (Jumblatt, 1987, p.18). He believed that Moscow was not satisfied with the democratic character of the Lebanese Left Movement that pledged to achieve progress in the Arab world. To better work for achieving the
socio-economic and political goals which he believed in, Jumblatt considered it necessary to form a party or a movement to mobilize people and unite efforts.

### 2.3-The Formation of the PSP

In a number of articles and lectures, Jumblatt explained that his socialist thought emerged after he produced a number of writings during World War II that were the result of his university readings and observations. A local Lebanese newspaper published in early 1947 an editorial by Jumblatt, in which his interest in forming a party to enact reform was evident.

There has not been so far, in the essence of the Lebanese people, a comprehensive and deep political, progressive, social movement… that on one hand aims at identifying the true theoretical basis for the hoped reform… and makes the entire people embrace them, and on the other hand seeks to organize and mobilize the masses and use their influence and social base to reach the highest posts in the state (Timoviev, 2009, p.152).

These comments clearly indicate that Jumblatt was mulling over the establishment of a political party to achieve reform. Jumblatt explained in *L'orient* newspaper in 1950 that the idea of forming a party had crossed his mind 10 years before and that he expressed it in a number of speeches.

Particularly in my wishes for the new year in an article published by *La Revue du Liban* magazine in December 31, 1944, in which I precisely said: ‘I wish that we discover (after this appalling failure of parliamentary systems as in France, Italy, Weimarienne Germany and many with other countries) this new formula of democracy which the world aspires to (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 23).

Thus, it is clear that Jumblatt believed that establishing a party would help discovering and applying this democracy. “Maybe it is a social formula that balances between discipline and freedom, system and evolvement, tradition and progress, religion and its separation [from the state], along with socialism and progress,” Jumblatt added (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 23- 24). According to the socialist leader, this new political system would also balance between socialism and
private property, between what is ideal and what is realistic, and between spirituality and politics. In other words, Jumblatt was advocating a socialism that had nothing to do with the tyranny of the communist regime in the Soviet Union and a democracy that was not associated with the principles of capitalism in Western Europe. Jumblatt further discussed the idea of a new formula of democracy in lectures and articles. “It then became the subject of a collective discussion by some friends [employees, workers and intellectuals] throughout successive months in summer 1946,” (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 24).

The establishment of the party was delayed when Jumblatt served as an agriculture and economy minister between 1946 and 1947 during Khoury’s tenure, Lebanon’s first president after independence. “Then [there] was a pausing…to practice self-criticism,” Jumblatt noted (Jumblatt, 1987, p.24). In 1947, Jumblatt resigned from his ministerial post in protest against the manipulation of the results of parliamentary elections in favor of Khoury, a prelude to the extension of the president’s mandate. With more free time, Jumblatt discussed the principles of the would-be party with a number of friends including Fouad Rizk, Sheikh Abdullah al-Alayli, Albert Adib, Jamil Sawaya, Farid Gibran and George Hanna, who all signed a license request for the PSP.

It was not a coincidence that Jumblatt chose May 1, 1949, Labor Day, to announce the birth of the PSP in a modest ceremony at his apartment in Beirut (Khalil, 1984).“In this great hour of our life in which we had the honor of leading the liberation movement and seeking justice and essential brotherhood and equality among human beings, we welcome you in the name of the Progressive Socialist Party” Jumblatt said (Safi, 2007, p. 75).

With these words, Jumblatt announced the birth of his party. “The day of these laborers is our day, and it is an honor to mark announcing the birth of this party in this day,” continued
Jumblatt (Timoviev, 2009, p.164). Secularism and socialism were the two main doctrines characterizing Jumblatt’s PSP. “The practical mission of the Progressive Socialist Party is building a socialist society in Lebanon based on the principles of social equality and justice and… solidarity between people,” Jumblatt argued more than once (Matni, 201, p. 105). He wanted the party to be a school to rehabilitate individuals and groups and enable them to organize society based on the principles of justice, brotherhood and equality (Khalil, 1984).

The human being had the highest value in Jumblatt’s progressive socialism whose main goal is to improve his or her capabilities. “All institutions of society, including the political ones are not an end, but a mean to build the human being. The state is cursed or blessed…depending on how much it serves or does not serve the human being,” declares the manifesto of the party. (Timoviev, 2009, p. 173). Jumblatt considered that humans develop when they seek to unite in groups or human societies. “This orientation of the developing human society…imposes socialism in the society,” (Timoviev, 2009, p. 173), that is, when all citizens take part in producing and exchanging benefits.

When asked why he opted for socialism, Jumblatt noted that “joining the left means adhering to an evolving biological vision at the time when the right means rigidity. I hate rigidity, and that is why I naturally belong to the left” (Safi, 2006, p.76). In other words, for Jumblatt, the right, always associated with conservatism, tries its best to preserve the present regime with its current social and economic equilibriums regardless of its injustice. On the other hand, the left represents a continuous struggle toward achieving social justice and introducing reforms to achieve this goal. Despite the fact that he was very wealthy, Jumblatt believed that a property has its “social role.” “Money can become a pernicious microbe if it is not used to help others. Property equals social function. I use it as economically as possible, spending only the
bare minimum necessary for personal needs, so that the surplus may always go to others,” (Jumblatt, 1982, p. 32). “I do not feel that I am aristocratic…I am a human being and that’s all,” Jumblatt claimed (Safi, 2007, p.77). The PSP drew supporters and members from different religions and sects, confirming Jumblatt’s secular credentials (Safi, 2007&Hazran, 2010). Jumblatt’s secularism was one “that does not oppose religion, but agrees with its essence and with human and moral values along with the morals of divine beliefs” (Safi, 2007, p. 77).

During the two years prior to announcing the manifesto of the PSP, Jumblatt engaged in a series of discussions with a number of Lebanese politicians and intellectuals. One of the longest dialogues was with Antoun Saade, the SSNP founder. However, the two leaders did not reach common ground. During a meeting between the two, Jumblatt shed light on the ambiguity of the SSNP concepts in organizing the economy and society within the state.

I was of course socialist in my thinking, and I said frankly that organizing the society and groups cannot take place except based on mere economic justice …despite being attracted to the Lebanese and Arab national idea, and my struggle for its sake…I hated talking about nationalism, any kind of nationalism(Safi, 2007, p.67-68).

This shows how Jumblatt’s thoughts were different from those of Saade. Jumblatt highlighted the contradiction between the SSNP’s ideology and the National Pact which consecrated the Arabism and independence of Lebanon. Jumblatt asked for clarifications on democracy inside the party and the state. Describing Saade’s response to his remarks during the meeting, Jumblatt said: “It was clear that Saade was confused, as he could not answer at all,” (Safi, 2007, p. 68). Several attempts to convince Jumblatt to join the SSNP failed due to differences in ideologies. However, following the execution of Saade by the Lebanese authorities on July 8, 1949, Jumblatt was the only Lebanese politician who lashed out against the cabinet of Riad al-Solh that sentenced the SSNP leader to death (Shayya,2007). Following the establishment of the PSP, Jumblatt went on to advocate his own version of socialism.
2.4-A New Socialism

Jumblatt advocated what he called a new socialism. In a joint statement issued by the PSP and Praja Socialist Party of India, the two parties highlighted the necessity of building socialism on new basics. “These new basics will correct or prevent the failure of socialism in the world…and allow it to confront the barbaric and immoral results of the development of the capitalist world,” said the statement (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 45). The two parties explained that these new basics would help socialism in forming a “new human civilization.” This civilization will encompass all useful socialist movements and achievements throughout history. The statement argued that socialism in Europe has failed to achieve socialist principles whether on institutional or human levels. Socialism had failed in being different from capitalist democracy and Russian communism because it relied on the same political and organizational techniques. “For communism to succeed, it has to acquire a new technique and spirit in the organizational and institutional fields…Asia has the essential required components on the historical, cultural and developmental levels for the birth of this sought socialism,” it suggested. Defending a law he drafted to allow workers to take part in managing the firms they work in, Jumblatt said

This measure reduces existing tension between the employer and the employee as everyone will take the other into consideration. This new socialism, according to the statement, aimed at achieving the highest levels of justice and equality and providing people with a decent living standard which meets their materialistic and moral needs. It also achieves technological advancement in agriculture and industry, reduces bureaucracy and encourages cooperation in all fields, especially in production, distribution and consumption. There is no justification for paying a wage ranging between six and LL 10 for this [the employee] while the other makes millions worth of profit (Jumblatt, 1987, p.39).

It is clear here that Jumblatt actually believed in the new socialism he advocated and has tried to implement it through his capacity as a lawmaker.
In a lecture in 1971, Jumblatt outlined his concept of socialist education in Lebanon. “Socialist education, as evident in its name, focuses on spreading the ideas of justice, brotherhood, cooperation and popular solidarity. We figure out from all these terms the reference to the other and to the concept of the relation with the other. The individual has his place among the group and education has to cement this meaning of unity,” said Jumblatt (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 50). “We consider that secularizing education and adopting the system of ‘compulsory social service,’ ‘combating feudal class structure,’ and ‘awakening the feeling of social solidarity and responsibility…could be used to establish a system of social education,” Jumblatt explained (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 50). He believed that academic education and manual and social work should go together on all levels. For Jumblatt, countryside elementary schools should offer agricultural and handicraft teaching. As for elementary city schools, handicraft and vocational education should be provided as well. Students in secondary schools and university should be encouraged to learn a craft to get close to those performing manual work. The PSP leader advocated introducing morals as a subject in the Lebanese academic system with a coefficient amounting to one third of the required average to pass. In other words, Jumblatt believed that new generations should be taught this new socialism at school through handicraft teaching and social work that encourages cooperation. In addition to his concept of socialism, Jumblatt had his own vision of Lebanon when it comes to its role vis-à-vis the Arab world.

2.5-Lebanon and the Arab World

Jumblatt strongly opposed the concept of “Lebanese nationalism,” which he accused France of inventing and some factions of the Lebanese right of promoting. He argued that it aimed at creating a society in which different Lebanese sects would live together under the
pretext of diversity within a sectarian system (Dalloul, 2010). This concept collided with Jumblatt’s idea of Lebanon which advocated diversity but within one nation, thus cementing the feeling of belonging to this nation. He believed that this feeling of belonging was essential to establish a modern state in which citizens enjoy equal rights and duties (Dalloul, 2010).

He outlined his vision of Lebanon and Arabism in a speech he delivered after he was elected MP for the first time. For Jumblatt, the goal of Arab unity can only be achieved gradually. He believed that Arab counties should develop their political and economic systems to have a common structure which facilitates cooperation. He considered that “it is impossible to unite two regimes, one republican and the other royal,” (Dalloul, 2010, p.41). Jumblatt highlighted the need to enhance “the infrastructure for democracy in Arab countries as a prelude to develop Arabism and progress toward the notion of Arab unity,” (Dalloul, 2010, p.41).

Jumblatt looked forward to an Arab, democratic, federal, decentralized union that preserves the national peculiarities of every society, abolishes political sectarianism, adopts a secular system and achieves internal national unity. Such a union would also promulgate legislation that enhances the participation of ethnic minorities in politics, the economy and the administration as a base for any future Arab unity. The goal of liberating Palestine is a main motivation for forming this union and thus it should be on the top of its political agenda (Safi,2007&Khalil, 1984).

In addition to being a socialist, Jumblatt was also progressive. He expressed no reservations to relations with the West. But to him such a relation should not take the form of a dependency, surrender or obedience. On the contrary, it should represent an attempt to benefit from the best experiences and production of the West, and make use of them in addressing the demands of the Lebanese. Prior to the June 1957 parliamentary elections, Jumblatt announced
the view of his party regarding the Eisenhower Doctrine, which refers to a speech delivered by US President Dwight D. Eisenhower on January 5 1957, in which he announced that his country would respond positively to any request made by another state for protection or assistance against “international communism” (Attie, 2004).

The party appreciates the fact that the statement exhibits a spirit of openness, which seeks to understand the situation in the Middle East by taking into consideration certain Arab criteria and the national aspirations of the people of this region; the statement also addresses the internal and external dangers that surround the region (Safi, 2007, p. 260).

Despite this welcoming statement, Jumblatt noted that the doctrine provides guarantees for states against a potential Soviet aggression only but not against other dangers, pointing to the tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1956 along with Israeli threats (Safi, 2007). Thus, Jumblatt did not blindly oppose all initiatives made by Western powers, but welcomed all what could serve the interests of Lebanon and Arab states in such initiatives, shedding light on any shortcomings.

Jumblatt was a major backer of the Bandung conference of 1955 which founded the nonaligned movement in the cold war. The joint statement of Praja and the PSP stipulated that a third power besides the US and the Soviet Union will effectively help people get rid of international imperialism. It will also “initiate and complete the process of grouping and cooperation between all the people and nations of this universe under the patronage of an international government which is inspired by the right concept of socialist nationalism, away from political religious feelings…and every narrow isolationist nationalism,” (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 43). The new group will also form and spread a new socialism to preserve the dignity of the human being and avoid recourse to violence.

This third power has become a pressing necessity more than ever to facilitate and complete the process of the liberation of the colonized people in Africa, Asia and the people still oppressed in Europe and the rest of the world…and to enable the United Nations, through effective influence and…contribution of this third power, to fulfill its role as a means of international progress and peace (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 43- 44).
In other words, Jumblatt believed that the nonaligned movement was necessary to balance against the two great powers and to better serve the interests of countries who form this power. The third power, according to the statement, will prevent the two great powers from turning the UN into an arena for struggles and international competition and pave the way for it to become an international government. “This third international power is in fact the only sincere effort to achieve true peace because it forbids…recourse to violence,” (Jumblatt, 1987, p. 44). As much as the nonaligned movement was necessary to achieve and maintain international peace according to Jumblatt, reform in Lebanon was a pressing need to maintain peace as well. His demand for reform was motivated by a number of factors, some dating back to the Ottoman era.

2.6-Behind the Call for Reform

Starting in 1918, the geographic entity known later as Lebanon came under the French mandate. On 1 September 1920, the birth of Greater Lebanon with its current borders was announced. The newly born state was granted its independence in 1943. Given the religious diversity of Lebanon and the fact that every sect was affiliated with a foreign side, an agreement, or what was called the National Pact, was necessary to achieve harmony in the tiny Levantine country. While many Lebanese Christians considered France their traditional protector, many Muslims opposed Lebanon with its 1920 borders, and yearned for Lebanon to become part of a greater Arab state. The National Pact presented a settlement by which Muslims would recognize the existence of an independent Lebanon and Christians would refrain from seeking any alliance with France and approve a Lebanese foreign policy consistent with that pursued by other Arab states. Domestically, the settlement was manifested in a confessional arrangement defined by article 95 of the 1926 Lebanese constitution that divided public sector posts among Lebanese
religious sects. Based on this power-sharing agreement, the President would be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker a Shiite Muslim. Parliamentary seats were divided along a six-to-five ratio: the ratio of six Christian MPs to five Muslims. It was clear that sectarian considerations dominated the newly independent state (Attie, 2004). Obviously, the balance of power in Lebanon was then tilted toward the Maronites. The Maronite president had unlimited prerogatives and the Maronite sect occupied key positions in the state (Attie, 2004).

Jumblatt’s socialist thought was reflected in his hatred of the Lebanese confessional system and of the fact that the Maronite sect controlled key positions in the state. He considered this political system unjust, and that it was unfair for the Maronites, who did not constitute a majority, to control a society that was composed of 18 sects. “The constitution that was imposed upon us included an electoral system which gave political predominance to the Maronites; even in terms of the division of seats amongst Christians, they took the lion’s share,” he objected (Jumblatt, 1982 p. 41-42). “Greater Lebanon was quite simply created for the Maronites,” Jumblatt added (Jumblatt, 1982, p. 42). He explained that since Greater Lebanon was formed, it was characterized by sectarian fanaticism fostered by the Maronites. “This sickness may have been tolerable in the homogenous Petit-Liban of 1864, but it became a festering sore in 1922. A minority caste enjoyed the privileges of a majority,” he concluded (Jumblatt, 1982, p.42).

Jumblatt detested uni-polarity because it isolates parties and results in tyranny and subjugation. What annoyed Jumblatt the most was that political life in Lebanon centered on religions and sects and that administrative posts were distributed to people based on their sectarian affiliation rather than merit. Such a behavior paralyzed the administration and judiciary and ruined politics in Lebanon. Whenever he was asked to nominate Druze figures to ministerial
posts, Jumblatt always preferred to be represented by ministers that did not belong to the Druze sect. But all policies pursued by consecutive Lebanese governments tried to restrict the representation of PSP to Druze ministers (Dalloul, 2010).

Jumblatt believed that the Maronites lacked the required experience to run a state. He considered that after the Druze ruled most of Lebanon in the early 19th century, Europe invented Petit-Lebanon in 1864, and sponsored it till it was re-occupied by the Ottomans in 1914. The Maronites occupied prominent positions during this period in the small state of Mount Lebanon. “In less than a century, the Druze fell from a dominant to a dominated position,” said Jumblatt in his book I Speak for Lebanon (Jumblatt, 1982, p. 30). Jumblatt concluded that the period during which Maronites were in power, lasting for around half a century, was an exception. For the Maronites have never been in power, but were poets, intellectuals, farmers and merchants, continued the PSP leader. He pointed out that during the French mandate that followed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the French granted the Maronites enormous powers without any logical justification. The French legacy was present in the National Pact of independent Lebanon in 1943, with Maronites taking control of key state positions along with presidency. “Maronites make poor governors, for they lack both the feeling and the tradition of government (the Turks were of the same opinion)” according to Jumblatt (Jumblatt, 1982, p. 40-41).

Given such a sectarian system in the country, reform was always a priority for Jumblatt. But he always insisted that his call for reform was never aimed at restoring the power the Druze had in Mount Lebanon before the creation of Petit-Liban, but to establish a secular democratic state where all sects would have equal rights and obligations and could occupy any state post based on merit. Addressing an interview shortly before his assassination, Jumblatt explained

The establishment of any secular, civic, democratic state with a progressive representational system through which basic Lebanese sectors like the commercial sector,
the labor sector, etc. would express their views in a special council, the separation between ministerial and parliamentary functions as well as the creation of a constitutional court would change the course of Lebanese history. It would be a revolution on the pattern of the 1789 [French] revolution but in a Lebanese fashion (Shuqair&Jumblatt, 1977, p.19).

This indicates that Jumblatt’s ambitions aimed not at serving the interests of his sect only, but all components of the Lebanese society.

Jumblatt proposed his first reform initiative in 1944, a few months after he was elected MP for the Chouf. He formed with a number of MPs the “Reform Front” which forwarded a petition that was known as the “petition of the notables.” The petition called upon officials to adhere to transparency and honesty in power and administrative posts. Furthermore, Jumblatt surprised Lebanese politicians when he called in July 1944 for adopting a secular system and abolishing political sectarianism: “Secularism is not a disengagement with the values of religion or with morals and principles…for the linkage binding religion with the history of the human being can never be broken, as a social phenomenon and a main base for building society. Its [religion’s] moral and spiritual principles are to society like the soul to the body,” said Jumblatt, explaining his version of secularism that does not contradict the values of religion. (Safi, 2007, p.49) “People do not want sectarianism,” Jumblatt later suggested, “the government should have eradicated it so that no religious figure would raise his voice in this country…people are the essence and not religious figures,” (Safi, 2007, p.175). Jumblatt made it clear that his opposition to sectarianism stemmed from the fact that people are fed up with this phenomenon.

Jumblatt headed the Salvation Front, which later became the National Socialist Front. This front called for and participated along with other parties in a series of strikes and popular movements against Khoury in 1952, who was serving his second term. The opposition called for the immediate resignation of Khoury, whom it accused of sponsoring corruption throughout the
country. Khoury succumbed to the enormous pressures and submitted his resignation on September 18, 1952 (Safi, 2007). Jumblatt’s dissatisfaction with the Lebanese confessional system was evident in a statement he made after Khoury’s forced resignation. “I am the president…but someone else will be his Excellency,” he said when chairing a meeting for the Front at PSP’s headquarters in Beirut (Safi, 2007, p.146). In other words, although he played a leading role in protests and popular movements that forced Khoury to resign, he was unable to occupy the highest post in the state because he was not a Maronite. He felt proud of his achievement, but sensed the bitterness of not being able to reach the presidency (Safi, 2007).

“The tradition implies, as it is known, that the presidency is occupied by a person who is born a Maronite, even if [at the same time] he was an atheist…This is the situation in a country where political sectarianism prevails in place of religion,” Jumblatt said with disenchantment (Safi, 2007, p.147). But Jumblatt also discovered in the wake of the 1952 crisis that when people spontaneously unite behind a leader that represents their ambitions for change, they are ready to make the sacrifices needed to achieve their goal (Safi, 2007).

Chamoun, the candidate of the Front, won the presidential elections, after he promised to implement a list of reforms the Front was advocating. These included adhering to neutrality in international affairs, administrative reform and the establishment of a council to examine the constitutionality of legislation and abuses of power. But Chamoun withdrew from the front and went back on his commitments. During his tenure, Chamoun opposed the participation of Jumblatt in any cabinet on the request of the US, after it suspected that Jumblatt supported the nationalizing of oil interests (Traboulsi, 2011).

Years later, Jumblatt stated that the 1960 report of French Father Louis-Joseph Lebret on the economic situation in Lebanon indicated that “80 percent of the Lebanese were forced to
monopolize misery and deprivation...so how can we allow this internal colonization of 80 percent of the Lebanese?” (Matni, 2010, p.250). Jumblatt’s socialist goals were evident in a speech in 1950 in which he said: “There is no doubt that we will free the human being from the enslavement of...the human being. We will free the human being from misery and sickness and from concern over his fate and the fate of his children, we will free him from ignorance...and employment” (Matni, 2010, p. 104).

Despite his radical position vis-à-vis the Lebanese political system, Jumblatt did not support any call for a forceful takeover of power. This was because he thought it was not suitable and inconsistent with the concept of the natural development of nations. The Druze leader did not advocate the immediate abolishment of political sectarianism, but called for gradually ridding Lebanese society of it. The move would be implemented in several stages, each requiring wise efforts by the Lebanese cabinet. But after his experience during the tenures of Chamoun, Shehab and following presidents, Jumblatt discovered that the sectarian system was too solid to be changed by gradual reform.

Thus, by the eve of the Lebanese civil war, Jumblatt was firmly convinced that the current Lebanese political system had become outdated and required radical change. The Druze leader had always warned Lebanese political leaders of the consequences of overlooking reforming the Lebanese constitution in a matter that takes into account the socio-economic changes that Lebanese society underwent after 1943. He voiced concerns that an “explosion or a revolution” (Dalloul, 2010) would occur if calls for reform went unheeded, a situation during which there would be no chance to discuss reforms anymore. He criticized opinions attributing the economic prosperity that Lebanon enjoyed to the 1943 Lebanese political formula. To him, such a political system deepened the economic and social gaps between Lebanese segments and
increased tension in the country. Jumblatt complained about the clear contradiction lying in unlimited presidential power which at the same time was not responsible for its acts no matter how harmful they were except in the case of treason. When conveying his fears and concerns to a number of Maronite leaders, he was faced by relentless opposition, some repeating the statement that “what is ours is ours, and what is yours is yours and ours” (Dalloul, 2010). Unfortunately, what Jumblatt was warning of turned out to be true.

2.7- Jumblatt and the Lebanese Civil War

In April 1975, the Lebanese civil war broke out, pitting the LNM alongside the Lebanese Front. One of the many reasons of the war was the common feeling among many Lebanese and especially Muslims that the 1943 National Pact was no longer applicable given the worsening socioeconomic and political realities in the country.

The LNM announced that reforming the Lebanese political system was the only solution for the Lebanese crisis. On August 1975, Jumblatt announced the main items of LNM’s reform agenda. It aimed at abolishing political sectarianism, manifested mainly in the distribution of government posts along sectarian quotas. The second goal was amending the personal status law. According to the 1943 constitution, each religious sect applied its own laws when it came to issues related to the personal status like marriage, divorce and inheritance. Civil marriage was banned under such a system. The LNM demanded allowing the option of civil marriage. Finally, the leftist coalition demanded drafting an electoral law by which the whole country is considered as one electoral district and called for adopting a proportional representation voting system (Mansour, 1994).
2.8-Conclusion

This chapter traced Jumblatt’s ideological evolution into a socialist intellectual who worked hard to implement his socialist thought. He founded the PSP with reform and social equality as its main goals. He strived to achieve these two goals in Lebanon, and believed that the most important item of political reform is abolishing political sectarianism. Although reform was his main demand during the tenures of successive presidents, Jumblatt did not support a forceful takeover of power, but advocated a gradual abolishment of political sectarianism. The Druze leader believed that the Lebanese civil war constituted the ideal chance to root out political sectarianism in Lebanon. But his movement was opposed and disrupted by Syria, which imposed its own solution to the Lebanese crisis, backed by the US and most Arab states. Rather than compromising, Jumblatt stood firm on his principles, knowing in advance they would probably cost him his life. The next chapter will address in detail Jumblatt’s attempts to reform the Lebanese political system from within during the tenure of Shehab, when the PSP leader held several cabinet portfolios. It will also touch on Jumblatt’s leading role in social movements in the country up to 1974.
CHAPTER THREE

REFORM FROM WITHIN

3.1-Introduction

Shehab’s presidency witnessed a series of administrative reforms and numerous projects aimed at alleviating the socio-economic conditions of the Lebanese, particularly those living in the peripheral areas. Jumblatt threw his full weight behind Shehab’s reform initiatives through his capacity as education minister, public works and design minister, and interior minister respectively (Khalil, 1984&Matni, 2010). As he served in these posts, Jumblatt worked on implementing his socialist thought and reform goals. But despite bold reform initiatives, developmental projects in rural areas and the establishment of new state institutions during Shehab’s tenure, both Jumblatt and the president came to a conclusion that reform in Lebanon was difficult if not impossible to implement in the presence of a political class with influence in the state and enjoying the support of “Le mur de l’argent,” as both Jumblatt and Shehab used to describe the alliance of the country’s financial oligarchy with the political class.

This chapter starts with the circumstances leading to the election of Shehab and his relationship with Jumblatt. It then turns to a detailed presentation of Jumblatt’s efforts to enact reform from within the political system through his ministerial portfolios. It closes with an explanation of the obstacles that emerged and ultimately prevented the full implementation of these reforms along with Jumblatt’s support for social movements rising in the 1960s and 1970s.
3.2-US-Egyptian Deal Brings Shehab to Power

Shehab’s election ended months of strife that rocked the country starting in May 1958. Violence was sparked by the assassination of leftist journalist Nassib al-Matni who was famous for his stances against Chamoun. Armed clashes broke out between security forces known as the gendarmerie, who were loyal to Chamoun, and supporters of the Kataeb party and the SSNP, on one side, against opposition groups comprising the PSP along with supporters of Rashid Karami, Saeb Salam, Maarouf Saad, Sabri Hamadeh and others (Attie, 2004). The fighting was not restricted to Beirut, but spread to the Bekaa, Tripoli and the Chouf. Tension had been rising in the country since the parliamentary elections of 1957 which saw Jumblatt, Salam, Ahmad al-Asaad and Abdallah al-Yafi lose their seats. The opposition said the elections were rigged and accused Chamoun of carving out electoral districts to suit his own interests in a bid to secure a parliamentary majority to guarantee amending the constitution and extending his mandate. Jumblatt blamed Chamoun’s acts for the crisis, particularly his “use of the gendarmerie as a personal force, foul play in the parliamentary elections, and his attempt to strike at the nationalist zu’ama [leaders],” (Attie, 2004, p.146).

Chamoun’s foreign policy and his opposition to severing ties with Britain and France in the wake of their 1956 tripartite attack against Egypt alongside Israel contributed to raising tension in the country. The opposition demanded the immediate resignation of Chamoun and the split took a religious nature, as supporters of the pro-Gamal Abdel-Nasser opposition were mainly Muslims while pro-government groups were predominantly Christians. Chamoun accused the Nasser-led United Arab Republic (UAR) of sparking the crisis in Lebanon and providing rebels with arms. An Egyptian-American agreement ended the confrontation which
saw the landing of US marines on the shores of Beirut in July in line with the Eisenhower Doctrine, one day after a coup toppled the pro-Western Iraqi monarchy. The US-Egyptian deal resulted in the election of Shehab, the army commander, as president. The compromise was promoted locally under the slogan of “no victor and no vanquished” (Attie, 2004). But Shehab’s ascent to the presidency did not only mark the end of the worst wave of violence Lebanon had seen since independence, but also the start of bold attempts to enact political and socio-economic reform in the country.

3.3-Shehab, Jumblatt push for Reforms

Although a descendent of Prince Bashir II who ruled an Emirate in Mount Lebanon in the 19th century, Shehab’s family, of noble ancestry, was not wealthy. His father immigrated to the United States after which his family knew nothing about his whereabouts. Initially working as a court bailiff in Jounieh, Shehab joined the Military Academy in 1921 and was promoted through the ranks until he became the first commander for the Lebanese army in 1945 following Lebanon’s independence. In 1952, he was tasked with heading a transitional government after President Khoury stepped down under popular pressure. Shortly after, Chamoun was elected president (Nassif, 2011). During the 1958 crisis, the army under Shehab took a neutral stance, giving him the reputation of a fair broker among Muslims and helping to garner support for electing him to the presidency the same year (Attie, 2004). For Shehab, state interests came before his personal interests (Nassif, 2011). He disliked most politicians in Lebanon, whom he called “les fromagistes,” or cheese-eaters, and hated opportunist officials, who seek power and influence through illicit wealth. Shehab gained extensive experience in politics during the
thirteen years when he served as army commander and became aware of the socioeconomic woes of remote areas, as many army personnel hailed from these places (Traboulsi, 2011).

Shehab chose to engage in administrative reform and to launch development projects in underprivileged districts before moving into political reform. He believed that national unity is not only achieved through a fair distribution of public sector posts among sects, but through social equality. Shehab considered that the state should launch development projects in predominantly Muslim districts in the south, north and Bekaa rather than focusing only on mostly Christian districts around Beirut. He knew that the Lebanese lacked a sense of national belonging which he argued could only be established through the formation of a state that gives them their rights and looks after them. “It is possible through the state to build a nation and achieve a national sense of belonging rather than doing it the other way around which is more difficult for us in Lebanon currently” Shehab said (Nassif, 2011, p. 412). That is, Shehab’s aim was to build a modern state and he received Jumblatt’s full support for this process (Hazran, 2010).

Addressing the PSP’s General Assembly in February 1960, Jumblatt voiced his readiness to support the new president. “We will be loyal to this [president] whom we and the blessed revolution contributed to bringing to power on the basis of our progressive socialist principles,” Jumblatt said (Khalil, 1984, p.154). However, the PSP leader said that his support for Shehab did not mean that his party would take part in every cabinet formed during Shehab’s tenure. The party’s participation in the cabinets, Jumblatt continued, hinged on “how much these cabinets implement our principles and serve our public interests and the interest of the country,” (Khalil, 1984, p. 155).
According to Izzat Safi, the PSP’s former media commissioner, Jumblatt trusted Shehab, given his good performance as an army commander. Safi explains

He [Jumblatt] knew Fouad Shehab personally and was certain that he [was] a man that can be entrusted to the presidency because during his service in the army; he was a responsible man and had conscience. Although he was a devout Maronite, he was not biased towards any sect...during the tenure of Fouad Shehab, educated people from Muslim sects had access to job opportunities [in the public sector].

Safi adds that among other figures, Shehab was considered by Jumblatt to be the best person to carry out reforms. Jumblatt also supported Shehab’s regional policy which was set during the president’s famous meeting with Nasser on the border with Syria in March 1959. The two leaders agreed during the meeting that Lebanon would support the UAR’s stances on the Arab and international levels. In return, the UAR would stop meddling in Lebanon’s internal affairs (Timoviev, 2009 & Nassif, 2011 & Matni, 2010).

During a meeting between the two shortly after Shehab’s election, discussions focused on means to enact reform. However, most of Jumblatt’s reform demands were more than Shehab expected and very difficult for him to adopt.“Kamal beik...if it was only me and you ruling it will be easy [to achieve these demands]...but do not forget that we are in a country where there are many thieves and these I cannot immediately get rid of through democratic means,” said Shehab (Safi, 2007, p. 316). “[This can only] happen if I suspend the constitution [and] laws and rule as a dictator;” he added half-jokingly(Safi, 2007, p.316). “Start [combating] these thieves then,” Jumblatt responded (Safi, 2007, p. 316). “This means we have to start by building prisons to accommodate our guests,” Shehab said (Safi, 2007, p. 316). The conversation indicates that Shehab was well aware of the obstacles hindering his attempts to implement reforms.

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4 Izzat Safi, PSP former media commissioner, interview by author, June 2012, Beirut, Lebanon.
5 Izzat Safi, interview by author, June 2012, Beirut, Lebanon
Nevertheless, Jumblatt and Shehab agreed on the basis of cooperation during the president’s tenure which started with administrative reforms.

The first cabinet during Shehab’s term excluded Chamoun’s supporters, sparking a month-long counter-revolution, featuring strikes and protests that brought down the newly formed cabinet and was replaced by a four-men coalition cabinet, two representing Muslims and two Christians. With Karami as prime minister again, the balance of the cabinet was comprised of Raymond Edde, Pierre Gemayel and Hussein Oweini (Attie, 2004). Shehab believed that he could defuse tensions in the country by having heads of rival groups all in the same cabinet (Nassif, 2011). Jumblatt blasted the newly formed cabinet, saying that Shehab’s attempt to achieve national consensus in the country through forming a cabinet with half of its members Muslims and the other half Christians was extremely dangerous. He believed it was impossible to build a modern state with effective institutions by relying on the Qaemmaqams system that only represents local and narrow sectarian interests. The Qaemmaqams system was implemented in Mount Lebanon in the 19th century, dividing it into two districts, one ruled by a Druze and the other by a Christian official. Jumblatt insisted that maintaining political sectarianism would increase the rifts among the Lebanese and polarize them based on religion and sect, thus preventing the unity of the Lebanese nation under the framework of a civil society that offered equal rights and opportunities for everyone. Speaking during a lecture shortly after the 1958 strife, Jumblatt said

The first cabinet [during Shehab’s tenure] did not satisfy us…because our goal was to form a revolutionary government that rids the country of corruption and betrayal and enacts the needed radical reforms…but we were forced to support this government…given that it was temporary and aimed at restoring calm [in the country] (Jumblatt, n.d.).
Addressing his aides, Shehab explained that he wanted the public sector to serve people and give everyone his right away from nepotism. He opposed politicians’ interference in employment in the public sector. Shehab issued 62 legislative decrees to reform the administration on 12 June 1959. Decree 114 formed the Civil Service Board, Decree 115 formed the Central Inspection and Decree 118 reorganized the Court of Audit. The Civil Service Board was tasked with appointing public sector employees based on competence through granting them equal opportunities to examination. The Board guaranteed the independence of the process and shielded it from the influence of politicians who sought to employ their supporters for political, electoral or sectarian interests. The Central Inspection was tasked with overseeing the performance of public sector employees. It put an end to a common practice by which a minister appoints inspectors in departments that he heads, many of whom used to cover violations. As for the Court of Audit, its mission was to manage and monitor the use of public funds and to bring corrupt officials to trial (Nassif, 2011).

Other legislative decrees set the bylaws of the Shura Council, formed a Bank for industrial, agricultural and real estate credit, the Authority of Social Relief, the Civil Defense, the Railway Authority, an institute for judicial studies, the Department of Urban Planning, the National Social Security Fund, Electricite du Liban and the Central Bank. The Green Project office was opened as well, with the aim of encouraging farmers to stay in their land through providing them with loans, guidance and other forms of aid. It was also tasked with forestation. Vacancies at the newly formed institutions were filled with young and competent personnel. While competence remained the only qualification for public sector employment, Shehab’s tenure saw a fairer distribution of these posts among sects in favor of Muslims and particularly Shiites. During Chamoun’s tenure, Maronites occupied half of public sector posts when they
comprised only 29 percent of the total population. By the end of Shehab’s term, they only held one third of public sector posts (Traboulsi, 2011).

Jumblatt welcomed Shehab’s reform initiatives and said that he was proud of them, saying they came in line with PSP proposals made a decade prior. He highlighted the need to rid public departments of corrupt employees who were loyal to Chamoun and said the cabinet should bridge gaps in socio-economic conditions between one Lebanese district and the other. Jumblatt reiterated his call for gradually getting rid of the practice of distributing public posts based on sect and for adopting merit as the only criteria. Jumblatt proposed laying off public sector employees who have been on duty for more than 25 years and replacing them with new employees while taking into consideration sectarian quotas. This should be followed with a new law abolishing political sectarianism in public sector appointments and basing promotions on qualifications. During a five-year- transitional period, additional grades would be given to applicants from some Islamic sects along with those from the Greek Orthodox and Armenian sects, given their low level of education compared to Maronite and Greek Catholic applicants. In the meantime, the government should equally develop education services for all sects so that they get the required qualifications, according to Jumblatt (Jumblatt, n.d.). But Jumblatt’s role in this era exceeded making proposals to governments, as he held three ministerial portfolios and strived to implement the reforms he advocated.

3.4-Jumblatt a Minister

In June 1960, the first parliamentary elections during Shehab’s tenure were held and resulted in a favorable outcome for Jumblatt who became the head of the largest bloc in Parliament, comprising eight MPs. Following the elections, Shehab tasked Saeb Salam with
forming a cabinet. Jumblatt decided to participate in the cabinet, as he believed that cooperation with a president willing to engage in reform would provide him with an opportunity to make gains he had failed to achieve in light of the 1958 crisis or what Jumblatt referred to as revolution. According to Khalil Ahmad Khalil, who was close to Jumblatt

In the early sixties, Kamal Jumblatt was seeking to reap the fruits of a lengthy Lebanese national struggle amid new Arab circumstances featuring the following: Egyptian-Syrian unity (1958-1961) and Jamal Abdel-Nasser’s strong presence as a nationalist leader in the Levant (Khalil, 1984, p.153).

In other words, Jumblatt believed that Shehab’s era was the ideal period to carry out reforms. Responding to rivals who nominated figures other than Jumblatt to participate in the cabinet, Jumblatt said that he intended to become a minister not in order to represent the Druze sect, but to push for reforms. In a seven-hour-meeting with Shehab, Jumblatt discussed his 16-item-agenda that he wanted the cabinet to implement. Shehab crossed out two items, one calling for the implementation of a law drafted in 1954, which obliges public sector employees to declare their property when starting work and after leaving employment. Shehab also crossed out a proposal to amend the electoral law by raising the number of parliamentary seats from 99 to 121. Jumblatt was appointed education minister and Nasim Majdalani, a member of his bloc, justice minister and deputy-prime minister.

Few days after he assumed his post, Jumblatt felt that many employees at the Education Ministry were not happy with their new boss. “Me and [then-Justice Minister and Deputy-Prime Minister] Nassim [Majdalani] are in an unenviable situation, as supporters of sectarianism agree the most on resisting the few reforms we are striving to introduce,” Jumblatt told some of his close friends, in anticipation of the challenges that would emerge during his work at the ministry (Timoviev, 2009, p.296). However, this did not alter his determination to radically change the educational system in the country. Chairing the first meeting at the Education Ministry, Jumblatt
said he would blow up the ministry from within “with national mines,” in reference to the radical change he plans to make.

Jumblatt believed that the then-education system in Lebanon did not contribute to forming a national mentality which was essential to building a united and independent Lebanon. Back then, more than 70 percent of Lebanese students went to private schools where teachers, as in some public schools, did not adhere to the standardized state curricula. Students graduating from private schools were exposed to opposing concepts and understanding of Lebanon’s past and future, as every private school promoted its own vision of history, usually reflecting that of a certain sect. The same divisions were present in universities, making dialogue and understanding among the new generation almost impossible. Further complicating the problem were social and economic inequalities between Lebanese sects and districts. Students attending expensive private schools which provide a better education than public ones came mainly from wealthy Christian families. Thus, the number of private schools in predominantly Christian districts was much higher than that in mainly Muslim areas, where parents sent their children to public schools. Private schools almost did not exist in the south, Bekaa and Akkar. To the resentment of members of other sects, this inequality made it much more easier for better educated Christians, mainly Maronites, to secure jobs in the public sector and in private companies (Matni, 2010).

Jumblatt’s plan aimed at increasing the number of public schools in Lebanon, particularly in underdeveloped districts, and uniting the academic curricula, focusing on history which he believed is essential for establishing a national mentality. In parallel, a long-term plan was being set to build vocational educational schools and institute projects to provide training for teachers, as Lebanon had no single institution providing these services. When visiting secondary schools across Lebanon, Jumblatt used to encounter accountants at municipalities teaching math,
physicians teaching Biology and topography experts teaching geography due to shortage in teachers (Matni, 2010).

At the end of 1960, Jumblatt proposed uniting history curricula in Lebanon and tasked well-known specialists with handling the matter. To avoid accusations of being biased, the specialists were from different sects, including prominent Christian academicians and historians like Alexy Butros, the president of l'Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, geologist Maurice Shehab and well-known historian and writer Constantine Zreiq (Matni, 2010). Jumblatt called for a return to Lebanon’s Arab roots and for relying on authentic documents and referring to historical events as they really happened, not as distorted by some historians in favor of some sects. “If the present generations and those in the past were deceived after reading the pages of a number of history books, then the coming generations should not be deceived and should have the right to know historical facts just as they happened,” noted Jumblatt, in an address to historians from various sects (Safi, 2007, p. 340).

Still, Jumblatt’s initiative was strongly opposed by then Finance Minister Pierre Gemayel, the Kataeb leader, who considered that unifying curricula violated the freedom of education which he considered one of the pillars of liberalism in Lebanon. The proposal sparked a debate in the Education Ministry as well, with Maronite employees close to Gemayel opposing the new curricula and impeding its implementation. In response, Jumblatt contended that according to the Greek explanation, freedom means knowledge and wisdom. He said that the church’s monopolization of education is similar to the practices of tyrannical regimes and has nothing to do with freedom (Timoviev, 2009 & Matni, 2010). Jumblatt planned to enlarge the branches of the state-run Lebanese University and to launch a national project to improve the academic standards of the LU so that they matched those of the American University of Beirut.
and Universite Saint Joseph. Contributing to this project would be international non-governmental cultural and educational organizations. When discussing the situation of LU with a joint delegation of the university’s professors and students, one of the professors told him: “This is the university of the poor…who else other than you Kamal beik can raise its academic standards?” (Safi, 2007, p. 340). The statement angered Jumblatt who responded saying

What is this saying? There is no university for the poor and a university for the rich, we have a university that should be the university of the nation and the people, it should merit its academic stature and give its graduates the degrees they deserve and whoever chooses a university other than this one is free to do so (Safi, 2007, p. 340).

These remarks summarize Jumblatt’s plan and strategy for the LU. Just like the tradition adopted by AUB and USJ, Jumblatt asked Shehab to personally launch the academic year at LU. Shehab supported the idea and attended the ceremony held at UNESCO Palace in November 1960 and this became an annual tradition (Safi, 2007).

Similar obstacles faced numerous proposals and plans Jumblatt made in the 10 months during which he served as an education minister. Almost every proposal he made was opposed by Gemayel. In January 1961, Gemayel and Camille Chamoun opposed a plan by the Beirut Arab University to open a faculty of law and teach major courses in Arabic, a step supported by Jumblatt. For its part, the Beirut Bar Association began a strike to protest the plan. But the minister stood firm and called for dissolving the Beirut Bar Association. Months later, the cabinet made a final decision in favor of opening the faculty (Matni, 2010).

Despite these challenges, Jumblatt made numerous achievements in his post. Two months after assuming office, 150 elementary schools providing free education opened and the construction of 12 vocational schools across Lebanon began. One hundred teachers were sent to remote villages as well and five secondary schools were opened in Akkar, Hermel, West Bekaa, Nabatieh and Tyre and the budget of the Education Ministry for 1960 doubled, reaching L.L. 70
million. Dalloul explains that Jumblatt was “the first education minister to open public schools; they were few back then. He opened schools in Bekaa, south, Beirut, [and the] north.” Dalloul explains that Jumblatt’s efforts in this regard were opposed by Gemayel who did not approve funds for these newly opened schools because he wanted Christian schools to remain dominant. He also argued that Islamic schools were not interested in having strong public schools in the country. “He started to feel that this system does not want to evolve, a conflict began,” Dalloul notes. Many challenges were yet to come in his other ministerial post.

In May 1960, Salam formed a new cabinet in which Jumblatt was appointed Minister of Public Works and Design. The post gained importance under the tenure of Shehab who announced that socio-economic development in the country was a priority (Khalil, 1984). Shortly after coming to office, Shehab was advised by Father Yuhanna Maroun to work on producing an accurate analysis of the economic situation in Lebanon. Maroun recommended that Shehab ask Father Louis Joseph Lebret to prepare a report. Lebret was the founder of the Institut de Recherches et de Formation en vue de Developpement, a famous institute based in Paris (Nassif, 2010).

Lebret’s mission began its work in Lebanon in 1959. In 1963, the Public Works and Design Ministry released the findings of the mission in a three-volume report. Contrary to the widespread impression of economic prosperity during that period, the report indicated that four percent of the Lebanese controlled 32 percent of the country’s GNP, 14 percent controlled 28 percent of the GNP and 32 percent controlled another 22 percent. The report also revealed that 50 percent of the Lebanese control 18 percent of the GNP (Nassif, 2011).

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6 Mohsen Dalloul, interview by author, 29 January 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
7 Mohsen Dalloul, interview by author, 29 January, Beirut, 2013.
Jumblatt argued that the development plans the report recommended in the underdeveloped districts of Akkar, Dinnieh, Hermel and the south were possible to implement. He wished that Christian orders allocate part of their endowment revenues to fund these plans. For his part, Shehab said that “if the reform ideas were not made by a Catholic French priest, the Lebanese will not believe in them” (Nassif, 2011, p.394). It was common knowledge that anyone serving as a Minister of Public Works and Design could easily abuse his post to attract thousands of voters in parliamentary and municipal elections. Addressing Jumblatt during the first cabinet session, Shehab said: “Usually, the one appointed a public works minister gets to have much more friends but I predict that you will no longer have a single friend,” (Safi, 2007, p. 341). Shehab, was of course referring to Jumblatt’s strict adherence to the law.

Despite serving in his post for only 148 days, Jumblatt recorded a number of achievements. He considered among his main achievements a five-year-development plan with a record funding amounting to L.L. 450 million. It featured water and electricity projects, increasing irrigation, constructing roads and public facilities, along with housing. Jumblatt was also proud of his ministry’s plan to construct road networks in underdeveloped areas as instructed by Shehab. Jumblatt was excited to see his relentless efforts at the ministry bear fruit and was working tirelessly so that the maximum number of projects start during his tenure. He once signed contracts for 30 construction projects within one week (Timoviev, 2009&Nassif, 2011& Matni, 2010).

Serving in the Public Works and Design Ministry made Jumblatt much more familiar with the rampant corruption in this institution which mirrored corruption in the public sector in general. When assuming his post, Jumblatt did not mind receiving all people at his office and forced his aides to do the same. He issued a circular that was posted on the ministry’s entrance
and the doors of every office, urging people not to resort to nepotism, or ‘wasta,’ to have their paperwork processed quicker and warned them against offering bribery for this purpose. He also urged employees to perform their duties in line with the law. Jumblatt opened an office where qualified and honest employees were tasked with receiving the complaints of people and following up on them. The minister tasked a group of engineers who had extensive experience in projects to make sure that contractors were implementing the ministry’s projects according to the agreed upon specifications (Safi, 2007).

In order to better monitor the performance of ministry employees, Jumblatt used to pay surprise visits to the ministry departments and listen to the complaints of people with formalities that need to be processed. He was surprised to discover that bribery was actually the “law,” and that some MPs had shares in projects that had many violations. After paying these surprise visits, Jumblatt used to head back to his office, throw his jacket at a nearby chair and sit laying his head on his crossed hands. Expressing his discontent with rampant corruption in the ministry, Jumblatt used to address his aides saying: “What is this cave which has thieves more than it has people with formalities to process!” (Safi, 2007, p.342).

Jumblatt used to relay his concerns and discontent over the situation in his ministry to Shehab during meetings between the two. The outcome of these meetings was often decisions to enforce the implementation of the law, impose reform and give qualified and honest employees the assignments that they deserved. However, at the end of every meeting, Shehab and Jumblatt used to conclude that political, administrative and social reform in the country was difficult if not impossible amid the presence of a political class that inherits influence in the state and is supported by “Le mur de l’argent”(Safi, 2007).
Jumblatt and Salam were at odds, with the prime minister blocking many proposals made by the former. Salam opposed names proposed by Jumblatt to be appointed director generals. In one of the incidents, Salam stood against the appointment of an individual, known to be competent and honest, as a director general of the department of roads in the Ministry of Public Works and Design. As he chaired a cabinet session, Shehab touched on the dire situations of roads in Beirut, its suburbs and other districts. Commenting on the situation during the session, Jumblatt said

If Prime Minister Saeb Salam approved the appointment of the person we proposed as a director general of the department of roads, we would have avoided this dire situation, particularly in deprived districts [in] which we promised [its residents] to construct roads as a first step towards development. Do you want to know the reason [for Salam’s refusal]? The fault of this great honest employee is that he was the head of a committee appraising land for the Salams in the district of Ghadir which will be expropriated for Beirut International Airport. This employee refused to set the high value [for the land] which some tried to impose (Safi, 2007, p.344).

Salam interrupted Jumblatt, banging on the table and accusing him of making fabrications against him. But Jumblatt, who managed to stay quiet, took a report from one of his files and addressed Shehab saying: “My answer lies in this report which includes the complete details of expropriations, interference and pressure. Do you allow me to read it?” At this moment, Salam stood up, announcing his resignation (Safi, 2007). The resignation of Salam’s cabinet did not represent the end of Jumblatt’s role as a minister, as he was appointed interior minister in the following cabinet.

Jumblatt was appointed interior minister in the cabinet of Karami which succeeded Salam’s. He granted additional powers to municipalities and his tenure saw increasing cooperation between Damascus and Beirut to combat crime and cross-border smuggling. Jumblatt opposed random arrests which targeted thousands of SSNP members following the failed coup d’etat of 1961. He also stood against the growing role of the “Deuxième Bureau” or
military intelligence. Army officers felt humiliated after the failed coup and thus started to work on winning supporters in government departments, municipalities, Parliament, professional associations and student leagues. They even had supporters among the media and religious figures. Shehab appointed an officer in every governorate and district, tasking him with establishing ties with parties, professional associations, civil groups, religious figures and student leagues. With time, some groups began to oppose the military’s interference in civil affairs. Jumblatt urged Shehab to put restrictions on the military’s interference in politics. He voiced his frustration to some media outlets in 1963

We have only to preserve this democracy and develop it. It is preserved through respecting the constitution, the rule of law and holding transparent elections and making sure that the civilian rules…and by making executive bodies, whether military or non-military…totally under civilian rule(Safi, 2007, p. 367).

These remarks demonstrate Jumbatt’s eagerness to preserve Lebanon’s democratic system. Addressing an officer in the presence of Shehab, Jumblatt said

What do you have to do with ministers and MPs so that you mediate reconciliation between this and that? Who gave you the permission to give advice that is actually warnings and threats to members of unions, parties and mayors? Do not go beyond your authorities…and I personally will not accept or remain silent!(Safi, 2007, p.367).

Although a staunch supporter of Shehab, who was a former general, Jumblatt categorically opposed the army’s meddling in politics.

3.5- Unfulfilled Ambitions

Shehab sought to achieve political reform through two steps: by amending the electoral law and the constitution. He believed that the first goal would pave the way the next one. That is, a new electoral law would bring to parliament a new political class that will be aware of the necessity of enacting reforms.
Shehab started preparing for the first elections in his tenure which took place in 1960. He hoped that it will bring new MPs that would reduce the influence of traditional leaders who had controlled the country’s politics for decades. But at the same time, Shehab realized the importance of preserving the representation of these leaders. According to Shehab, Lebanon had just emerged from an armed conflict which took a sectarian taste and thus it was impossible to achieve national consensus and preserve stability without bringing the strong representatives of sects to power. Hence Shehab’s determination to preserve the representation of Jumblatt and Gemayel in parliament and government (Nassif, 2011).

In drafting a new electoral law, Shehab tried to avoid the pitfalls of the 1947 law which divided Lebanon into five governorates and the 1957 one which sidelined major Lebanese leaders and was based on single district. The new 1960 law split the difference and was based on the qada’ electoral district, raising the number of seats from 66 to 99, 54 for Christians and 45 for Muslims. This law of 26 qadas introduced the voting card and the voting booth to preserve the secrecy of ballots (Nassif, 2011).

The 1960 elections brought back to parliament Jumblatt and many other leaders who were defeated in the 1957 elections. However, Shehab was disappointed, as traditional leaders proved more influential than he had expected and largely determined who won in the polls. Shehab was able to bring only few new people to parliament whom he hoped would enact reforms. His powerful aides, officers Antoun Saad and Toufic Jalbout, had to resort to intimidation to convince traditional leaders to put some independent candidates on their electoral lists. During Shehab’s mandate, 51 MPs of the elected total were not new. Of these, three were elected for the sixth time, three for the fifth time, twelve for the fourth time, another twelve for the third time, and 21 for the second time (Nassif, 2011).
Shehab thus realized that it was impossible to rule the country without traditional politicians, as he could not bring to parliament a considerable bloc of new and young MPs to help him introduce political reforms. Further worsening the situation was the failed SSNP coup which impeded reform and led to the increasing influence of the army in politics in an attempt to prevent another coup. Speaking frankly to his aides, Shehab admitted that he had thus failed to achieve political reform. “Administrative reform is necessary but not enough, it should be accompanied by political reform…if political reform does not happen, the country will explode,” Shehab once told his aides (Nassif, 2011, p. 429).

By the time Salam resigned, half of Shehab’s term had already passed, with competent people joining state institutions. More than once, Jumblatt visited Shehab in summer 1961 at a house the latter rented in Ajaltoun, where the two discussed achievements made during the first half of Shehab’s tenure. “Could we build the state of independence in the remaining three years [of my tenure]?” Shehab asked Jumblatt once (Safi, 2007, p.346). Jumblatt doubted that this was possible, given rampant corruption and sectarianism in the country

I doubt that this is possible…how can we build the state of independence when the Lebanese disagree on the concept of the state and independence? When we are afraid of the slightest disruption of the balance of sectarian privileges at the expense of the country, people and the future? When we are afraid of ridding the state of corruption and thieves, of giving the Lebanese the option of civil marriage, as a gradual move towards secularism, which we consider the only modern means to rescue Lebanon from disintegration and [its people from] exchanging suspicions and worries?(Safi, 2007, p.346-347).

Jumblatt’s remarks indicate that at that period, and judging by experience, he was gradually losing hope in the possibility of introducing reforms to the political system and building a capable state. Shehab supported Jumblatt’s analysis, suggesting that this was the reason behind his brief resignation in July 1960. “I resigned after discovering this reality you are speaking about, after realizing that it will be difficult for me to defeat an internal enemy that I
cannot eradicate or get rid of,” Shehab said (Safi, 2007, p.347). “As you know, I went back on my resignation under pressure, but since I am back, we have to work and try to succeed” Shehab added (Safi, 2007, p.347). Shehab had resigned following the 1960 parliamentary elections, arguing that he had fulfilled the task of restoring order in the country and holding parliamentary elections. However, the president went back on his resignation days later under pressure by all political groups (Safi, 2007). Shehab used to discuss with Jumblatt obstacles impeding his reform initiatives, as in the following quote

If three individuals from a certain sect were sentenced to death, then implementing the sentence should await sentencing to death three individuals from another sect, executing three innocent people [from this other sect], postponing the execution of the verdicts or forgetting about them (Safi, 2007, p.345).

This shows how Jumblatt and Shehab were fed up with sectarianism in the country which obstructed every reform initiative.

3.6-Shehab Opposes Renewing his Mandate

As Shehab’s mandate approached its end, much had been achieved in terms of reform and development. However, little was accomplished in terms of political reform. Public sector posts were still allocated based on sect, which Jumblatt hoped would change during a new term for Shehab. Thus, Jumblatt was a staunch supporter of renewing the mandate of Shehab despite the latter’s strong opposition. Jumblatt believed that there were many reforms that have yet to be enacted. These included dissolving all sectarian organizations and passing a law stipulating that at least one quarter of members of their board of directors should be from a different sect than that of the majority, banning anti-Lebanon parties, unifying education curricula and passing a regulation forcing endowments to provide their services for all people without discriminating based on sect. Jumblatt accused these endowments of sectarianism
Many of these endowments are institutions that instigate divisions and practice discrimination in the country, we should get rid of this appalling scene of every sect caring only for its displaced, needy, sick…orphans and others (Safi, 2007, p.370).

This underscores Jumblatt’s eagerness to combat all forms of sectarianism in the country. He called for abolishing the practice of distributing parliamentary seats based on sects, for raising the number of MPs from 99 to 121 or 130 and for implementing the law of illicit wealth on parties to assure that they are receiving funds through legal means (Safi, 2007).

In May 1964, Jumblatt launched a campaign in support of renewing Shehab’s tenure. He warned of the consequences of Shehab’s refusal to have his tenure renewed.

The issue of the new mandate has become a major and national reform cause, either the principles of this [Shehab] era-under which Lebanon witnessed justice, equality, prosperity and independence, survive or they fade (Safi, 2007, p.371).

Jumblatt argued that if these principles were compromised, then the country would head towards destruction. He considered renewing Shehab’s mandate an inevitable step, arguing that Shehab cannot leave Lebanon to greedy investors and sectarian leaders. “Thus, accepting the renewing [of the mandate] has become an honor and a duty for the president,” Jumblatt explained (Safi, 2007, p. 372). Two weeks later, 79 out of 99 MPs presented a petition to the speaker urging him to amend the constitution to re-elect Shehab. However, the president reiterated his rejection in a statement, saying he insisted on respecting the constitution (Nassif, 2011). Jumblatt failed to convince Shehab to go back on his decision during a meeting at the president’s house. But Shehab was adamant

I fulfilled by constitutional duty and I gave what I could to the state and people under circumstances and capabilities that you know as I know. My duty now is to preserve the constitution until the last moment of my tenure so that I do not set a precedence [if I accept to renew my mandate] for my successor to do what I did. So please stand by my side so that I do not commit the sin of renewing my term (Safi, 2007, p. 373).
This demonstrated Shehab’s categorical refusal to renew his mandate. Responding to Shehab, Jumblatt said

The constitution that we are eager to preserve is a guarantor and a problem at the same time. We would not fall into crises, should this constitution allow electing the best among the Lebanese to the presidency through referendum rather than adhering to sectarian tradition, just like what happens in contemporary democratic states (Safi, 2007, p.373).

These words reflect Jumblatt’s dissatisfaction with the Lebanese political system. The amendment to the constitution was endorsed by parliament, enjoying the support of 79 MPs, while only 14 MPs opposed it. However, Shehab clung to his position during a cabinet session despite the insistence of then Prime Minister Hussein Oweini. “I made my decision, I will not accept the law to renew [my mandate], this is my constitutional and personal right,” he said. Shehab warned during the last session of the widening gap between the poor and the rich in the country

Communism has arrived to the airport and is thriving in the houses of the rich who are living an extravagant life…those should not feel surprised if one day servants revolted against them and smashed the trays and Champagne bottles on their heads and the heads of the invitees (Safi, 2007, p.375).

It was clear that Shehab was unwilling to renew his presidential mandate. By the end of July, it was clear for all political groups that nominating a candidate for the presidency other than Shehab was the only way out of the crisis. Jumblatt stressed that any new president should adhere to Shehab’s policy to achieve development and eradicate poverty. Shehab proposed Charles Helou, after conveying his choice to Abdel-Hamid Ghaleb, Egypt’s ambassador to Lebanon and making sure that Nasser did not oppose his nomination. Helou was nominated for the presidency in August by Shehabist MPs who constituted the majority and was elected two days later. Just like every presidential elections, foreign countries had a role in nominating Helou. Shortly before the day of elections, Helou visited Jumblatt and received his support
(Timoviev, 2009). He also visited Shehab and promised him to carry on with his policies. “Your Excellency, we will always need you, and we will adhere to the Shehabist path on the internal and external levels, we will follow your advice and the wise policy you adopted,” Helou said, addressing Shehab (Safi, 2007, p.377). Although he believed that the election of Helou implied the continuation of Shehabist policies, Jumblatt believed that this was not enough to make change (Matni, 2010&Nassif, 2011).

3.7-Forming Leftist Coalitions

With Shehab’s tenure over, Jumblatt concluded that the outgoing president was mistaken by relying on a group of technocrats and the Deuxieme Bureau to enact reforms. He believed that making radical change required gaining the support of the masses and mobilizing them to achieve this change as in Egypt, where Nasser announced in 1964 a socialist democratic state, allying with the prolareteriat. Pondering his role in power and in opposition over the past years, Jumblatt became convinced that the traditional political process in the country was futile. He thought that alliances forged under this process and the distribution of sectarian quotas would keep him a local leader whose powers could not exceed those assigned to the Druze sect. Hence, he realized the importance of looking for allies among leftist groups in order to form a strong coalition that would mobilize the masses to make change. In 1962, the PSP helped in forming the Labor Liberation Front, which was granted a license thanks to the efforts of Jumblatt, then an Interior Minister (Timoviev, 2009& Khalil, 1984).

In early 1965, Jumblatt began looking for allies to form a wider coalition of progressive groups. “The unity of the left which we and some faithful are calling for means bringing together groups that believe in the concept of socialism and the path of liberation, committees,
individuals, parties and union” Jumblatt told a magazine in the same year (Timoviev, 2009, p.320), highlighting his efforts to unite leftist groups in one alliance. Improving ties between Nasser and the communists in 1964 helped unite leftist groups in Lebanon and the Arab world. The unity of these groups came amid increasing social tension in the country and deep divisions in the Arab World between Nasser and Saudi Arabia over the civil war in Yemen. Unemployment rates soared, with farmers in the south and Bekaa moving to Beirut due to the absence of markets for their crops. Lebanon imported most of its foodstuffs. At the end of 1964, the Labor Liberation Front expressed its support for teachers who staged a three-week-strike to pressure the government to give elementary school teachers a pay hike and allow them to form a union. Leftist parties demonstrated a more solid alliance by their participation in strikes held by the Lebanese University students and the Regie Libanaise des Tabacset Tombacs (Timoviev, 2009& Traboulsi, 2011).

By the end of summer 1965, Lebanon witnessed what was referred to as the “apple crisis.” Apples topped the country’s exports and a few businessmen monopolized hoarding and marketing the produce and made huge profits out of it. According to statistical figures, there were more than 4 million apple trees in Lebanon in the mid-1960s and the annual produce hit a record number of 120,000 tons. Around 60 percent of farmers in Nabaa al-Safa, Kesrouan and Metn were apple farmers. Businesspersons took advantage of the excess in crops to buy the produce at a very low price from famers (Timoviev, 2009& Safi, 2007& Traboulsi, 2011).

In a bid to shed light on the plight of apple farmers, the PSP and other leftist parties in the newly formed Front of National and Progressive Parties and Figures (FNPPF) held a rally in the Upper Metn village of Btekhnay in September 1965 attended by around 15,000 people. Addressing participants, Jumblatt called for resolving the apple crisis on socialist bases, through
the state buying and storing apples and other crops along with marketing them (Timoviev, 2009 & Traboulsi, 2011). He also said that the government should closely monitor the selling and buying prices of these crops. In response, Gemayel accused the organizers of the Btekhnay rally of serving a foreign agenda and ruining the economy whose growth would be impeded by Jumblatt’s socialist thoughts. Joined by Majid Arslan, Jumblatt’s Druze rival, Gemayel organized a rally in which speakers lashed out at “destructive socialism,” praising the liberal economy (Traboulsi, 2011). Authorities intervened and banned these rallies under the pretext that they posed a threat to stability. Jumblatt responded that such a move indicated that authorities were following the instructions of groups who want to deviate from the Shehabist policies of reform and development. He lashed out at the socio-economic and political policies of Helou, urging him to rely on “strong and competent” people in governmental posts, or else, he would take the country to the pre-Shehab era (Safi, 2007 & Khalil, 1984). Members of the FNPPP were committed to socialism and the Nasserite concept of Arab nationalism. Along with the PSP, members of the coalition were the Lebanese Communist Party, the Movement of Arab Nationalists, Labor Liberation Front and some independent figures like Maarouf Saad and Jamil Lahoud. The PNPPF made relentless efforts to improve the working conditions of laborers and was able to force the government to introduce a salary hike and set a minimum wage. When the famous Intra Bank went bankrupt in 1966, Jumblatt blamed western financial institutions for the crisis and called for forcing foreign banks, particularly US ones, to invest at least half of their deposits in Lebanon. In regional politics, the PNPPF aligned with Nasser in his confrontation with Saudi Arabia (Timoviev, 2009). But a cataclysmic regional event would soon throw these parties into disarray.
3.8-The Decline of Shehabism

The 1967 defeat of Nasser, an ally of Shehabism, helped in the formation of a strong Christian opposition to Shehabist policies and politicians. Raymond Edde, the head of the National bloc, made a surprise move by joining Gemayel and Chamoun in what was known as the “Tripartite Alliance” in the 1968 parliamentary elections. When asked whom he was against, Edde said “against Israel, Communism and Shehabism” (Safi, 2007, p.405). The defeat of Nasser created divisions among leftist parties and undermined their alliance, adding to the strength of the Tripartite Alliance. In the second half of 1968, Gemayel, Edde and Chamoun succeeded in mobilizing a significant number of Christian voters and the support of the Maronite church after they called for combating dictatorship and the Deuxieme Bureau (Mansour, 1994).

Despite relentless efforts by the Deuxieme Bureau to prevent the three leaders and members of their lists from achieving victory, they nevertheless made significant gains. Seven candidates from Chamoun’s NLP won along with nine from the Kataeb and six from the National Bloc. The result dwarfed the PSP’s success in clinching seven seats and maintaining a majority in parliament alongside Shehabist allies. Jumblatt described the results of elections as “disastrous,” representing the start of a counter revolution that aimed at putting an end to Shehabist social reforms. Jumblatt held the Deuxieme Bureau responsible for the gradual decline of Shehabism through its acts against some Shehabist politicians which prompted them to turn against Shehabism. He cited the example of Salam and Maronite Patriarch Bulos Mouchi who sided with the Tripartite Alliance after coming under scathing attacks from the Deuxieme Bureau (Khalil, 1984). But the 1967 war had other repercussions on the country as well.

Although Lebanon did not participate in the 1967 war, repercussions had direct impact on the country. With the defeat of Arab regimes, the PLO rose to prominence. PLO commandos
began to cross into Lebanon and stage military operations against Israel. The latter used disproportionate force in its response, inflicting massive destruction on southern Lebanese villages and towns. The flow of PLO commandoes into Lebanon further exacerbated divisions in the country. Jumblatt, other leftist figures and parties, and the majority of Muslim public opinion supported the right of Palestinian organizations to act militarily against Israel from south Lebanon as opposed to the Kataeb, National Liberal Party, and the majority of Christians who considered it a violation of Lebanon’s sovereignty. Armed confrontations began to occur in the south between the Lebanese Army and Palestinian factions. On 28 December 1968, an Israeli commando unit destroyed 13 Middle East Airline planes on ground at the Beirut International Airport in response to the hijacking of an El-Al plane to Athens by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Traboulsi, 2011). In remarks published by a newspaper on 31 December, Jumblatt held Helou responsible for the attack since he did nothing to improve Lebanon’s defense capabilities. He said that Helou lacked the courage to buy Soviet arms and still counts on the “illusion” that Western states would not allow Israel to attack Lebanon (Timoviev, 2009).

Israel’s attacks deepened the crisis in the country. In early 1969, students at four universities in Lebanon went on strike to protest the inability of the Shehabist-dominated-state to defend the country against Israeli aggression. Fellow students in Sidon, Tyre and other Lebanese cities joined the strike and called for allowing Palestinian commandos to operate freely in Lebanon. Alarmed by the rise of support for leftist parties among Muslims and their solidarity with the Palestinian resistance, Edde, Gemayel and Chamoun met in Broummana in March of the same year and warned that the country was facing “communist and Zionist” dangers, calling for deploying UN troops on borders between Lebanon and Israel. The three leaders considered the
confrontation in Lebanon to be between Muslims and Christians (Timoviev, 2009). The tension soon culminated into a political crisis.

In April 1969, Jumblatt formed a coalition of leftist parties, less than two years after the 1967 war which sparked deep divisions among the left. The Gathering of National and Progressive Parties and Committees supported the right of Palestinian factions to stage attacks against Israel from Lebanon, slamming the state for putting the army in confrontation with PLO fighters in the south. On 23 April 1969, several individuals were wounded when the army opened fire on demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian resistance. In light of the army’s aggressiveness, particularly in his home town Tripoli, then Prime Minister Karami submitted his resignation. Armed clashes broke out between the army and Palestinian groups and the country plunged into a deep political crisis (Traboulsi, 2011).

After months of clashes, the army launched an attack in a bid to control the situation, prompting Syria to close its border with Lebanon and slap economic sanctions on it. The crisis was over in November 1969, when Yasser Arafat, who later became PLO chairman and army commander General Emile Boustani signed the Cairo Agreement under Nasser’s patronage. The agreement recognized the right of Palestinian armed groups to operate in Lebanese territories, particularly to and from the Arqoub region and to stage military operations against Israel from Lebanon but without violating Lebanon’s sovereignty. It also gave the Palestinians the right to manage their camps after years of close control by the Deuxieme Bureau (Traboulsi, 2011 & Khalil, 1984). Jumblatt dubbed the agreement an important victory for the struggle to allow Palestinian freedom fighters to launch resistance operations and to manage their camps. The deal helped end the crisis the country had been witnessing since April (Timoviev, 2009).
With the deadlock easing, Karami finally formed a national unity government in which Jumblatt was appointed Interior Minister tasked with implementing the Cairo Agreement. When he assumed office, he set three goals for himself: implementing the Cairo Agreement, enhancing freedoms, and improving ties with Arab countries (Timoviev, 2009). By the end of November, Jumblatt had convinced Palestinian armed factions to withdraw from their positions in northern and eastern Lebanon. Jumblatt coordinated with a committee formed by the PLO to impose restrictions on funerals of PLO fighters to prevent any disruption of the public order. In January 1970, he banned Palestinian fighters from carrying arms or wearing military outfits in public places along with opening live fire to celebrate or mourn. Palestinian militants in the south were ordered to be positioned at least one Kilometer away from residential places (Timoviev, 2009 & Khalil, 1984).

Although he hated political sectarianism and called for its eradication, Jumblatt tried to benefit from his new post to achieve a far less ambitious goal. According to Traboulsi, who served as the vice-president of the Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon (OCAL), a prominent LNM faction, Jumblatt tried to make use of his good ties with Palestinian factions and his post as an interior minister to negotiate a deal with the Christian parties over power-sharing. He offered limiting the military activities of the PLO by strictly implementing the Cairo Agreement in return for a greater Muslim share of power. Traboulsi explains

He told the Maronite establishment I am a Muslim interior minister, I can strike a deal with the Palestinians in return for a better place for Muslims in general in decision making: more prerogatives for the prime minister, a strong prime minister, equal distribution of administrative posts, a reform of the electoral process, that was a whole package.8

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8 Fawwaz Traboulsi, former vice-president of the Communist Action Organization in Lebanon, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
To underscore his prerogatives as an Interior Minister, Jumblatt ordered the internal police forces to take over an illegal settlement next to the Palestinian refugee camp of Tal al-Zaatar in the Metn region, a move that left a number of people dead.9

Dalloul, who was once Jumblatt’s deputy, argues that the PSP leader worked on preserving order in the country during his term as interior minister because he believed that this could facilitate the peaceful evolution of the political system. Inspired by Teilhard de Chardin and his theory of evolution, Jumblatt believed the political system should evolve through the Maronite political establishment accepting to provide a fairer distribution of power among the Lebanese. Dalloul notes that

When Kamal Jumblatt became…interior minister, he set a specific route for demonstrations, he marked markets in downtown Beirut as…green area that demonstrators are banned from reaching. He did so in a bid to preserve order and allow the system to evolve.10

Dalloul continues that Jumblatt’s objectives were opposed by the Maronite establishment, which considered that the evolution of the system would end its control over the country. He notes that Jumblatt wanted the system to evolve because he was afraid it would collapse.11

Jumblatt complained about Palestinian factions not abiding by the Cairo Agreement. This happened largely due to the absence of a united leadership for all Palestinian groups. Meanwhile, Israel’s retaliatory attacks with disproportionate force against southern villages continued, causing between 15,000 and 30,000 southerners to leave their villages and move towards the north. At the same time, feelings of hatred towards Palestinians were high among Christian parties. Gemayel, Edde and Chamoun declared the Cairo agreement a failure, and that the presence of armed Palestinian groups jeopardized Lebanese sovereignty. Gemayel dubbed the

9 Fawwaz Traboulsi, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
10 Mohsen Dalloul, interview by author, 29 January 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
11 Mohsen Dalloul, interview by author,29 January 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
Cairo Agreement a mistake and proposed transferring Palestinian fighters to other Arab countries. On March 1970, more than 20 people were killed and wounded when Kataeb fighters led by Bashir Gemayel ambushed a Palestinian convoy in the mountain village of Kahaleh. The attack sparked sporadic clashes between Palestinian factions and the Kataeb across the country. In the same day, Gemayel was arrested by Palestinians near the camp of Tal al-Zaatar. This prompted Jumblatt to intervene. He contacted Arafat and secured Gemayel’s release, thus restoring calm to Kahaleh (Dalloul, 2010). Focus shifted soon to the upcoming presidential elections.

As the date of presidential elections approached, the PSP lashed out at the undemocratic practices of the Deuxieme Bureau and announced in its General Assembly in July 1970 that it no longer supported the Shehabist bloc. The PSP was not willing to support presidential candidates who opposed national progressive forces and the Palestinian resistance. In August, Shehab declared that he would not join the race and nominated Elias Sarkis for the presidency, while Chamoun, Edde and others supported Suleiman Franjieh. A few months before leaving his post, Jumblatt granted party permits for the Lebanese Communist Party, the Baath Party and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (Shayya, 2007 & Khalil, 1984). Jumblatt decided to back Franjieh because he promised to support and carry on with the PSP leader’s method in implementing the Cairo Agreement and protecting political freedoms. For Jumblatt and his Palestinian allies, the support of a presidential candidate depended on whether he promised to fulfill these two conditions or not. During a meeting between the two on the eve of elections, Franjieh voiced his support for Jumblatt’s policy. He promised to appoint him interior minister in his first cabinet to continue implementing the Cairo Agreement. But Franjieh did not keep his promise (Dalloul, 2010).
3.9-The Failure of the Revolution from Above

Shortly after Franjieh assumed office, the Jordanian army attacked PLO factions in the kingdom, prompting PLO leadership and thousands of Palestinians to move to Lebanon in October 1970. In an attempt to avoid the repetition of the same scenario, Palestinian groups forged solid alliances with leftist parties in Lebanon and garnered support in West Beirut and in Tripoli, reducing the influence of traditional Sunni leaders in the capital. Two other events transpired in the early 1970s, further underscoring Jumblatt’s international and Arab stature. In November 1972, he was awarded the Lenin Medal for Peace for his efforts to enhance solidarity and peace among people in the world. In the same month, the representatives of 47 socialist Arab organizations met in Beirut and established the Arab Front for the Support of the Palestinian Revolution and elected Jumblatt its secretary general (Khalil, 1984). Jumblatt was disappointed by Franjieh’s nomination of Salam as his prime minister, nor did Franjieh appoint Jumblatt interior minister as he had promised. Dalloul argues that Jumblatt’s participation in the cabinet was vetoed by Pierre Gemayel and Chamoun. He states that

The Maronite Establishment vetoed the participation of Jumblatt in any cabinet [during the tenure of Suleiman Franjieh], because they did not want this system to develop. He [Jumblatt] used to say I have a big role in making someone become a president, like Suleiman Franjieh and bringing ministers but he couldn’t become a minister. He felt that he is being targeted…and punished because he is trying to develop this [political] system.12

Jumblatt believed Salam was not a pro-reform politician and expected that all reform attempts by some ministers in the new cabinet would be aborted. The cabinet called itself “a youth government,” as it had 12 young technocrat ministers and promised to stage a “revolution from above” in order to thwart a possible one from below. But Jumblatt’s predictions turned out to be

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12 Mohsen Dalloul, interview by author, 29 January 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
true, as a number of reformist ministers submitted their resignations due to obstacles placed by the country’s oligarchy and political class. Elias Saba, the economy minister and an economic advisor to Franjieh, issued a decree to introduce a set of fiscal reforms and measures to protect national industry. However, he later had to revoke the decree in light of a threat by the Merchants’ Association to strike. Health Minister Emile Bitar proposed that the government control the price of medicine and allow the NSSF to import some pharmaceuticals which would expose the real price of medicines and the profit of its importers. In response, and backed by the Merchants’ Association, drugstore owners and pharmacists threatened to go on strike with some highly demanded medications, such as insulin, disappearing from the market. Franjieh, who had friends working in this business, abandoned Bitar, prompting him to resign. For their part, Education Ministers Ghassan Tweini and Michel Edde resigned as well after they could not implement their reform plans (Traboulsi, 2011).

President Franjieh, parliament Speaker Kamel Asaad, and Prime Minister Salam joined forces to eradicate the Shehabist legacy, sacking Shehabist-era public sector employees and army officers. Many intelligence officers were replaced by ones close to Tony Franjieh, the president’s son. Just as it was almost impossible for ministers to implement reform, it was as difficult for pro-reform MPs to win seats in the 1972 election, as parliament was being increasingly dominated by notables and businessmen. Commenting on Jumblatt’s continuous calls for reform, Salam said on the eve of elections

We welcome Kamal Jumblatt, in his capacity as the son of a well-bred “house” and as an honorable chief of his [Druze] sect…but we categorically refuse to deal with him as one who invites destruction and sabotage, poses as the protector of the Left and Communism and exploits popular problems [for his own interests] (Traboulsi, 2011, p. 171-172).

This quote illustrates the real challenge posed by traditional notables to any call for reforms or change in Jumblatt’s part in the early seventies. Very few independent leftist candidates were
able to make it to the legislature. But the composition of parliament in 1972 totally contradicted the growing desire for political and socio-economic change among the population.

In the early 1970’s, Lebanon experienced a severe socioeconomic crisis. The GNP growth plunged from 10.5 percent between 1960 and 1965 to zero percent in 1974, and inflation rates reached 23 percent in 1973, making incremental wage hikes introduced by the government useless. On the eve of 1975, the prices of rice, vegetables and fruits more than doubled and even a cup of coffee became a luxury for some families, with its price rising from L.L. 0.25 to L.L. 1. Moreover, high rents forced many families to leave their homes and gather in misery belts around Beirut (Timoviev, 2009 & Taboulsi, 2011).

As the socio-economic situation deteriorated, the labor movement gained momentum and it was backed fully by Jumblatt. Demonstrations were held by farmers, teachers and students who demanded better living conditions. The government sent troops to repress these movements. Peasants of Akkar resorted to an armed rebellion starting in 1968 to protest the difficult conditions of sharecropping imposed by their landowners. On January 1973, thousands of tobacco farmers took over the offices of the Regie in Nabatieh, calling for a 20 percent increase in the price of their produce. The Regie had the exclusive right to export Lebanese-produced tobacco, import cigarettes and produce local cigarettes. The army opened fire at the protesters, killing two. The next day, 20,000 took to the streets in the capital in a show of support for tobacco farmers. Addressing the protesters, Jumblatt slammed the “rule of the whip and repression,” and called for supporting the struggle of workers to gain their legitimate rights. The country’s mainstream labor movement, the General Labor Confederation, held a number of demonstrations in which it demanded a salary raise, reduction of rent, the state’s importation of medications and foodstuffs, limiting commercial profits and encouraging cooperatives. The
government’s response to all these demands was often to introduce a salary raise which did not even match the increase in the cost of living (Traboulsi, 2011).

A series of strikes hit the industrial sector as well starting in the late 1960s. Close to 1,200 workers of the Ghandour biscuits and chocolate factory went on strike in November 1972. They demanded a pay hike, equal pay for male and female workers and unionization. The police opened fire on Ghandour workers during their demonstration, killing two and wounding 14 others. To protest the crime, Jumblatt led a demonstration of 20,000 people which was organized by leftist and progressive parties. The procession was joined by more protesters to form a large rally that reached the steps of parliament where Jumblatt delivered a speech. For their part, students and teachers at universities and schools went on strike as well. Teachers called for better teaching conditions while students demanded lower fees and more scholarships. In spring 1972, students at the Lebanese University held a massive strike, demanding the construction of a unified university campus, an increase in scholarships and university restaurants. For their part, LU professors demanded higher wages and tenure. The PSP’s Anwar al-Fatayri headed the active National Union of Lebanese University Students (Timoviev, 2009).

3.10—Conclusion

Backed by Jumblatt, Shehab tried his best to achieve reform from within the Lebanese system. He launched an ambitious plan to reform the administration, bridge the socio-economic gap between Muslims and Christians in rural areas, and establish a fairer distribution of public sector posts among sects. However the influence of traditional leaders and their alliance to Lebanon’s oligarchy made necessary political reforms impossible and heralded grave consequences on the country. As Jumblatt commented shortly before his assassination in 1977:
“there was no one who truly thought about the life of the masses. President Shehab began to stir interest in this direction but was not able to accomplish his work. He is known to have said at the end of his six-year term that: ‘If the wealthy continue to preserve their privileges against everything and everybody, then a social revolution will break out in Lebanon’ (Jumblatt, 2002, p.148). The Kataeb and the NLP gained significant influence after the 1968 parliamentary elections, and were able, along with their allies, to bring an anti-Shehabist candidate to the presidency in 1970. Jumblatt’s reforms from within the system became even harder in the early 1970’s, with the alliance between the country’s political class and financial oligarchy getting even getting stronger under Franjieh’s tenure. The next chapter traces the shift in Jumblatt’s call to reform the political system to his insistence on toppling it altogether especially during the first two years of Lebanon’s civil war.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ADVENTURE

4.1-Rounds of Violence, Failure of Talks

13 April 1975 marks the start of the first phase, labeled the “two-year war,” of Lebanon’s civil war. Armed clashes broke out after a bus loaded with Palestinians was ambushed by Kataeb gunmen in the Beirut south-eastern suburb of Ain al-Roummaneh, killing 27 and wounding many others. The incident came hours after a car had opened fire on a gathering during the inauguration of a church in the area, killing a bodyguard of Pierre Gemayel who was among the attendees. The war pitted Palestinian factions and the LNM, formed in 1972 under Jumblatt, against the Lebanese Front (Salkind & Traboulsi, 1977). In the wake of the Ain al-Roummaneh attack, the LNM called for “isolating” the Kataeb, which meant banning its participation in any cabinet. But this attempt did not work. After weeks of fighting, Franjieh tasked Karami with forming a government that excluded both Jumblatt and the Kataeb, but included Chamoun who represented the Kataeb. The cabinet negotiated a cease-fire with the assistance of Syria, marking the latter’s intervention in the Lebanese political crisis. After a truce that held for around eight weeks, fighting erupted again. The Lebanese Front relied on violence to pressure the army to deploy and enforce “law and order,” while the other side resorted to violence to impose political reforms (Traboulsi, 2011).

In August 1975, the LNM announced its transitional program to reform the Lebanese political system. The plan called for eradicating the entire confessional system. It called for the abolishing of political sectarianism consecrated in the sectarian allocation of parliamentary seats,
the posts of the president, speaker and prime minister along with administrative and army posts. The program also called for having a voluntary civil code for personal status. Also proposed was a new electoral law based on proportional representation with the entirety of Lebanon as a single district, lowering the voting age to 18, and extensive administrative decentralization along with other reforms (Mansour, 1994& Hazran, 2010& Traboulsi, 2011& Farsoun, 1976). Central to this program was the assumption that

The Lebanese political system fulfills its role in protecting the dominating economic, social and cultural privileges, consecrates the isolation of Lebanon from the Arab region and keeps in power a class of feudal politicians that is unable to offer actual solutions for the economic and social problems (Mansour, 1994, p.375).

The LNM believed that the sectarian political system had become outdated and unable to address mounting political and socio-economic problems.

The program also assumed that sectarianism was preventing competent people from occupying public sector posts, bringing down productivity and even threatening democracy (Mansour, 1994). Addressing a news conference in August 18, 1975 in which he announced the program, Jumblatt stated that the crisis Lebanon was witnessing highlighted the need for essential amendments to the socio-economic and political systems in the country. “This need has become more obvious over the past years through demands made by significant segments of the population that with no exaggeration do constitute the majority of the Lebanese,” Jumblatt said (Timoviev, 2009, p. 393).

In response, Gemayel warned that reform meant “playing with fire,” and the Kataeb’s al-Amal newspaper argued that the political dominance of the Maronites in Lebanon was the only guarantee for a minority that could face oppression by a majority that was oppressive by its very nature. Days later, Gemayel called for a secular state with a unified personal status law and the distribution of public sector posts based on merit. He said that this would pave the way towards
abolishing political sectarianism in parliament and in the top three state posts. The Kataeb leader announced that the National Pact and the constitution could only be amended if the move was unanimously approved by all the Lebanese. But the LNM insisted that prior acceptance of reforms was required before ordering the army to deploy and restore calm. More rounds of violence followed. The reform agenda of the LNM was discussed by a newly formed National Dialogue Committee which comprised officials from various political factions. Gemayel threatened to withdraw from the committee if it approved any constitutional amendment and opposed the altering of the 6/5 Christian/Muslim ratio for the distribution of posts in parliament and the public sector (Traboulsi, 2011).

During the discussions, Gemayel threatened to withdraw from the committee if it endorsed any constitutional amendment or an alteration of the 6/5 Christian/Muslim ratio for sectarian political and administrative representation. Edde proposed the adoption of a civil code for personal status as the first step towards ridding the country of political sectarianism. But his call was strongly opposed by Muslim leaders who maintained that civil marriage violated the principles of Islam. Participants in dialogue failed to reach consensus (Traboulsi, 2011).

With dialogue hitting a dead end, violence intensified. The LNM attacked Kataeb positions in the hotel district in downtown Beirut in retaliation for the massacring of hundreds of Muslims in East Beirut by party supporters on 6 December 1975, a day later known as Black Saturday. For their part, Kataeb and NLP gunmen launched an offensive at the Dbayeh Palestinian refugee camp along with the Karantina and Maslakh shantytowns in Beirut. In response, the LNM and Palestinian factions took over the predominantly Maronite village of Damour in January 1976. In August, the Palestinian refugee camp of Tal al-Zaatar in Metn and the pre-dominantly Muslim neighborhood of Nabaa were also invaded by the Kataeb and NLP
gunmen. Atrocities were committed during the different attacks. Karami resigned in protest of the army siding with the Lebanese Front (Traboulsi, 2011 & Farsoun, 1976). It was time for Syria to play a bigger role in Lebanon.

### 4.2-Jumblatt Opposes Syria’s Solution

On 19 January, 1976, Jumblatt headed an LNM delegation that visited Damascus. The Lebanese officials held intensive talks with Syria’s Foreign Minister Abdel-Halim Khaddam at the Foreign Ministry before meeting Assad the following day. During the talks, Jumblatt urged Assad to intervene and play an effective role in putting an end to violence in Lebanon (Dalloul, 2010). “Your Excellency, we appeal to you to intervene to put an end to this war. There is so much bloodshed and the situation has become dangerous,” Jumblatt told Assad (Timoviev, 2009, p. 409). Assad answered saying: “I am ready [to intervene], but putting an end to the war means reaching a settlement. If you accept a settlement then we are ready to intervene” (Timoviev, 2009, p. 409).

In the same month, Syria negotiated a ceasefire. Units from the pro-Syrian Palestinian Liberation Army deployed along the frontline in Beirut. Karami and Franjieh headed to Damascus where the so-called Constitutional Document was drafted. It called for the equal distribution of posts between Muslims and Christians in parliament and the public sector, and for increasing the powers of the prime minister. The Constitutional Document stipulated that the president would be a Maronite, the speaker a Shiite and the prime minister a Sunni, which was, hitherto only a gentlemen’s agreement and was not mentioned in any official text. But the LNM opposed the Document which was announced in mid-February, saying it fell short of abolishing political sectarianism and reforming the electoral law. Shortly before his assassination, Jumblatt
commented on the Constitutional Document in remarks published in his book *I Speak for Lebanon*. He said

The Syrians wanted to see ‘their solution’ to the Lebanese problem enforced, not the program of the Lebanese National Movement. In short, they wanted to impose the constitutional message [Constitutional Document] of President Franjieh, which contained only a few timid reforms and a decree affecting journalists, under the fallacious pretext of making them more responsible and independent (Jumblatt, 1982, p. 16).

This suggests that the reforms included in the Document were not up to the expectations of Jumblatt, who advocated a complete abolishment of political sectarianism in the country. Jumblatt insisted on the resignation of Franjieh, while the latter was adamant to stay in office till the end of his presidential term. Facing this stalemate, Jumblatt thought that a decisive military action against the Lebanese Front was the only option left to force Franjieh to resign and overhaul the political system (Traboulsi, 2011). He discussed the issue with his aides and was encouraged by the defection of army officer Ahmad al-Khatib and the formation of the Lebanon Arab Army that fought alongside the LNM. Jumblatt said

Suleiman Franjieh is trying to buy time in order to attack all those who are against him with the help of some of his allies. We have to make him understand that this method and such wagering will not work because we are ready for a decisive military action in cooperation with Ahmad al-Khatib. We are ready to confront him in Baabda and to confront any group that steps in to help him in the mountain…We will transform the demands for reform…into a revolution that will torpedo this [political] system altogether and do away with all compromises, even those included in the Constitutional Document. We will impose secularism on all levels and choose the suitable person for the presidency without giving assurances from our side that the top state post will continue to be reserved for the Maronites (Timoviev, 2009, p. 422).

For Jumblatt, the solution now lay in the imposition of systemic change by force. A compromise was no longer possible. On 14 March 1976, LAA units moved from the Bekaa Valley to Sawfar and Aley, near the presidential palace in preparation for the attack. However, and after an urgent meeting that Assad chaired in Damascus, units from the Palestinian Liberation Army and Saiqa
prevented LAA fighters from advancing to the Baabda Palace. The move antagonized Jumblatt who was attending a meeting in Aley. He banged on the table saying

We are independent in this country, we do not accept tutelage. They [the Syrians] cannot have tutelage on the Lebanese, we do not accept this at all. For the first time, a military solution was possible to solve the political crisis in the country and they prevented us from carrying it out (Timoviev, 2009, p. 422).

Jumblatt’s remarks expressed his irritation with Syria’s unwillingness to support his project in Lebanon. On the same day, Damascus invited Karami, Khatib, Arafat, a Kataeb delegation and other Lebanese and Palestinian officials for talks in Damascus. In his first open challenge to Syria, Jumblatt did not attend the meeting, despite being invited. “The Syrians should get out, their role is over,” he told the *International Herald Tribune* (Timoviev, 2009, p. 422-423).

Assad told the visiting Lebanese delegations that Syria would not allow any side in Lebanon to defeat the other. Franjieh succumbed to Syria’s pressure and accepted not to oppose a constitutional amendment allowing the election of the president six months ahead of time; he was allowed to stay in his post until the end of his term however. Parliament passed the amendment in April 10 (Traboulssi, 2011).

But Jumblatt insisted on the immediate resignation of Franjieh and was confident that a military victory over the Lebanese Front was possible. He considered that only decisive military action could pave the way for a political solution. On March 20, Jumblatt declared the establishment of the Fakhreddine Army, hoping that all national forces from areas falling between Jezzine and Zgharta would join it. He said:

There is no area that we cannot reach in Mount Lebanon…we have a comprehensive plan that we will implement without hesitation. Our brothers from all sects, particularly Christians, should ostracize the Kataeb and the National Liberal Party (Timoviev, 2009, p. 423).
Jumblatt was confident of his ability to defeat the Lebanese Front. On 21 March, 1976, LNM and PLO forces launched a massive military offensive in Beirut and the mountain simultaneously. They attacked Christian-controlled territories on three axes: Upper Kesrouan, Upper Metn and the Aley-Kahhaleh front. They fired artillery shells at Baabda Palace, Beit Mery, Broummana and Baabdat. After a few days of fierce fighting, the leftist militias took over Mtein and Aintoura and were positioned a few kilometers away from Bikfaya, the home village of the Gemayels. In Beirut, the PLO and its Lebanese allies drove Kataeb gunmen out of the Holiday Inn Hotel in the downtown. With the retreat of the Lebanese Front fighters, Gemayel coined the slogan “the nation is in danger,” urging Christians and army personnel to embrace the Lebanese Front to save Lebanon (Timoviev, 2009).

Later in the same month, Jumblatt held his last meeting with Assad. Heading a Palestinian-Lebanese coalition that controlled a large swath of Lebanon, Jumblatt tried to convince Assad that Franjieh should resign, political sectarianism be abolished and electoral reform enacted before electing a new president. He told the Syrian president that his military solution aimed at defeating the Lebanese Front and imposing political reforms. But Assad had little interest in seeing internal change that would lead to a secular and more democratic Lebanon. Assad told Jumblatt that he backed Franjieh and the Constitutional Document and confided that he planned to send his troops to Lebanon to control the PLO (Traboulsi, 2011).

4.3-Syrian Army in Lebanon

After the famous red-line agreement between Syria and Israel, Syrian troops appeared in the Bekaa in April (Traboulsi, 2011). US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was concerned about the victories the left was achieving in Lebanon, which subsequently would give the Soviet
Union more influence in Lebanon. Kissinger was also worried about a possible clash between Israel and Syria in Lebanon which both states considered of extreme importance for their security. Any confrontation as such would do away with Kissinger’s success in starting the Israel-Egypt relationship (Seale, 1988).

At the beginning of the civil war in Lebanon, the US conveyed to Assad Israel’s stance, which is that it viewed any Syrian intervention in Lebanon as posing a grave threat to its security. But Kissinger then decided to do it the other way around. Rather than telling Assad “If you go in, so will Israel,” (Seale, 1988, p. 279), Kissinger believed it was more useful to scare Assad by telling him “If you don’t go in, Israel certainly will,” (Seale, 1988, p. 279). Kissinger was aware that Assad feared Israel would intervene to save the Christians from the LNM and PLO offensive. Thus, he believed that Syria could be encouraged to step in and crush the Palestinians in a bid to prevent the Israeli intervention it feared. The benefits of such a move for the US and Israel were plenty: taming the left and PLO in Lebanon, reducing the influence of the Soviet Union in the country and tarnishing the reputation of Assad whom Arabs would criticize for allying with Christians against the Palestinians (Seale, 1988).

Kissinger convinced Israel to let Syrian troops enter Lebanon. But Israel had its own conditions. These were that Syria should not have more than one brigade to the south of the Damascus-Beirut road and that units there should not bring in SAMs. Israel also said that Syria should have limited air and naval deployment in Lebanon. These were the unwritten terms of the red line agreement between Israel, the US and Syria (Seale, 1988). Now Assad could send his army to Lebanon while being comfortable that Israel would not be provoked.

In a speech on April 12, Assad blasted the LNM and the PLO as “criminals who buy and sell politics and revolution,” announcing his country’s willingness to intervene in Lebanon to
“defend every oppressed against every oppressor” (Traboulsi, 2011, p.197). Dean Brown, the US envoy to Lebanon, assured Jumblatt that Syrian troops were clearing roads in the Bekaa, denying that their presence amounted to an occupation. When Jumblatt questioned the huge number of Syrian army soldiers that were crossing into Lebanon, Brown promised to inquire about the matter (Traboulsi, 2011).

On 8 May 1976, Elias Sarkis, supported by Syria and Lebanese Front, was elected president. Edde, who was the LNM’s candidate, refrained from joining the race after he was informed by Brown that the US supported Sarkis (Mansour, 1994). Sarkis began his term in September. He proposed a ceasefire to be followed by round table talks between representatives of warring factions in a bid to achieve national reconciliation. On 19 May, Jumblatt told Sarkis during their first meeting that it was impossible to have a ceasefire as long as Syria had troops in Lebanon. Jumblatt explained to Sarkis that round table talks would be futile if attendees did not back LNM’s reform agenda, namely the items calling for the abolishment of political sectarianism and adopting proportional representation in elections (Timoviev, 2009).

In June 1976, Assad said in a speech that he sent 6,000 troops to Lebanon in response to calls for help by residents of two Maronite villages in Akkar. Days later, there were 15,000 Syrian soldiers in Lebanon. The Syrian troops pressed through Lebanese territories, forcing PLO and LNM forces to retreat. To provide political cover for the Syrian intervention, an Arab League meeting in Cairo decided to dispatch an Arab Deterrence Force to Lebanon. In a bid to work on a Lebanese solution for the deadlock, Jumblatt proposed during a meeting with Bashir Gemayel, Pierre’s son, that the president remain a Maronite. He also called for establishing a senate in which sects were represented. For his part, Gemayel called for the complete secularization of the state, including the abolishment of political sectarianism. But he demanded
lifting military pressure on the Christian areas, particularly his home village of Bikfaya. In light of this meeting, the LNM called for direct negotiations between the warring factions in order to achieve what it called the “peace of brave.” Only Bashir Gemayel supported the LNM’s reform program, lashing out at traditional political leaders, but he was not a senior Kataeb official that could affect his party’s decision in supporting Syria’s intervention (Traboulsi, 2011). The Lebanese Front announced on 5 June its support for the “Syrian Military Initiative.” At the time, the elder Gemayel noted that “a faithful patriot is pained by the entrance of any foreign force to his land, but the situation in Lebanon has reached a level making it necessary that a friendly force steps in to restore security” (Timoviev, 2009, p. 456).

In August, the LNM and Palestinian factions suffered another drawback with the fall of Tal al-Zaatar camp where Lebanese Front gunmen committed a massacre against unarmed refugees. Jumblatt announced the start of a popular war and headed on 17 August to the front line in the Zaourour area in the mountain. In a speech in Mukhtara the following day, Jumblatt urged fighters to make sacrifices, stressing that the LNM planned to achieve victory and power. “I call on hundreds of you to defend the mountains. These mountains represent Lebanon’s honor,” Jumblatt said (Timoviev, 2009, p.464). He was trying to mobilize fighters and boost their morale, given the increasing pressure they were put under by Syrian troops. Still, the Syrian army continued their advance.

As Syrian troops launched their final attack against the PLO and the LNM in Sidon, Beirut and the mountains, Jumblatt visited several Arab states to convince them to contribute to the Arab Deterrent Forces in a bid to dilute its Syrian contingents. But Egyptian President Anwar Sadat opposed such a move and urged Jumblatt to mend his ties with Syria. For his part, Algerian President Houari Boumediene argued that Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria controlled the
decision in Lebanon while French officials explained that they could do little in Lebanon without the approval of Syria and the US. On 16 October, reconciliation between Assad and Arafat was achieved in a mini-Arab summit in Riyadh and a ceasefire in Lebanon was declared as of 21 October. Both warring factions announced their adherence to the ceasefire. A number of Arab states contributed symbolically to the Arab Deterrent Forces. A few days later, Syria was given a free hand in Lebanon in an Arab summit in Cairo and the Arab Deterrent Forces entered West Beirut unopposed in November 1976 (Traboulsi, 2011).

In mid-November, Palestinian factions intensified talks with Damascus and achieved reconciliation. For his part, Jumblatt toned down his rhetoric against Syria for a while and sent Dalloul to Damascus to determine if the Syrians were interested in direct dialogue with the LNM. But the Syrians’ response was negative. This became more obvious when Damascus opposed Jumblatt’s membership in the first cabinet during Sarkis’s tenure. Sarkis was planning to form a government in which Jumblatt and Gemayel would be ministers. He believed that such cabinets had helped achieve stability during Shehab’s term. Sarkis dispatched Fouad Butros to Damascus to secure Syria’s approval for the participation of Gemayel and Jumblatt in the cabinet. But Assad strongly opposed appointing Jumblatt as minister. Instead, Assad argued

You cannot move backward. Look towards the future...you have to know that Kamal Jumblatt is the cause of the crisis in Lebanon and the region. He conspired against Lebanon and Syria. Had he won, he would not have shown mercy with anyone. He is trying now to restore ties with us...but we refused. No one will feel comfortable with the presence of Jumblatt, neither Lebanon, nor Syria nor President Sarkis himself (Pakradouni, 1986, p.76).

Assad wanted Jumblatt to have no role in Lebanese politics at all. When Butros asked Assad whether Syria planned to eliminate Jumblatt, Assad said: “To eliminate him physically? No. We do not believe in political assassination. Now whether we want to eliminate his political role, I
say yes. Kamal Jumblatt should become a regular person just like other people,” (Pakradouni, 1986, p.76). But Butros’s fears over the fate of Jumblatt turned out to be justified.

Rumors of assassination plots targeting Jumblatt surfaced during that period. Some said the Mossad stood behind these plots while others pointed the finger to the CIA or Syrian Intelligence. On 4 November, a car blast ripped through the Msaitbeh neighborhood near Jumblatt’s house. Jumblatt visited Edde the same day, handing him a hit list, with Edde’s name at the top followed by Jumblatt’s. Edde said he had the same list, but with Jumblatt’s name on top. Shortly after, Edde survived three attempts on his life. He left to Egypt and then to France where he decided to live the rest of his life. When Jumblatt’s aides urged him to take security measures to protect himself, the latter said that men from the Jumblatt family rarely died in bed. On 16 March 1977, Jumblatt, his driver and bodyguard were assassinated near a Syrian checkpoint in the Chouf (Timoviev, 2009).

For many observers, the events of the two-year war are the most unfathomable in Jumblatt’s life. Known to be a peaceful person who admired Gandhi, Jumblatt became the advocate of a massive military offensive against Christian-controlled territory in Lebanon. Furthermore, Jumblatt moved from his long-time call for reforming the Lebanese political system from within, to advocating and pushing for its total abolition through LNM’s reform program. The reasons behind this shift, and whether it was a tactical move or a strategic decision and when it occurred, remain unclear for many people, particularly those who witnessed that crucial period of Lebanon’s modern history. The comrades of Jumblatt and people who knew him closely have their own explanations to Jumblatt’s stances.
4.4-A Violent Gandhi

According to Jumblatt’s comrades, the intransigence of the Maronite political establishment and its refusal to render concessions over power sharing with Muslims was the main reason behind Jumblatt’s revolution against the entire political system. Traboulsi alleges that the Maronite political establishment responded negatively to the offer Jumblatt made when he was an interior minister in 1969, when he voiced readiness to control PLO military operations through the strict implementation of the Cairo Agreement in return for a greater share of power for Muslims. Instead, it resorted to the army to repress growing social movements during Franjieh’s tenure. Moreover, the army was ordered to besiege and bombard Palestinian refugee camps in the country in May 1973. Under these circumstances, Jumblatt began considering a radical change. He started to think after 1973 of using Palestinian armed factions to strike a balance with the army that was training the Kataeb militia since at least 1972. He believed that he could use both social movements and the PLO’s military capabilities to pressure for change.13

According to Suleiman Taqeyeddine, a former OCAL politburo member, another reason that made Jumblatt seek to change the political system radically was his participation in the government during Franjieh’s tenure and how he was vetoed by Chamoun and Gemayel. This aimed at preventing him from calling for or enacting reforms, which would have meant that the Maronite political establishment would have to render political concessions. In June 1973, Prime Minister Amin al-Hafez resigned in light of the army’s bombardment of Palestinian refugee camps in Sidon and Beirut and Syria’s closure of the border with Lebanon. Franjieh then tasked Taqeyeddine al-Solh with forming a new government. The Lebanese left, the LNM and Muslims in general demanded that Jumblatt become an interior minister for another time. But the Kataeb

13 Fawwaz Traboulsi, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
and NLP strongly opposed Jumblatt’s participation in the government, accusing him of conspiring against Lebanese sovereignty. The two parties accepted that Bahij Taqeyeddine, an ally of Jumblatt, become interior minister only after he issued a statement pledging allegiance to Lebanon. Jumblatt even received death threats to prevent him from leading a demonstration to defend the rights of tobacco farmers in 1973, forcing him to hold a gathering rather than a demonstration. Jumblatt realized that the Lebanese political system is immune to any peaceful change or gradual reforms. He consequently decided to overthrow the entire political system by force.\textsuperscript{14} Dalloul explains that it was hard for Jumblatt to accept that he, whose support was crucial for the victory of any presidential candidate, could not even become a minister. Jumblatt’s backing was also necessary for anyone to become a prime minister.\textsuperscript{15}

Another reason that contributed to Jumblatt’s radical stance, Taqeyeddine claims, was that traditional Muslim elites in the country, particularly Salam, did not deal with him as a leader who represented a wide segment of the Lebanese population rather than only his sect. Although his support among Muslims across the country was growing, traditional Muslim elites told Jumblatt many times: “you do not represent Muslims, you cannot talk for them, you only represent yourself.” This occurred when Jumblatt was proposing reform in a bid to give more power to Muslims. This behavior by traditional Muslim leaders contributed to Jumblatt’s decision to rebel against the sectarian system altogether in which a leader was only considered to represent his sect.\textsuperscript{16}

The defeat of Nasser in the 1967 war was among the main reasons for the Maronite political establishment’s unwillingness to give in any of its prerogatives in favor of a fairer

\textsuperscript{14} Suleiman Taqeyeddine, former member of the politburo of the Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon, interview by author, 10 April, 2013, Beirut Lebanon.

\textsuperscript{15} Mohsen Dalloul, interview by author, 29 January 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.

\textsuperscript{16} Suleiman Taqeyeddine, interview by author, 10 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
distribution of power in Lebanon, states Taqeyeddine. Maronite leaders considered that with Nasser weakened, the time had come to eradicate the legacy of Shehab who maintained good ties with Nasser. They thought that the conditions had become favorable to dominate the country again, distance it from Arab causes, bring it closer to the West and consecrate the privileges of the Maronite political establishment. Hence the Tripartite Alliance was formed in 1968, followed by the election of an anti-Shehabist president in 1970, and purging all Shehabist officers and public sector employees. This closed the door completely for gradual reform.\(^\text{17}\)

Jumblatt later suggested that he explained to Assad during their last meeting that his resort to military action, particularly the offensive in the mountain, aimed at bringing a quick end to the bloody war. He said that based on his calculations, no country was willing to intervene to help the Christian parties that were retreating and voicing readiness to engage in negotiations. In his book *I Speak for Lebanon*, Jumblatt notes that

> The Syrians, on the other hand, resented us—myself in particular, because I had instigated the battle in the Mountain, the sole aim of which was to cut the Gordian knot and put an end to the dirty trench warfare in Beirut. By doing so, we had embarrassed everybody. But the Syrian president misunderstood our intentions. He did not accept that we would not agree to the ‘immediate cease-fire’ he had demanded of us during my last visit to Damascus, where, during a meeting which lasted for over eight hours, he and I expressed completely divergent viewpoints. He tried to tell us about the pressures which were being exerted upon him. Perhaps we did not take them enough into account: the stakes in the struggle in Lebanon, which had become offensive instead of defensive, were too important for us; we could not let slip by this historic opportunity finally to transform these confessional and outdated institutions into truly secular and democratic ones. A revolution is an unforgiving affair: the propitious moment has to be seized immediately victory comes within your reach. True, there is something adventuristic about the whole thing, but then, life itself is a calculated and deliberate adventure (Jumblatt, 1982, p.14-15).

For Jumblatt, this was an opportunity to achieve his long-awaited goal that could not be missed: the abolishment of the Lebanese sectarian system. Jumblatt also told Assad during their last meeting that he opposed a federation between Lebanon and Syria as long as democracy remained

\(^{17}\) Suleiman Taqeyeddine, interview by author, 10 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
absent in Lebanon’s neighbor. He urged him to pull out his troops from Lebanon and carry on with his political mediation

I had advised President Assad very frankly: I beg you to withdraw the troops you have sent into Lebanon. Carry on with your political intervention, your mediation, your arbitration. You were about to succeed, one might even say you have succeeded already…we do not want to be a satellite state. We want to be independent. We do not want the sort of federation preached by your Ba’ath Party representatives in Beirut…Do not think we are opposed to the Arab Union, on the contrary. We are the only party to have presented a rational federative program and constitution to all the Arab states—but we want a federation which guarantees us our freedom. We do not want the great Syrian prison. When you have moved towards political democracy in Syria, when you have created a real democracy on western lines, then we will be the first to ask that Lebanon become part of a Syrian-Lebanese federation (Jumblatt, 1982, p.19).

Jumblatt’s decision to launch the mountain battle and resort to a decisive military action was a result of a number of factors. According to Taqeyeddine, Jumblatt was very annoyed by the ongoing street battles in Beirut that inflicted huge damage on the capital’s downtown and by the rising sectarian violence it involved. Jumblatt believed that this war of attrition aimed at destroying the country and its economy without making any change in the balance of power, particularly as the Palestinian factions were interested in maintaining the status quo. Mansour claims that Jumblatt believed that a quick military operation with minimum casualties would deal a blow to the Maronite political establishment and that he would guarantee that no violations and attacks against innocent people would take place during the operation. He thought if the conflict continued to drag on, it would leave many human casualties. It seems that at one point in the conflict, he believed that the political system had become so weak that a military strike would abolish it and pave the way for establishing a new system.

Taqeyeddine notes that the PSP leader was attacked by his Muslim allies who accused him of fighting with Muslims, particularly Shiites, and on the land of Sunnis, while keeping the

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18 Suleiman Taqeyeddine, interview by author, 10 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
19 Albert Mansour, interview by author, 11 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
Chouf, his district, outside the violence. The battles were taking place mainly in Beirut. The western part of the capital, which was under the control of the LNM, was mainly inhabited by Sunnis and Shiites.\footnote{Suleiman Taqeyeddine, interview by author, 10 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.}

By launching a military offensive, Taqeyeddine explains, Jumblatt was also trying to present himself as a prominent politician whose consent is indispensable for any settlement to end the conflict. This came in light of the declaration of the Constitutional Document in February which was agreed upon by Karami and Franjieh under the sponsorship of Damascus. Jumblatt was sidelined, and his opinion not taken into consideration. Contrary to what many in the Kataeb and NLP argued, Jumblatt’s aim behind the military assault was not to invade Christian districts and displace their people, but to create a shock effect, to put the Maronite political establishment under pressure, in order to hasten a compromise of which he was a part. Jumblatt wanted a compromise between the Lebanese, that is, between the LNM and the Kataeb, which did not suit the Syrians. The latter did not want to give up their role in Lebanon, they consequently thwarted Jumblatt’s attempt and eliminated him.\footnote{Suleiman Taqeyeddine, interview by author, 10 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.}

According to Traboulsi, Jumblatt oversimplified the situation and believed it was enough to threaten the Maronite political establishment with force in order for it to make concessions and accept reforms. He adds that when this attempt did not work as well, Jumblatt resorted to military action.

This is a story of an adventure that Jumblatt thought could work especially when it was clear that the majority of Lebanese territory in the first period of the war was under the control of this large alliance which is the PLO and the Lebanese National Movement. Jumblatt used to simplify things, he was not a military man, he thought it was enough to threaten with the PLO to get reforms, he did not realize how stubborn the ruling alliance or the Maronite establishment was. He always said I am a person who studied in Aintoura and I am the only Lebanese politician who knows how to deal with the Christians so no one should give me lessons. The military situation, the breakup of the army, the
difference with Syria, the decision to undergo a real military adventure came when it was clear from Damascus that it doesn’t work, after that famous meeting between him and Assad. After that each of them wanted to kill or vanquish the other. Jumblatt told Assad that he wants to change the regime, saying it’s enough we have been living under Maronites for many centuries. Of course he thought: ‘my sect ruled Lebanon and then came those peasants [the Maronites] and got rid of us,’ but he never put it as such. Assad and Jumblatt put their cards on the table, Assad told him I am undertaking a security military operation to control the PLO, and you are waging an opposing battle, what do you have to do in all this? This is a regional issue…and we have already introduced the reforms you were talking about in the Constitutional Document.\(^\text{22}\)

Thus, according to Trabloulsi, Jumblatt’s transformation was incremental: from offering to control the PLO presence in return for a better place for Muslims in power, to threatening the Maronite political establishment with PLO forces, and finally launching a military offensive relying on these forces.

In *I speak For Lebanon*, Jumblatt stressed that one should use force to protect his principles if he had no other chance

I dislike violence. Those around me know my veneration for Gandhi. I believe he is the true prophet of the modern age, for he reintroduced morality into politics, at a time when the politicians, of West and East alike, sought to shut it out. But I also believe that when one has an ideal and that ideal is seriously in danger, when the choice is between submission and violence, then one must opt for violence. But most of the time there are other means available…one is often forced to use armed violence to save men, to save a country, and because one has no other choice (Jumblatt, 1982, p.116).

### 4.5- A Miscalculated Adventure

Jumblatt’s unwillingness to compromise his stance vis-à-vis the political system, his insistence on a decisive military battle against the Lebanese Front, and his subsequent loss after the Syrian army’s intervention raises the question of whether he miscalculated or misread the positions of regional and international actors involved in the conflict in Lebanon. According to many of his comrades, Jumblatt’s move was a miscalculated adventure, as he did not have the

\(^{22}\) Fawwaz Traboulsi, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
requisite military capabilities to engage in such a battle. Jumblatt believed that the Palestinian factions would stand by his side because they had an interest in lifting the siege laid by the Kataeb and NLP on refugee camps in the eastern suburbs of Beirut. Egypt was at odds with Syria over the Camp David Treaty. Iraq and Syria were historically bitter rivals. Jumblatt believed that Egypt and Iraq along with Israel would not allow Syria to send its troops to Lebanon. He also thought that the Christians in Lebanon would not support a Syrian military intervention. However, Jumblatt miscalculated and misread local and regional developments.\(^{23}\)

According to Traboulsi, it was not possible for the PLO to defeat the Syrian army in Lebanon. It strived to penetrate the defenses of the Lebanese Front by taking over Kahhaleh and break the defenses to east Beirut but could not do so because of the army’s intervention. It was difficult to take over any area apart from the Bekaa. Arafat took a pragmatic stance and decided not to confront the Syrians. Khalil al-Wazir, a senior Fatah commander better known as Abu Jihad, reached an agreement with the Syrians stipulating that Fatah would not fight Syrian troops advancing in Lebanon. Thus, PLO forces fought symbolically in Bhamdoun rather than fight in Dahr al-Baydar, an area easy to defend.\(^{24}\)

Jumblatt also underestimated the strength of the Lebanese Front militias. He used to describe them as a scouts team whose members would flee the battlefield once the LNM and the PLO launched their massive attack. He estimated the number of Kataeb gunmen to be around 2,500. But other sources predicted that the party had around 6,000 well-armed and trained gunmen. The number would eventually rise to 10,000, if other local Christian militias were taken into account. “Actually, if national fighters planned to cleanse Beirut from the Kataeb in a massive attack, they will do this with extreme ease…because when this group’s [strength is]

\(^{23}\) Suleiman Taqeyeddine, interview by author, 10 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon
\(^{24}\) Fawwaz Traboulsi, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
tested, its [fighters] will just run away,” Jumblatt wrote in an editorial (Timoviev, 2009, p. 392). It was obvious that Jumblatt did not take the military capabilities of the Lebanese Front seriously and thought that a military victory would be easy.

Also, Traboulsi notes that Jumblatt was not aware until it was too late that Saudi Arabia had started mediating between Syria and Egypt, where Egypt would accept a Syrian intervention in Lebanon in return for Syria lessening its opposition to Israeli-Egyptian negotiations that paved the way for the 1979 Camp David Treaty. This became clear when Egypt agreed that the bulk of the Arab Deterrent Forces should be Syrian.25

Jumblatt, Traboulsi alleges, could not imagine that throughout this period, an American-Syrian agreement preparing for the latter’s intervention in Lebanon was underway. For the US, the war in Lebanon should continue in order to give a cause for Syria to intervene. Thus, Brown told Franjieh, Gemayel and Chamoun that the US would not send the Marines to Lebanon to help them as it did in 1958, adding that the only way they could protect Christians was through strengthening ties with Israel (Seale, 1988). Brown lied to Jumblatt by publicly supporting his calls for reform. He told Jumblatt and Edde that the US would agree on significant reforms to the Lebanese political system in return for controlling the Palestinian resistance. Although Brown knew that Kissinger had agreed with the Israelis on the details of the Syrian intervention and that the Lebanese Front approved the move, he continued to talk about reform with Jumblatt. When the PSP leader asked about the presence of Syrian troops in the Bekaa, Brown, as above mentioned, said that this was to open the routes to Zahle. When Jumblatt told him that several brigades had actually entered, Brown did not answer.26

26 Fawwaz Traboulsi, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
Brown was more honest when speaking to Edde, telling him that the US backed Sarkis rather than him for presidential elections, because the former would ask Syria to send its troops to Lebanon. According to Mansour, Brown told Edde that the US believed only the Syrian army could restore calm in the country. Although Edde informed Jumblatt about his conversation with Brown, the PSP chief insisted on military action in a bid to change facts on the ground before Syrian soldiers crossed the border, which the LNM knew would happen in June.27

Jumblatt explained that the LNM believed that the US, France and Israel could not step in to help the Lebanese Front, each for its own reason.

At the time, our adventure was calculated as follows: the isolationists had been denied an American military intervention; Mr. Dean Brown had notified us that he had replied negatively to requests from Gemayel, Chamoun, etc., and that the international situation had changed since 1958, when American Marines had disembarked in Lebanon…nor could France be counted on to defend the privileges of a fundamentalist and presumptuous Maronitism. Much water has passed under the bridge since 1860…Israel, according to our calculations, could not intervene without upsetting the whole laboriously constructed edifice, put together, piece by piece, by the Americans and a few Arab states, as part of the build-up to Geneva…In short, we had every reason to feel confident. Sheikh Bashir Gemayel came to present his condolences when my sister was assassinated by the isolationists among whom she had insisted on living. ‘We accept your program of constitutional reform,’ he said, ‘but in many ways we find that it does not go far enough. Both sides had only one wish: to begin the negotiations. The end of the conflict seemed imminent. Only Rabin, Peres, Mordecai Gur and other personalities of the Zionist state, gave it to be understood that the events in Lebanon were not over yet, that the Dantesque struggle would continue. As for us, just as we felt that the war was coming to an end, that everybody was going to come together at the round table and that peace was about to return, the Syrian army began its slow but inexorable advance towards Beirut, Saida and Tripoli. Bit by bit, the country was being seized (Jumblatt, 1982, p.15-16).

Jumblatt noted that the Syrians intervened at a time when the LNM was very close to victory and negotiations with the Lebanese Front were about to start. Detailing the reasons which he thinks were behind Syria sending its troops to Lebanon, Jumblatt argued that

For Syria, it was mainly a question of prestige. The Damascus regime could not withdraw without some loss of face, it was already too closely involved. It had set out to teach the Palestinian Liberation Movement a lesson and to bring the left and a rebel Islam to

27 Albert Mansour, interview by author, 11 April, 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
heel...The Syrian regime committed the same error of judgment. In the name of immediate gain and illusory interests (as the future was to show) the Syrian leaders sacrificed the democratic emancipation of a whole people, an emancipation which would have acted as a powerful lever for the development of democracy and real socialism throughout the Middle East. Of course, it is open to question whether the Syrian leaders would have welcomed such developments...it would seem that, on the contrary, they found the prospect alarming. In Baathist circles in Damascus the word was that ‘Kamal Jumblatt is a dangerous man, far more dangerous than Camille Chamoun and all the others. He is going to drag us into a new confrontation with Israel.’ This was, of course, quite absurd, a truly stupid argument betraying a complete lack of dialectical understanding ...Our independence, our views on representative political democracy, socialism and social economy frightened everybody (Jumblatt, 1982, p. 16-17-18).

Jumblatt explained that a solution to the conflict in Lebanon neither topped the agenda of Saudi Arabia nor that of Syria. He noted that

Whether in Damascus or in Riyadh, there was only vague and distant interest in the Lebanese problem. The mirage of recovering the territories occupied by Israel remained to the forefront. The general attitude was ‘Oh no, not Lebanon again’ (Jumblatt, 1982, p.18).

Finally, Jumblatt exaggerated the impact of opposition of many Syrians to the regime sending its army to support Christian parties in fighting the PLO. Although many members of Jumblatt’s Druze sect were against his decision, including Sheikh Mohammad Abu Shaqra, then Druze Spiritual leader in Lebanon, Jumblatt was very stubborn and unwilling to analyze the situation differently. Egypt and Libya, and some in Fatah, were pushing Jumblatt to carry on with his plan. On the other hand, some in the LNM, like the OCAL and the Lebanese Communist Party, were against waging the mountain battle and a confrontation with Syria.28

Some of Jumblatt’s comrades argued that in all attempts to change, one could never be hundred percent sure that of favorable results ahead of time. Jumblatt was conscious that there was an element of risk or adventure but to him it became a matter of life or death.29

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28 Suleiman Taqeyeddine, interview by author, 10 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
29 Fawwaz Traboulsi, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
On the other hand, rivals claim that Jumblatt committed several “deadly” mistakes. According to Karim Pakradouni, a former Kataeb leader, one of these mistakes was contacting Syrian Druze in an attempt to topple Assad’s regime which opposed his projects and ambitions. He wished that the Syrian regime would fall and he incited Syria’s Druze against it. This was one of the main reasons for his disagreement with Assad. He actually believed he’s as important as Assad and even more, given his Arab and international relations. Jumblatt’s second mistake, continues Pakradouni, was his alliance with the PLO against Syria, which had further exacerbated the conflict with Lebanon’s neighbor and with Christian parties that stood strongly against the PLO. Jumblatt’s third mistake was moving from the idea of democratic transition of power to change by force. He lost hope of reforming the political system democratically and thus thought it should be reformed via non-democratic means.

4.6-Jumblatt’s Personal Ambitions

Many observers question the sincerity of calls for political reforms by Jumblatt. They argue that by imposing a system change, particularly through the abolishment of political sectarianism, Jumblatt aimed at removing all obstacles that could prevent him from becoming a prime minister if not a president. As a Druze, a minister was the highest post he could aspire to, given Lebanon’s sectarian allocation of state posts. Many of those who knew Jumblatt closely do not deny that he had his own political ambitions, which they argue were legitimate for any politician to have. However, they maintain that his call for the abolishment of sectarianism was for the benefit of the entire Lebanese population rather than for a certain sect. Nevertheless, Jumblatt’s rivals argue that his sole aim behind seeking a change in the political system was to

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30 Karim Pakradouni, former Kataeb leader, interview by author, 27 February 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
take revenge against the Maronites who were given power in Lebanon during the French mandate. For him, historically, the Druze were the rulers of the emirate of mount Lebanon before 1864.

Assad supported the latter argument in a speech he delivered in Damascus on July 20, 1976, before members of the newly elected Syrian provisional councils, in which he touched on his last meeting with Jumblatt. Assad explained that Jumblatt’s call for decisive military action against Christian parties was motivated by his will to take revenge against the Maronites, who according to Assad, Jumblatt argued had been unjustly ruling the entity of Lebanon for 140 years. Assad said that Jumblatt opposed the Constitutional Document although it included most of the reforms he was advocating and insisted on doing away with the entire system. The Syrian president explained

We discussed the Constitutional Document. I believe that there were no major objections [by Jumblatt]. I can cite some examples to you. Jumblatt said that we agreed on six points; the Constitutional Document contains seventeen points. I told him in brief that what was important was not the number of points or whether they were six or seventeen. What was important was the content of those points which were not in harmony with your demands and of your demands which were not included in these points. He said a committee had been formed which studied the document and concluded that it was ambiguous. I told him that the document was an outline for future action and that every point in the document needed decisions, decrees and laws. At this point, meanings would become very clear, and you could include all the details you wanted. It is impossible to do this now, and there is no justification for going into more details or specifics now (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 217-218).

It was obvious that Assad was trying to impose the Constitutional Document on Jumblatt by stating that it addressed his calls for reform. Touching on the topic of secularism, Assad said he explained to Jumblatt that it was Muslim clerics and officials that opposed it, not the Kataeb

He spoke about secularism. I told him that the Phalangist [Kataeb] Party is enthusiastic about secularization. When the leadership of the Phalangist Party, headed by Sheikh Pierre Gemayel, visited us, I asked him in person about this matter. He told me, I do not accept a substitute to secularization. I insist on and cling to a secular state in Lebanon. I raised this matter with the Muslims, with Musa al-Sadr, with certain prime ministers, and
with certain speakers. They rejected it because the matter deals with the essence of Islam—the Phalangists cling to secularization and Kamal Jumblatt clings to secularization. I told him [Jumblatt], “The Muslim ulema are the ones who do not agree to secularization.” He replied, “do not pay attention to them; they do not represent anything.” I told him the matter is not one of representation. He said they do not represent anything. I told him, “the matter is not one of representation but an issue which touches on Islam—when a matter deals with Islam, it must not be taken lightly” (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 218).

In other words, Assad tried to convince Jumblatt that the secularization of the state cannot be applied in Lebanon, given the opposition of a major group of Lebanese. At this point, Assad said Jumblatt told him it was necessary to use force against Maronites in order to get rid of them. He continued:

He [Jumblatt] said, “Let us discipline them. We must have decisive military action. They have been governing us for 140 years, and we want to get rid of them.” At this point, I realized that all the masks had fallen. Therefore, the matter was not as we used to say it was and not as we were told. The matter was not between the right and the left or between a progressive and a reactionary. It was not between a Muslim and a Christian. The matter was one of vengeance, a matter of revenge, which dates back 140 years. Of course, if I am going to proceed from the fact that I am a Muslim, I must be against this trend because Islam is love and justice and not hatred and animosity...Islam has prohibited vengeance and revenge...If I were to proceed from the fact that I am a revolutionary...a revolutionary does not remove injustice from one to place it on another. He removes injustice from himself and from others (Rabinovich, 1985, p.218-219).

This illustrated the sharp differences between Assad and Jumblatt over the solution to the Lebanese crisis. The Syrian president made it clear to Jumblatt that he would not support his strategy to inflict military defeat on Christians and that he would prevent him from doing so. He said military action would give Israel a pretext to intervene in Lebanon.

Kamal Jumblatt emerged from this meeting and left me with the impression that he insisted on fighting. I told him, “Do not count on any help. We cannot march with you on a path which we both agree upon in advance is the path of the conspiracy...decisive military action in Lebanon is impossible, because the factor of might is not the only condition which must be available. There are other factors and conditions which must be available but are not at present...We can unreservedly and without hesitation assert now that if we had decisive military action, a big and grave problem would arise...it would be the problem of those who are oppressed. The world would sympathize with the problem, because the world always sympathizes with the oppressed. This is the first result that
would ensue from decisive military action as they want it—if they can achieve it…the second result is that the world would seek to find a solution to this problem…what could this solution be? We can all guess that a solution would not take place without the partitioning of Lebanon. But it will be a partition of violence and oppression…A state for those who are oppressed would be established—a state filled with rancor, a state whose sons would inherit rancor as a result of the oppression from which they suffered…I say frankly and clearly, a state more dangerous and more hostile than Israel would be established…the third result: A decisive military action in this way would open doors to every foreign intervention, particularly Israel’s intervention. Let us all visualize the magnitude of the tragedy which might ensue if Israel were to intervene and save some Arabs from other Arabs (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 219-220-221).

Assad’s remarks indicated the Syrian president’s willingness to prevent a potential military victory that Jumblatt could achieve against the Lebanese Front. Asked to comment on Assad’s speech, Jumblatt told an interview: “Yes, I am working for the elimination of the separatist Maronite regime in Lebanon…I want to remove the Crusade character which is associated with our country” (Hazran, 2010, p. 196).

According to Farid al-Khazen, Jumblatt’s main aim behind his revolution was to remove all obstacles that prevented him from reaching the presidency. He claims that Jumblatt believed that the Maronites were the only sect preventing him from carrying out a decisive military action. Since he was not able to neutralize them politically as he did with the Sunnis, military action against them and their mountain stronghold, was the only solution (Khazen, 1988)

More frustrating was the fact that Jumblatt strongly believed that his claim to the Lebanese ‘throne’ was not only legitimized by political competition but also by inherited rights based on historical tradition. After all, Jumblatt believed that the ‘Maronites make poor governors, for they lack both the feeling and the tradition of government’…by contrast ‘as a warrior aristocracy, the Druze had called in the Maronites to the land in the vast area they controlled...therefore, the best the Christians, and particularly the Maronites, could do was to engage in activities which are least related to the rule and government…Consequently, since the Druze are the ruling community, and because no one is entitled to rule the Druze but the Jumblatts, then Kamal Jumblatt becomes the most qualified ruler both of the Druze and the Maronites and, by extension, of the entire country (Khazen, 1988, p. 197).
Khazen maintains that Jumblatt’s revolution targeted the historical process from which Lebanon’s contemporary sectarian structure was born, which did not suit his political ambitions (Khazen, 1988).

Pakradouni shares a similar view regarding Jumblatt’s intentions behind his call for a system change. He argues that this call was partly motivated by personal ambitions. With Jumblatt, continues Pakradouni, one could not differentiate between personal ambitions and the national project he was advocating.

He [Jumblatt] felt that he is greater than his sect and even greater than Lebanon…in one of my meetings [with him] he told me: look now who has become a prime minister, it is Rashid Solh. I believe that he, the leader of the Lebanese National Movement, a great leftist leader, and an ally of the Soviet Union and maybe the only one in Lebanon who was awarded the Lenin Medal For Peace, could not accept that Rashid Solh will be his prime minister. I think he thought about Lebanese presidents just as he thought about Rashid Solh…he believed that he is the number one leader of Sunnis who should have the right to at least become a prime minister if the system prevents him from becoming a president.\footnote{Karim Pakradouni, interview by author, 27 February 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.}

According to Pakradouni, Jumblatt thought it was unacceptable that someone of his stature be denied the right to reach top state posts. He believed he was the legitimate heir of Nasser, at least in Lebanon and this reflected reality, as most Sunnis rallied behind Jumblatt rather than traditional Sunni leaders. Jumblatt, Pakradouni continues, detested Lebanon’s sectarian system because it limited his political ambitions.

[Jumblatt] believed that a Sunni can become a prime minister only because he is a Sunni, and the Maronite can become a president only because he is a Maronite, while his highest ambition can only be to become a minister…The sectarian system is unjust and for someone with the political weight of Kamal Jumblatt, injustice is unacceptable and he felt at a certain moment that he can confront this injustice through different means like Palestinian arms and the support of the Soviet Union.\footnote{Karim Pakradouni, interview by author, 27 February 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.}
However, Albert Manosur, a former MP and a member of the LNM who knew Jumblatt closely, argues that Jumblatt was not planning to replace the political dominance of the Maronites with the dominance of another sect. He argues that Jumblatt wanted either a secular system or to achieve parity between Muslims and Christians. He did not have the intention to become a president, but a prime minister. I understood from conversations with him that he believed the presidency should continue to be allocated for Maronites in order to assure Christians…apart from this, Lebanese from various sects should be able to occupy any state post…it is unfair to say that his movement was motivated by narrow sectarian interests…Kamal Jumblatt overcame this phase.\(^{33}\)

Jumblatt’s call for toppling the political system could be partly motivated by a feeling of injustice resulting from the fact that members of his sect cannot occupy senior state posts or by some personal ambitions, according to his comrades. His calls were for the sake of all the Lebanese rather than a single sect. These personal ambitions prompted him to make national stances, to call for reforming the entire system, which serves all people.\(^{34}\)

Taqeyeddine explains that Jumblatt proposed in the 1970s that the presidency be reserved to Christians, but not only to the Maronites, and that the premiership be given to Muslims from all sects rather than only Sunnis. He says that this call aimed at helping Jumblatt become a prime minister. He opposed the Constitutional Document because it affirmed the allocation of the three top state posts to the Maronites, Shiites and Sunnis. It boosted the powers of the Sunni prime minister while the rest of the sects, particularly the Druze, were left outside the equation.\(^{35}\)

Some of those who knew Jumblatt argue it is not legitimate to separate between the stance, interests and behavior of a leader. For some who knew Jumblatt, it does not make sense to divorce Jumblatt from his position as a Druze leader who represented a small minority sect which can only aspire to one or two ministerial posts. This point constituted a real constraint for

\(^{33}\) Albert Mansour, former MP and member of the Lebanese National Movement, interview by author, 11 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.

\(^{34}\) Albert Mansour, interview by author, 11 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.

\(^{35}\) Suleiman Taqeyeddine, interview by author, 10 April 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
the sect and for him, he was a prisoner of the sectarian system in this sense and barred from what he believed serving his country as a prime minister or a president. However, his personal ambition did not determine his behavior because he never mentioned the presidency during his political career. Jumblatt was forced to move from the position of a person who wanted to change the system from inside to a person who rebelled against it, he was not a person who rebelled for personal ambitions.  

Jumblatt was encouraged by what was happening around him which was a very wide movement for change in which people were more and more united over socioeconomic demands. Lebanese society was laden with demands for radical changes in the 1970s. Jumblatt at that time was a socialist and his party was part of all these movements that were demanding change in Lebanese society. He was at the head of all social movements. Jumblatt headed the demonstrations that protested the killing of two tobacco farmers by the army and two workers in the Ghandour factories. This was a very favorable political social situation for change which Jumblatt embraced before becoming its leader.  

Jumblatt noted that all elements of revolution were present in the early 1970s, as many young people wanted and sought change. Rebellion was in the air we breathe, as they say, so that all young people wanted change. Dozens of study circles were formed, where young people meet, attracted by the brightness of the new, to examine the theories of Marxism, or some other ... and there is another phenomenon which contributed to this cultural impulse, this was the large number of students: there was about 60,000 students in five universities, and this is a large number for a city like Beirut. And that was all immersed deep in the center of the Palestinian revolution and you used to hear talk about revolution at night and day (Timoviev, 2009, p. 365).

The PSP leader felt that social and political factors on the eve of the war were favorable for toppling the sectarian political system altogether.  

36 Fawwaz Traboulsi, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.  
37 Fawwaz Traboulsi, interview by author, March 2011, Beirut, Lebanon.
4.7-Conclusion

Jumblatt considered that the two-year war constituted the long-awaited opportunity for knocking down the Lebanese political system and replacing it with a radically different one. He thought that this opportunity should not be missed, as it might not become available again. It was the time for what he called a calculated adventure. With rising levels of sectarian violence during the conflict, Jumblatt thought that a massive and swift military operation in the mountain would quickly end the war and bring the Lebanese Front to heel. But he miscalculated due to several internal and external factors. The LNM lacked the military capabilities to inflict a defeat on the other side. In addition, Syria’s intervention in Lebanon against the LNM was supported by the Arab League and the US. Israel did not oppose the move after receiving assurances that the move would not pose a threat to its security. The Soviet Union, Egypt and other allies of Jumblatt turned a blind eye to Syria’s intervention. Jumblatt realized it was all over after paying visits to France, Egypt and Algeria in 1976. He returned to Lebanon only to be assassinated. The next and final chapter will sum up the thesis and state findings and lesson’s drawn from Jumblatt’s experience.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1-Summing Up the Argument

This thesis traced Jumblatt’s move from a Lebanese leader trying to reform the country’s political system from within to the leader of a revolution against the entire system. Jumblatt advocated reforms to the Lebanese political system from his earliest years in politics. He expressed his hatred of political sectarianism and the corrupt political class. A member of a prominent family whose Druze sect enabled him only to become a minister at most, Jumblatt believed that political sectarianism prevented many qualified people from occupying top state posts. He developed his first socialist ideas in France where he went to study. In 1943, he was elected an MP for the first time. Jumblatt then founded the PSP in May 1, 1949, with the aim of achieving social justice and equality in Lebanon. He played an active role in the opposition that forced Khoury to resign in 1952 and hinged his support to any presidential candidate who supported reforming the political system.

Jumblatt trusted Shehab and strongly backed his policies of administrative reform and socio-economic development. Furthermore, he tried himself to implement his long-sought reform goals through his capacity as an education minister, public works and design minister and interior minister during Shehab’s tenure. Shehab’s term saw numerous bold reform initiatives and development projects. The government established the Civil Service Board, the Central Inspection, the National Social Security Fund, Electricité du Liban and the Central Bank. It also
reorganized the Court of Audit and carried out development projects in rural areas and made a fairer distribution of public sector posts between Muslims and Christians.

When he served as an education minister, Jumblattt worked on increasing the number of public elementary and vocational schools across the country and on increasing the budget of the Education Ministry. His policy was strongly opposed by Gemayel who was then a finance minister. In his post as a public works and design minister, Jumblatt launched a five-year-development plan to provide electricity, irrigation, construct roads and implement other development projects in rural areas.

By drafting the 1960 electoral law that adopted the *qada’* as an electoral district, Shehab tried to bring to parliament new MPs who were not members of blocs headed by traditional politicians. He believed that new lawmakers would be more willing to engage in political reform which would require the amendment of the constitution. But Shehab was disappointed when he discovered that traditional MPs were too influential and they actually determined who won in elections. With many of Shehab and Jumblatt’s reform steps opposed by traditional politicians, the two concluded that political, administrative and social reform in the country was almost impossible in the presence of a political class that inherited influence in the state and was supported by “*Le mur de l’argent.*” This was the term they both used to describe Lebanon’s financial oligarchy.

Shehab reached an agreement with Nasser by which Lebanon would support Egypt’s regional and international policies in return for Cairo not interfering in Lebanese internal affairs. But Shehabist policies suffered several setbacks during the tenure of Helou, Shehab’s successor. On the regional level, Nasser, to whom Shehabism was allied, was weakened by the 1967 defeat. On the local level, Chamoun, Gemayel and Edde, all anti-Shehabist by 1968, achieved a
sweeping victory in parliamentary elections during that year. The decline of Shehabism culminated in 1970 with the election of Franjieh to presidency and the purging of all Shehabist officers and public sector employees during his tenure.

Jumblatt supported and led social movements in the 1960s that reached their peak on the eve of the civil war. He was also a strong supporter of the Palestinian resistance, particularly with the flow of PLO fighters to Lebanon which gained momentum after the 1967 war. Jumblatt was appointed an interior minister in 1969 in the cabinet that was formed shortly after the Cairo Agreement. He tried to make use of his post to make an offer to the Maronite political establishment. The offer involved him controlling the PLO presence through the strict implementation of the Cairo Agreement in return for a better share for Muslims in power. But the Maronite political establishment refused to concede any of its powers.

In a bid to prevent Jumblatt from implementing any of the reforms he championed, the Kataeb and the NLP blocked his participation in Franjieh’s cabinets. Jumblatt, who became the leader of a growing social movement during that period, began to think of doing away with the entire Lebanese political system and establishing a new different one. He believed that the elements of revolution were everywhere, with increasing social movements and calls for change made by large segments of the Lebanese population. Jumblatt thought it was enough to threaten the use of PLO arms to bring the Maronite political establishment to its heels and make it render concessions. It proved to be more stubborn than he predicted, however.

With the starting of the war in April 1975, Jumblatt decided to impose reforms by arms. Shortly after the outbreak of violence, Jumblatt announced the LNM’s transitional program to reform the Lebanese political system. The plan would eradicate political sectarianism, establish a voluntary personal status law, adopt a new electoral law based on proportional representation
with Lebanon forming one single electoral district, lower the voting age from 21 to 18 and implement extensive administrative decentralization along with other reforms. But the program was opposed by the Lebanese Front and fighting, which involved sectarian violence, intensified in the country.

In February 1976, the Constitutional Document was announced. Brokered by Damascus and approved by Franjieh and Karami, it called for the equal distribution of parliamentary seats between Muslims and Christians and for boosting the prerogatives of the Muslim prime minister. However, it stipulated that the president be a Maronite, the speaker a Shiite and the prime minister a Sunni. Although this form of sectarian allocation of top state posts had long been practiced, it was not mentioned in the constitution, but was only a gentlemen’s agreement. Jumblatt refused to compromise, opposing the Syrian initiative since it fell short of abolishing political sectarianism. In March 1976 he ordered a massive military assault against Christian-controlled territories in Mount Lebanon. He believed that a quick military operation would bring an end to the civil war and push leaders of the Lebanese Front to negotiate with the LNM. But Jumblatt’s plans were foiled by Syria’s intervention in Lebanon. Albeit Assad informed Jumblatt during their last meeting in March that he opposed his attempts to inflict a military defeat against the Christian parties, Jumblatt insisted on a decisive military victory against the Christian areas.

In June 1976, Syrian troops entered Lebanon and assisted Lebanese Front gunmen, driving back PLO and LNM forces in several areas. An Arab League meeting in Cairo legitimized the deployment of Arab Deterrence Forces to Lebanon. A few months later, reconciliation between Assad and Arafat was achieved in a mini-Arab summit in Riyadh in October and a ceasefire in Lebanon was declared in the same month, bringing the two-year-war to an end. Jumblatt visited several Arab countries in a bid to decrease the number of Syrian
soldiers in the Arab units sent to Lebanon, but his attempts failed. He returned to Lebanon and was assassinated on 16 March 1977.

Jumblatt turned out to have miscalculated. He thought that Sadat supported him and would never reconcile with Syria. But Jumblatt was surprised to discover much later that Saudi Arabia had begun mediating between Syria and Egypt, where Egypt would approve a Syrian intervention in Lebanon in return for Syria easing its opposition to Israeli-Egyptian negotiations that culminated in the 1979 Camp David Treaty. Also, Jumblatt could not imagine that the US would support the sending of Syrian troops to Lebanon. But while opposing any Syrian interference in Lebanon at the beginning of the civil war, the US shifted its stance, encouraging Assad to send his army to Lebanon after providing guarantees to Israel that the move would not endanger its security. The US considered such a move would fulfill the following favorable goals: reducing the influence of the Lebanese left, the PLO and the Soviet Union in Lebanon and tarnishing the reputation of Assad among the Arabs by dragging him to fight the PLO. Finally, Jumblatt and the PLO lacked the military capabilities to stop the advance of Syrian troops in Lebanon and they could not break the defenses of the Lebanese Front.

5.2-The Lessons of History

Jumblatt’s reform experience raises the question of the prospects for reform in contemporary Lebanon. More than 36 years after Jumblatt’s assassination, demands for reform in Lebanon remain almost the same. The 1989 Taif Agreement stipulated that parliament should form a committee to consider the abolishment of political sectarianism. However, this demand is hitherto opposed by major groups in the country, and many sects believe that political
sectarianism is a guarantee for their survival. The committee is unlikely to be established in the foreseeable future.

Non-governmental organizations fall back on Jumblatt’s ideas and call for a new electoral law based on proportional representation with a single electoral district. But this voting system is also opposed by most political groups in the country. The adoption of an optional civil status law also remains a demand in Lebanon. Although caretaker Interior Minister Marwan Charbel signed on the registration of the civil marriage of a Lebanese couple in April 2013, a civil marriage law is unlikely to be passed by parliament in the future. This is due to strong opposition from religious authorities and many politicians. The socio-economic situation in Lebanon is not much different from the one that existed on the eve of the civil war. The alliance between the sectarian political class and the country’s financial oligarchy is even more solid than ever. Most of the ministers, MPs and state officials are either prominent businessmen or maintain close links with wealthy ones.

But while the demands for reform are almost the same, Lebanon is a much different country now compared to the 1970s. Sectarianism and clientalism have become much stronger, making the implementation of reform even more difficult. Dominating the political arena in Lebanon are sectarian leaders who are heads of political parties. These leaders rely on clientalism in order to sustain their power. With increasing levels of poverty and unemployment along with sharp sectarian feelings, the only way for many members of Lebanese sects to be employed and enjoy a decent life is through allegiance to heads of their sects. Enjoying wide popular support and allied to the country’s financial oligarchy, sectarian leaders succeed in maintaining their positions and resist any attempt to introduce reforms because this would jeopardize their interests.
Although Lebanese of various sects are facing the same socio-economic challenges, most of them rally behind their sects rather than unite together and demand socio-economic and political reforms. The formation of a multi-sectarian coalition to push for reforms in the country, like Jumblatt’s LNM has become almost impossible. Indeed, the country is more divided along sectarian lines than ever before; it is also exposed to geopolitical struggles of all kinds. Kamal Jumblatt’s vision of a secular democratic Lebanon remains all but a mirage.
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