

## THE SYRIAN WAR: SPILLOVER EFFECTS ON LEBANON

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Nowhere have the spillover effects of the overlapping domestic, regional and international war for Syria proved more devastating than in Lebanon.<sup>1</sup> Whether in terms of increased sectarian agitation and violence, refugee flows, the mushrooming of local and transnational Salafi-jihadi cells, or the matrix of regional and international actors involved, the Syrian war has placed new economic, social, political and security strains on an already overstretched Lebanese system. The metrics alone are astounding.

As of winter 2017, the number of officially registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon was 1,011,366.<sup>2</sup> The Lebanese government estimates that nearly half a million additional refugees are not registered with UN agencies, bringing the total to a quarter of the Lebanese population.<sup>3</sup> The World Bank calculates that the financial and economic costs of this refugee population amounts to some \$4.5 billion per year.<sup>4</sup> These socioeconomic and fiscal pressures compound Lebanon's security conditions. Small crimes have increased by more than 60 percent since 2011; Syrians make up 26 percent of Lebanon's prison population; and human trafficking of Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is com-

monplace.<sup>5</sup> The war has also intensified the domestic and regional political struggle over post-Syria Lebanon and the crisis of postwar power sharing.

The 1989 Taif Accord that ended Lebanon's civil war (1975-90) was anchored on a particular regional-international constellation involving a Saudi-American-Syrian guardianship over Lebanon that was directly supervised by Damascus. As this guardianship turned into an open geopolitical confrontation after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and the 2005 assassination of Prime Minister Rafic al-Hariri, it triggered a contest over who rules post-Syria Lebanon between two multi-sectarian political gatherings — the March 8 and March 14 coalitions — that overlapped with a wider geopolitical one. Led primarily by the pro-Iranian Shia Hezbollah party, the March 8 coalition<sup>6</sup> sought to defend Syria's interests in Lebanon. By contrast, the March 14 coalition<sup>7</sup> gathered political groups opposed to Syria, led by Saad al-Hariri's pro-Saudi Sunni Future Movement. Albeit these were multi-sectarian coalitions that disagreed over different visions of Lebanon, its security priorities and its alliance choices, they nevertheless expressed a political struggle among the mainly Sunni and Shia political elite and

their external patrons over who should control the post-Syria Lebanese state.

The Christian sectarian political elite felt increasingly marginalized as this overlapping contest escalated. The 29-month vacuum after the end of Michel Sleiman's (2008-14) presidential tenure was a stark reminder of a community increasingly relegated to the status of an appendage rather than an equal partner in the postwar power-sharing arrangement. The country's postwar Maronite presidents had been handpicked either by Syria<sup>8</sup> or, following the latter's withdrawal from Lebanon, by agreement between the main regional actors — namely Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia — and their protégés among Lebanon's Muslim political elite. But with the country's main Sunni and Shia protagonists preoccupied in the Syrian war, what was the role of the heavyweight representatives of the Christian communities in Lebanon's postwar power-sharing arrangement? The Maronite sectarian elite insisted that only a widely representative in-group candidate should assume the presidency. After all, this is the practice among other sectarian communities, where top public posts are reserved for sectarian elite heavyweights or their in-group-designated representatives. For the Christian political elite, then, the contest was not just over *who* rules post-Syria Lebanon, but also *how*. They insisted on full ownership of their part of the power-sharing arrangement.

Some observers have suggested that the socioeconomic and political pressures generated or exacerbated by the spillover effects of the war for Syria produced a context “strikingly parallel to the period preceding the 1975-90 civil war.”<sup>9</sup> According to this view, the “presence of armed groups acting autonomously in pursuit of a divisive cause tied into a regional dispute”

is eerily reminiscent of the Lebanon of the late 1960s and early 1970s, one that ultimately set the country on the slippery slope toward civil war.<sup>10</sup> Yet, despite this context, post-Syria Lebanon amounts to a political puzzle precisely because a civil war among the Sunni and Shia protagonists has not occurred in the past decade or so. To put this differently: given the sectarianization of the overlapping domestic and geopolitical contest over post-Syria Lebanon since 2005 — and how this contest was exacerbated by the spillover effects of the Syrian war — why has a civil war *not* erupted in a country notorious for its deeply divided society, institutionally and coercively weak state, and permeable regional environment?

Part of the explanation involves the military imbalance among the different sectarian communities. Hezbollah, by far the most militarily powerful of them, is especially wary of a civil war given its preoccupation in the Syrian theatre of operations and in deterring any potential Israeli attack against Lebanon. Yet this has not prevented other communities, especially militant Sunni groups, from challenging its political and military power. Another part of the explanation pertains to Syria's emergence as the primary site of regional and international proxy wars for the foreseeable future, a role traditionally played by Lebanon. However, a fuller explanation of this puzzle must also consider the impact of the institutional architecture of power-sharing in Lebanon.

This paper contends that it is the country's postwar corporate consociational arrangement that helps explain the lack of civil war in post-Syria Lebanon. The prewar corporate power-sharing arrangement associated with the 1943 National Pact had privileged the country's Christian politico-

economic elite at the expense of their Muslim counterparts.<sup>11</sup> The former dominated the state's executive, bureaucratic, legislative, judicial and military offices, and the country's main economic sectors. It reserved the presidency to the Maronites, an office that controlled the state's political, financial and judicial institutions. Furthermore, the president's prerogatives were buttressed by Maronite control over

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the most sensitive security and military posts. In parliament, the ratio of Christian to Muslim deputies was fixed at 6:5; a similar ratio was applied in the cabinet and state bureaucracy.

By the 1960s, however, this arrangement no longer reflected the country's demographic or political realities, ultimately contributing to the political immobility that led to civil war in 1975.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, postwar power-sharing redistributed political, bureaucratic and military offices and prerogatives away from Christian sects toward Muslim ones, establishing an elaborate 50:50 Christian-to-Muslim predetermined sectarian quota throughout state institutions.<sup>13</sup> This increased substantially the powers of the Muslim political elite and their share of appointments in what amounts to a rigid and predetermined sectarian quota stretching throughout the executive, legislative and judicial branches as well as the public sector.<sup>14</sup> Nor are the structures of socioeconomic inequality and political disenfranchisement that drove the slide to civil war in the 1960s and 1970s the same today. Whereas in the prewar

years, economic and political dispossession overlapped with confessional identity, this is no longer the case as a new trans-sectarian politico-economic elite emerged in the postwar years.<sup>15</sup> Stretching its clientelist and neopatrimonial networks and using its control of state institutions and

resources for private gains, this new trans-sectarian politico-economic elite has eschewed civil war because it stands to

lose the most from an outbreak of all-out violence. While this synergy between the postwar power-sharing arrangement and the sectarian elite's politico-economic interests forestalled civil war, it has nevertheless made attempts at reform more difficult. The result is often political crisis in post-Syria Lebanon, but not civil war, a veritable consociational trade-off.<sup>16</sup>

The above puzzle has implications, not just for the study of Lebanese politics, but also for debates pertaining to the utility of identity-based power-sharing arrangements in postwar contexts.<sup>17</sup> This debate is usually defined by two polar perspectives: one suggesting a positive relationship between these types of consociational war-ending arrangements and postwar peace,<sup>18</sup> and another contending that identity-based power-sharing arrangements serve to reproduce conflict.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, proponents of consociational power-sharing arrangements favor liberal (self-determined) over corporate (pre-determined) institutional variants. This is due to the former's in-built flexibility and potential to reward a range of counterfactual identities, in contrast to the

latter's bias toward what are considered to be fixed, ascriptive sectarian or ethnic identities.<sup>20</sup> Yet the curious case of no civil war in post-Syria Lebanon suggests that, despite being prone to political crisis and immobility, even corporate consociation power-sharing arrangements may help preclude a return to civil war. What seems to matter more than the liberal-corporate distinction is whether there is synergy between the power-sharing arrangement and sectarian-elite interests.

The spillover effects of the war for Syria are also instructive for what they tell us about the malleability of political identities. This is particularly important after the popular uprisings and concomitant authoritarian restorations and civil wars, when sectarianism emerged as the dominant marker of political identity across the Arab public sphere. Yet, as constructivist explanations of ethnic conflict suggest<sup>21</sup> and Melani Cammett reminds us, the increase in sectarian mobilization and violence in post-Syria Lebanon is better taken as an example of “the variability of sect as a politically salient category”<sup>22</sup> rather than as an exogenous primordial given. Albeit historically constructed<sup>23</sup> and later institutionalised into the Lebanese political system through multiple corporate consociation arrangements,<sup>24</sup> religious (or confessional) differences overlapped with economic disenfranchisement to shape political demands throughout the civil-war years.

It was later, starting in the early 1980s, when the country's Shia community exploded on to the political and military scene, that sectarianism emerged as the main marker of political identity and driver of political mobilization.<sup>25</sup> Be that as it may, incidents of Sunni-Shia sectarian agitation and conflict, and the use of sectarian discourse to mobilize political followers,

increased only after the Hariri assassination and the war in Syria.<sup>26</sup> Far from being driven by static, irreconcilable and essentially *sectarian* differences, this was a consequence of two synergetic dynamics: how the sectarian elite used identity mobilization for domestic political ends, and how they are in turn used by their regional protégés in the contests driving what Gregory Gause has labelled the “new Middle East cold war.”<sup>27</sup>

Instead of a return to civil war, then, the Syrian conflict and its spillover effects on Lebanon engendered two political consequences: it exacerbated the contest over post-Syria Lebanon, which, in turn, generated an unprecedented presidential vacuum as political protagonists and their regional patrons waited for the dust of the Syrian battle to settle. Only when the main actors involved in the contest over post-Syria Lebanon — namely, Saudi Arabia, Iran, France and the United States and their domestic protégés, especially the Future Movement and Hezbollah — concluded there was no end in sight for the overlapping domestic, regional and international war for Syria did they set in motion dynamics leading to the election of Michel Aoun president on October 31, 2016.

The Syrian war and the concomitant increase in agitation along Sunni-Shia lines also enabled the emergence of new sectarian entrepreneurs. This was best expressed in elite fragmentation within the Sunni community as a new brand of radical Salafi Islamists and maverick politicians used the heightened sectarian agitation and discourse associated with the war for their own political purposes. Absent the war in Syria and its spillover effects on Lebanon, then, the political vacuum following the end of Sleiman's tenure would either never have materialized or would have been

much shorter. Moreover, it would have been much more difficult for new sectarian entrepreneurs to emerge and contest the political leadership of the existing elite.

### BACKDROP TO THE WAR

Long before the popular uprisings snaked their way to Syria, Lebanon had emerged as a site for two overlapping political struggles.<sup>28</sup> At the domestic level, Hariri's Saudi-sponsored Future Movement sought to re-establish its control over the state's political, judicial and bureaucratic institutions immediately following the withdrawal of

Syrian troops on April 26, 2005. The main opposition to this effort came

from Shia political parties, represented by the alliance between Hezbollah and the Amal Movement led by Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, and from Aoun's Maronite Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) representing a majority of Christian public opinion. Consequently, every detail of domestic politics was politicized along sectarian lines: (1) appointments to public-sector posts, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the security services; (2) new electoral laws and UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559 of September 2, 2004, mandating the "disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias,"<sup>29</sup> in reference to Hezbollah's weapons arsenal; (3) the bylaws of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) investigating Rafic al-Hariri's assassination; (4) UNSCR 1701 of August 11, 2006, ending the July-August 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah; (5) the latter's prospective disarmament and demobilization and the

state's defensive policy vis-à-vis Israel; and (6) the constitutional provisos shaping presidential elections.

This domestic confrontation overlapped with a geopolitical contest pitting, primarily, Iran and Syria against the United States and Saudi Arabia.<sup>30</sup> As Gause notes — and for both Riyadh and Tehran but also Qatar and Turkey — the objective of the main protagonists in this contest "is not to defeat their regional rivals militarily on the battlefield. It is to promote the fortunes of their own clients in these weak-state domestic struggles and thus build up regional

influence."<sup>31</sup>

With its perennially weak-state institutions and a sectarian political

elite prone to aligning with regional actors to balance the influence of domestic opponents and advance their patrons' geopolitical interests, Lebanon emerged as a primary site for this competition.

Throughout the contest over post-Syria Lebanon, the March 8 and 14 coalitions sought to impose their own understandings of the country's priorities.<sup>32</sup> Hezbollah, and by extension the March 8 coalition, considered the party's weapons arsenal a necessary deterrent against Israel and a guarantee that Lebanon would not be relocated to the pro-U.S. geopolitical camp. By contrast, its opponents in the March 14 coalition considered the party's armed wing proof of its proxy role on behalf of Iran's geopolitical interests and called for subsuming its military structure under the command of the LAF. Hezbollah rejected the latter proposal, reasoning that it would not only invite the destruction of the LAF in any future war with Israel, but also deny

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to the resistance the autonomy it needs to protect its cadres, and the operational agility to engage Israel in asymmetric warfare.

The 2006 war with Israel proved the validity of Hezbollah's military doctrine but raised new questions about the party's monopoly over war and peace decisions in Lebanon. Hezbollah would not compromise on its weapons arsenal, however, and snubbed all attempts to limit its operational autonomy. The March 14 coalition insisted that UNSCR 1701, adopted in August 2006 to end hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel, banned Hezbollah's military presence south of the Litani River. By contrast, the party interpreted the resolution to refer only to visible military installations and movements. In fact, Hezbollah replenished and expanded its weapons arsenal through the Syrian land routes — under the eyes of both the LAF and Israel.

These contrasting security priorities came to a head in May 2008, when Hezbollah undertook a lightning military operation in West Beirut to decimate the Future Movement's primitive military infrastructure. It was the first time in postwar Lebanon that the party had turned its firepower inward against fellow Lebanese, despite frequent promises by the party's leadership that its weapons were aimed solely at Israel. This precedent left an indelible mark on Sunni-Shia relations in the country and the region, demonizing the party in the eyes of the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic audiences it had carefully cultivated.

The Qatari-negotiated May 21, 2008, Doha Accord that ended the confrontation between the March 8 and 14 coalitions, especially between their Shia and Sunni protagonists, produced a new security arrangement to manage Hezbollah's weapons arsenal. Hezbollah acquired

veto power over government decisions in Hariri's newly formed national-unity cabinet of July 11, 2008. More important, his cabinet's ministerial statement referred to the unity of "the army, the people, the resistance" in the quest to liberate Lebanese territory still under Israeli occupation.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the Doha Accord placed any future deliberations pertaining to Hezbollah's demobilization and disarmament in the context of a new consensual and voluntary National Dialogue, headed by a prospective neutral president but in which the party claimed automatic veto power. Together, these provisos legitimized Hezbollah's weapons arsenal and gave it veto power over the timing and modality of the demobilization and disarmament of its military infrastructure.<sup>34</sup>

All this amounted to a victory for Hezbollah's security vision and priorities for post-Syria Lebanon, and a resounding defeat for those of March 14. Hezbollah later (in January 2011) engineered the resignation of the Hariri-led national-unity cabinet and helped form a new one dominated largely by its allies from the March 8 coalition and other centrist parties. And when the popular uprisings exploded in what the party considered to be two pro-U.S. regional allies, Tunisia and Egypt, Hezbollah's mood, like that of the Syrian regime, was celebratory. Such was the political environment in Beirut and Damascus when the Syrian uprising exploded.

## DREAMS OF VICTORY

The contest over post-Syria Lebanon gained a new lease on life as peaceful protests demanding a measure of socio-economic and political reform surged into an overlapping domestic, regional and international struggle for Syria.<sup>35</sup> The March 14 coalition considered the uprising

an opportunity to reverse years of Syrian hegemony in Lebanon and finally settle the score with a regime it accused of assassinating Rafic al-Hariri. Not only that, the March 14 coalition also accused the regime in Damascus of undertaking a string of assassinations against allied politicians and security chiefs to scare opponents into submission following the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

Equally important, the replacement of the regime in Damascus with a pro-Saudi Sunni-dominated one would deprive Hezbollah of a pivotal regional ally and access to its main weapons and logistic supply routes to Iran. This would consequently sandwich the party between Israel and a hard rock, substantially undermining its political and military capabilities in Lebanon. Finally, the fall of the regime in Damascus would tip the regional balance of power in favor of Riyadh, elevating the local political influence of the Future Movement, its main domestic protégé in Lebanon. Hezbollah's intervention in support of what was viewed across the region as an Alawi regime defending its parochial interests is rooted in these domestic and geopolitical threats.

Hezbollah's "necessary war of choice in Syria," aimed primarily at forestalling the collapse of an indispensable ally, was at the heart of its geopolitical calculations, as well as those of its ideological, political and military patron Iran.<sup>36</sup> Albeit signaling its understanding of the political-economic causes of the uprising in Syria, Hezbollah nevertheless considered the war against the Assad regime part of the wider geopolitical contest between Saudi Arabia and Iran, one that now directly involved both regional and international actors.<sup>37</sup> The United States, France, Turkey and Qatar operated to bring about the fall of the regime, each

in its own way, while Russia and China supported it.

Hezbollah accused Riyadh of using the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people to serve its own geopolitical objectives: to undermine Iran's regional power by toppling the regime of an allied state and replacing it with one allied to Riyadh, and to use regime change in Syria to recalibrate the pro-Tehran balance of power in Iraq. Regime change in Syria would eventually deny Iran access to the territory of an allied state bordering Israel, curtail substantially Tehran's ability to transfer weapons and military supplies to its proxy Hezbollah, and deny the latter the use of Damascus and its hinterland as a logistics base for the procurement of military supplies and movement of the party's cadres to train in Iran. All this would, in turn, seriously undermine Hezbollah's deterrence capabilities vis-à-vis Israel and expose it militarily and politically.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, what started as strategic consultations with the Syrian regime on a range of nonconventional military tactics, limited deployments of elite units around the Sayida Zaynab shrine in southern Damascus, and logistic and military support to Shia villages along both sides of the Lebanese-Syrian border in the Hermel region against attacks by the Free Syrian Army (FSA) gradually developed into full-fledged operations in Qusayr in April-June 2013, Yabroud in the Qalamoun ridge in February 2014, and all the way up to Aleppo in 2016.<sup>39</sup> With the regime's supply of military and paramilitary forces drying up, and its elite units operating more like local militias controlled by warlords rather than professional military commanders with a vertical chain of command,<sup>40</sup> Hezbollah fighters emerged as the professional core of a posse of transnational Shia non-state actors from

Lebanon, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan operating in close coordination with Russian and Iranian special forces in Syria.<sup>41</sup> The scope of this intervention proved just how important Syria is to Iran and Hezbollah's geopolitical interests and the political, human and economic losses both are willing to incur to protect them. Though Hezbollah is using its military operations in Syria to enhance its offensive and operational capabilities, the combined total of its casualties is estimated at a third of its entire fighting force, a staggering ratio compared to its force structure and the losses it has sustained in its wars against Israel.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, the use of sectarianism by all regional actors involved in the struggle for Syria to mobilize domestic and transnational constituencies tarnished substantially the party's image in Lebanon and across the Arab and Muslim worlds. Hezbollah's military intervention in Syria torpedoed the party's domestic standing and reopened the debate about the deterrence utility of its weapons arsenal and its use to defend, not just its own geopolitical interests, but Iran's. The party leadership invested much time and effort to explain the strategic significance of the Syrian intervention to its domestic constituency. It argued that Bashar al-Assad's regime was different from those of pro-American Arab states besieged by their publics, and that it had supported the party in its hour of need, namely during the 2006 war with Israel. It also claimed that the purpose of its military involvement in Syria was not only to forestall the collapse of an allied regime, but also to preempt a Salafi-jihadi takeover of Syria and the use of Syrian sanctuaries to plan suicide attacks against Hezbollah's strongholds in the Beqaa and Beirut's southern suburbs, and to secure its supply lines through the Syrian hinterland.

Hezbollah also branded the battle as directed not against the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people, but rather against Salafai-jihadi *takfiri* groups and U.S. and Israeli plans to vivisect the region.<sup>43</sup> If the wave of Salafi-jihadi terrorist attacks originating from Yabroud in the Qalamoun ridge against Shia towns and urban neighborhoods in Lebanon vindicated Hezbollah's claims among its supporters, its military intervention in support of a regime committing medieval atrocities against unarmed civilians turned much of Sunni Arab and Syrian public opinion against the party. This was a great transformation from the days when Syrians had embraced and sheltered the party's displaced supporters during the 2006 war.<sup>44</sup> More ominously, the securitization of sectarian identities across the region created fertile swamps for the very Salafi-jihadi local and transnational networks from which Hezbollah was trying to insulate itself, its security environments and its communities.

### SECTARIAN CONTESTATION

The spillover effects of the Syrian war on Lebanon had the most damaging effect on the country's sectarian relations. The anti- and pro-regime mobilization along largely Sunni-Shia fault lines led to an increase in conflict and agitation. As the war in Syria turned sectarian, especially in Homs in February 2012, where the regime targeted opposition areas with a scorched-earth policy and its local thugs (*shabiha*) committed sectarian massacres,<sup>45</sup> Sunni sentiments in Lebanon turned from solidarity with the rebels to active participation in the Syrian war. This was especially the case in the northern border regions of Tripoli and Akkar and the eastern Beqaa Valley.<sup>46</sup> Socioeconomic deprivation,

political marginalization, indiscriminate arrests, indefinite detention and torture of Sunni Islamists, coupled with their legacy as the country's epicenter of Salafi sentiments, combined to make these areas both sanctuaries for Syrian rebels and their families, and recruitment centers and military supply routes for the war effort in Syria.<sup>47</sup>

Salafi sheikhs in Lebanon called upon their followers to join the battle in Syria in defense of their co-sectarians. A steady stream of Salafi mili-

tants crossed into Syria from the northern cities to join the battle against the regime. The death of over 100 fighters from Tripoli in the battle for Qalat al-Hosn in Homs in March 2014 suggests that a substantial number of Salafi extremists heeded these calls.<sup>48</sup>

Sectarian fault lines in Syria were reproduced in northern Lebanon, as Tripoli's Sunni Bab al-Tabbaneh neighborhood and the Alawi hilltop section of Jabal Mohsen were consumed throughout 2012 and 2013 with intermittent clashes. Making use of the rush of weapons and funds into the area in support of the Syrian rebel cause, Salafi groups in the north sought to establish their own bastion to counterbalance Hezbollah's in Beirut's southern suburbs.<sup>49</sup> Sunni militias soon mushroomed throughout the country, from Tripoli in the north, through Sunni-dominated districts in Beirut, all the way to the stronghold of Salafi Sheikh Ahmad al-Asir in the south. They targeted the LAF, accusing it of complicating the cross-border movement of Syrian and Lebanese

anti-regime groups, and of coordinating its military operations along the Syrian-Lebanese borders with Hezbollah. This confrontation between the LAF and local Salafi groups and Sunni militants climaxed in June 2013 when it overran Sheikh Asir's stronghold in Sidon after his followers attacked a military checkpoint. It was fol-

lowed by a broader military operation in Tripoli in January 2014 against Salafi militants who were now operating beyond the control of the

city's political elite. This has not insulated the country from Salafi-jihadi-inspired suicide attacks, however.<sup>50</sup>

The environment of heightened sectarian agitation and conflict brought about by the spillover effects of the war in Syria also enabled transnational Salafi-jihadi networks to connect with local affiliates, especially in the Palestinian refugee camps, and launch terrorist operations in Lebanon. The Abdullah Azzam Brigades — a Lebanon-based Palestinian organization with links to al-Qaeda, Jund al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN) — staged or facilitated a number of terrorist attacks against the LAF, the Iranian embassy and cultural center, and Hezbollah strongholds in the Beqaa and Beirut. They made use of the combustible mix of agitated sectarian sentiments and socioeconomic deprivation to manufacture a new generation of Salafi-jihadis in the Palestinian refugee camps, especially Ain al-Hilwi in the south and Burj al-Barajneh in Beirut. Acting as a bridge between Lebanese radical groups and their

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Syrian counterparts, these Palestinian cells are time bombs set to explode.<sup>51</sup>

Another flashpoint is the remote border town of Arsal in the northeast.<sup>52</sup> Originally a town of 30,000 residents, it gradually came to absorb some 90,000 refugees from Syria. The victory of the Syrian army and Hezbollah in the Yabroud battle in the Qalamoun ridge pushed ISIS and JAN militants closer to the Lebanese border. This turned the town and its refugee camps and environs into a sanctuary for ISIS and JAN militants and sympathizers, from whom they recruited new members and planned and launched terrorist operations against the LAF and Hezbollah. In August 2014, and following the LAF's capture of an al-Qaeda operative accused of planning a number of terrorist attacks, these militants overran the army's positions, took some 42 soldiers and policemen hostage, and assumed complete control of the town. After intense fighting between the LAF and Salafi-jihadi militants, a group of Salafi sheikhs negotiated a bizarre settlement allowing ISIS and JAN fighters to withdraw from Arsal to the town's hinterland with some 39 hostages.<sup>53</sup> Albeit multiple LAF operations against ISIS and JAN militants in and around Arsal succeeded in denying the militant groups a sanctuary in the town, they continue to operate there, competing over control of its illegal border crossings. In a sign of the continued spillover effects of the war in Syria on the town, in April 2016 the LAF managed to kill the ISIS leader in Arsal and captured a number of other militants accused of participating in the 2014 attacks.

Ironically, though a target of this general environment of heightened sectarian agitation in the country, Hezbollah made ample use of the intense sectarianization of the Arab public sphere to mobilize its

supporters for the battle in Syria, shore up its credentials inside the Shia community, and neutralize muted but real criticism of the staggering human costs of its Syrian intervention. The party now condones a level of blatant Shia-Alawi sectarian symbolism and discourse in its strongholds in Beirut's southern suburbs that it once condemned and tried to dissociate itself from.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, by manning fixed checkpoints, cordoning off whole neighborhoods, and undertaking routine armed patrols to protect against genuine terrorist threats from Salafi-jihadi groups, it openly assumed the responsibilities and prerogatives of state security agencies.

It also intensified its recruitment drives and training operations inside its core Shia community, but also beyond it,<sup>55</sup> to make up for manpower needs across two very different military theaters. This has raised the ire of other communities, which accuse Hezbollah of operating more like an armed militia outside the confines of the law. It has also entrenched the party's "armed status and extended militia-ization within the [Shia] community," and in the process unleashed unlawful practices among its members and supporters that ultimately tarnished the party's once-sterling reputation.<sup>56</sup> The increase in incidents of Sunni-Shia sectarian agitation and conflict after the war in Syria has also affected intra-elite relations and brought Lebanon to a veritable political standstill.

## **ELITE FRAGMENTATION**

One consequence of the increased sectarian agitation and conflict associated with the spillover effects of the Syrian war is the fragmentation of Lebanon's Sunni community. Despite attempts by Syria's intelligence prefects to dilute and decentralize Sunni political power in postwar

Lebanon, Rafic al-Hariri had succeeded in appropriating the community's political representation and incorporating its religious elite into his neopatrimonial networks. His assassination served only to increase his son's monopoly on Sunni political representation across the country. This was demonstrated vividly in the 2005 and 2009 parliamentary elections, when the Future Movement dominated voters' choices in almost all Sunni-majority electoral districts.<sup>57</sup> However, poor leadership decisions, dwindling economic resources as a result of the collapse of oil prices, a change at the helm in Saudi Arabia,<sup>58</sup> a protracted but unbalanced confrontation with Hezbollah, and the emergence of extremist local leaders ultimately undermined the Future Movement's one-time "near monopoly over political representation of Lebanese Sunnis."<sup>59</sup> This fragmentation was especially evident during the 2016 municipal elections.

The Future Movement was forced to deploy the full force of its electoral machine, a chauvinistic sectarian discourse, and a host of electoral shenanigans to neutralize a challenge to its control of the Beirut municipal council mounted by an inchoate movement, Beirut Madinati (Beirut, My City), composed of apolitical professionals and amateurs determined to contest the sectarian system's clientelist politics.<sup>60</sup> Yet, despite the imbalance in financial, political and logistic capabilities between Beirut Madinati and the alternative electoral list supported by the Future Movement and an alliance of other sectarian parties, and an electoral law designed to favor sectarian parties,<sup>61</sup> Beirut Madinati secured 41 percent of the popular vote. This was an astonishing result, one that would have given it control over a substantial share of municipal council seats under

an alternative, proportional-representation (PR) electoral law. More alarmingly, the Hariri-backed list lost more than a third of the Future Movement's core Sunni votes in Beirut, as compared to its performance in the last municipal elections held in 2010, and another two-thirds of Christian votes in the capital's Christian-majority districts.<sup>62</sup> It was in the northern city of Tripoli, however, where Hariri's leadership of the Sunni community was unceremoniously dethroned.

Major General Ashraf Rifi, a staunchly anti-Syria and anti-Hezbollah former head of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), later named minister of justice by Hariri in Tamam Salam's national-unity cabinet (April 2013-16), led the attack against his former ally and political patron.<sup>63</sup> Rifi embraced the cause of Tripoli's Salafis languishing in jail for years without proper trials and the city's poor, whimsically mobilized during parliamentary elections but locked out of the sectarian elite's neopatrimonial networks. He also led a vociferous sectarian campaign against the Syrian regime and Hezbollah, accusing the latter of ransoming the country to Iran's geopolitical interests and obstructing the cause of justice in a number of terrorist attacks planned by Syrian intelligence officers and their Lebanese lackeys.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, and without consulting Hariri, Rifi resigned his cabinet post in February 2016 to protest Hezbollah's obstructionist ways in the cabinet and its hegemony over the country.<sup>65</sup>

Rifi contested the 2016 municipal elections against a coalition list supported by the city's financial and political heavyweights, including former prime ministers Saad al-Hariri and Najib Miqati, former ministers Mohamad Safadi and Faisal Karami, and an array of Islamist groups. Years of sectarian agitation against Hez-

zbollah and the Syrian regime, and steadfast support of the city's poor and Islamists, enabled Rifi to scoop up 18 of 24 municipal seats, locking out the city's Alawis and Christians. The release in September 2016 of the investigative judge's report indicting two Syrian intelligence officers in the August 23, 2013, terrorist attacks against the Salafi al-Taqwa and al-Salam mosques in Tripoli, in which 45 civilians were killed in what appeared to be a plot to unleash sectarian violence in the country, confirmed Rifi's accusations and catapulted his popularity even further among the country's Sunni community at Hariri's expense.<sup>66</sup>

Hariri's defeat in Tripoli's municipal elections and his difficult battle in Beirut accelerated the political fragmentation underway within the Sunni community. A new brand of radical Salafi Islamists and maverick sectarian entrepreneurs used the increase in Sunni-Shia violence and the demonizing sectarian discourse resulting from the spillover effects of the war in Syria to mobilize political groups previously controlled by the postwar Sunni establishment. This fragmentation within the Sunni community stands in stark contrast to developments in other sects, however.

In the Shia community, for example, despite growing criticism of battle losses in Syria and the emergence of a number of local opposition lists across the country in the 2016 municipal elections, the political representation of the community remains monopolized by the Amal-Hezbollah alliance. Similarly, Walid Jumblatt's hegemony over the Druze community remains unchallenged. And although the fragmentation of Maronite political representation is a hallmark of the postwar and post-Syria landscape, reflecting idiosyncratic differences and the maneuvers of sectarian

entrepreneurs, a level of convergence on a number of themes — decentralization, a more representative electoral law, and the need to recalibrate the postwar confessional balance of power — has nevertheless transpired.

Another consequence of the spillover from the Syrian conflict is the almost total paralysis of the political system, at least until the election of Aoun as president. Competing sectarian groups had invested politically and militarily in opposing sides across the border, so this meant that a defeat in Syria for either side or their regional patrons was expected to substantially recalibrate the Sunni-Shia domestic balance of power. Indeed, the Syrian war placed Lebanon in a political pause, as a sectarian elite beholden to their regional patrons waited for the battlefield dust to settle. An attempt by President Michel Sleiman (2008-14) to negotiate a modus operandi in the Syrian war among the sectarian elite proved stillborn. Labeled the Baabda Declaration and presented on June 11, 2012, during the National Dialogue meetings of the country's political elite, it called for "dissociating Lebanon from ... regional and international axes and struggles," namely Syria's.<sup>67</sup> Yet even this least common denominator proved difficult to sustain, as each side was embroiled further in Syria, and Hezbollah later made public its military intervention there on behalf of the regime. Sleiman retaliated by declaring invalid the army-people-resistance formula hitherto used to justify Hezbollah's weapons arsenal, further eroding its claim to be a resistance movement defending Lebanon's sovereignty from Israeli aggression.<sup>68</sup> Unperturbed, the party responded by ignoring Sleiman's very existence as president.

The failure of the different sectarian protagonists to abide by the Baabda Dec-

laration on matters pertaining to Syria was reflected in the domestic political arena. After the end of Sleiman's tenure on May 24, 2014, presidential elections were postponed indefinitely. The sectarian political elite was unwilling to disengage from the regional geopolitical battle between Saudi Arabia and Iran and agree on a consensus candidate. Similarly, parliamentary elections originally scheduled for June 2013 were postponed twice, first in May, for 17 months, and again in November 2014 for another two years and seven months. The pretext this time was that these elections were bound to exacerbate the atmosphere of sectarian agitation resulting from the spillover effects of the Syrian war, risking further violence in the country.

This paralysis of the political system brought about a commensurate atrophy in state institutions, a breakdown of the rule of law, sectarianization of the public sphere, unparalleled corruption across public and private sectors, and, as one International Crisis Group report puts it, a "climate of repression, self-censorship, apathy and disarray."<sup>69</sup> Unprecedented rates of everyday violence and criminality reflected the collapse of state institutions. They are normalized by a sectarian system that lacks any accountability and is undergirded by complex clientelist networks sustaining the material interests of the elite. Nothing symbolizes the breakdown of the political system more than the failure of the sectarian political elite to find a sustainable solution to the country's two-year-long garbage crisis. Neither popular demonstrations nor the environmental catastrophe and health hazards created by mountains of garbage bags enticed them to place the country's wellbeing and that of its citizens above their narrow political and financial calculations.<sup>70</sup> As mentioned, it was the realization

by external actors that the Syrian war was far from over that initiated domestic dynamics that led to Aoun's election, ending the 29-month presidential vacuum — but not the contest over post-Syria Lebanon.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the substantial security, socioeconomic and political spillover effects of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon, the country has nevertheless escaped a return to all-out civil war. This is in great measure a consequence of the postwar corporate consociation power-sharing arrangement. Unlike the pre-war arrangement in which socioeconomic and political demands overlapped with confessional identity, postwar power-sharing redistributed political prerogatives away from Christian communities, and the synergy between this and the sectarian elite's politico-economic interests has proved instrumental in forestalling a return to civil war. The curious case of no civil war in post-Syria Lebanon is thus illustrative of the utility of corporate consociation power sharing in deeply divided postwar societies, despite their political shortcomings. Instead, post-Syria Lebanon staggers from one political crisis to another.

Aoun's election to the presidency will not end the contest over post-Syria Lebanon among the main Sunni and Shia political protagonists. Moreover, it will stimulate the demand to recalibrate the postwar confessional balance of power that most Christian parties claim has tilted in favor of their Muslim counterparts. The former contest overlaps with a larger regional geopolitical battle and will undoubtedly continue until a new regional balance of power is achieved. The latter is rooted in the demand for genuine rather than numerical Christian-Muslim parity in decision mak-

ing and in the political and socioeconomic administration of the country. These crises underscore the earnest need for the kinds of institutional reforms — whether in the form of a new electoral law or decentralization mechanisms — that can contribute to postwar peace-building among Lebanon’s multiple sectarian communities and confessional groups, and open new political spaces for cross-sectarian and anti-sectarian groups.

After all, there is nothing primordial about the increase in sectarian conflict in

post-Syria Lebanon. It is rooted in overlapping domestic and geopolitical contexts. Whether the sectarian political elite will implement the kinds of institutional reforms that help stabilize the political system remains an open question, however. The current postwar power-sharing arrangement may help preclude a return to civil war. Paradoxically, however, it makes prospects for reforming the political system in the direction of more inclusiveness and stability all the more difficult.

<sup>1</sup> Steven Heydemann, “Syria’s Uprising: Sectarianism, Regionalisation, and State Order in the Levant,” *Fride and Hivos*, May 2013, <http://www.fride.org/publication/1127/syria's-uprising:-sectarianism,-regionalisation,-and-state-order-in-the-levant>.

<sup>2</sup> See the official accounts of the UNHCR’s Syria Regional Refugee Response, at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrian-refugees/country.php?id=122>.

<sup>3</sup> Khalil Gebara, “The Syrian Crisis and Its Implications on Lebanon,” University Saint Joseph, March 9, 2015, <http://www.sciences-po.usj.edu.lb/pdf/The%20Syrian%20Crisis%20%20its%20Implications%20on%20Lebanon%20-%20Khalil%20Gebara.pdf>. Some 50,000 Lebanese were also repatriated from Syria as a result of the war, and another 50,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria crossed the border into Lebanon.

<sup>4</sup> “Lebanon: Syrian Refugees Cost the Economy \$4.5 Billion Every Year,” *Fanack Chronicle of the Middle East and North Africa*, June 23, 2015, <https://chronicle.fanack.com/lebanon/economy/lebanon-syrian-refugees-cost-the-economy-4-5-billion-every-year/>.

<sup>5</sup> Gebara, “The Syrian Crisis”; and Kareem Shaheen, “Dozens of Syrians Forced into Sexual Slavery in Derelict Lebanese House,” *The Guardian*, April 30, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/30/syrians-forced-sexual-slavery-lebanon>.

<sup>6</sup> It consisted mainly of the Shia Hezbollah and Amal parties, the Maronite Free Patriotic Movement led by Michel Aoun and the Marada Party led by Suleiman Franjeh, the Druze Talal Arslan, the Sunni (late) Omar Karami and Usama al-Sad, and a number of other political groups.

<sup>7</sup> The name is a reference to the popular demonstration in downtown Beirut commemorating the one-month anniversary of Hariri’s assassination. After Aoun split from it on the eve of the 2005 parliamentary elections, it consisted mainly of Saad al-Hariri’s and Walid Jumblatt’s parliamentary blocs, the Lebanese Forces, the reunited Kataeb Party, and a number of political movements and independent MPs.

<sup>8</sup> As was the case with Elias al-Hrawi (1989-98) and Emile Lahoud (1998-2007).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Bahout, “Lebanon at the Brink: The Impact of the Syrian Civil War,” *Middle East Brief*, Brandeis University, no. 76, (January 2014): 5, <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB76.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> International Crisis Group, “Lebanon’s Self-defeating Survival Strategies,” *Report 160* (July 20, 2015): 2, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/lebanon-s-self-defeating-survival-strategies>.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Richard Hrair Dekmejian, “Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon,” *Comparative Politics* 10, no. 2 (January 1978): 251-65; and Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (Westview Press, [1968] 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Kamal S. Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon 1958-1976* (Caravan Books, 1976); and Michael C. Hudson, “The Problem of Authoritative Power in Lebanese Politics: Why Consociationalism Failed,” in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, eds. Nadim Shehadi and Danna Haffar Mills (I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1988), 225-39. For an alternative perspective, one that privileges the role of exogenous factors in

causing the civil war, see Farid El Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Michael C. Hudson, "Trying Again: Power Sharing in Post-Civil War Lebanon," *International Negotiation* 2, no. 1 (1997): 103-22. For a revisionist account of the Taif Accord, see Stephan Rosiny, "A Quarter Century of 'Transitory Power Sharing': Lebanon's Unfulfilled Taif Agreement of 1989 Revisited," *Civil Wars* 17, no. 4 (2015): 485-502.

<sup>14</sup> Bassel F. Salloukh, Rabie Barakat, Jinan S. Al-Habbal, Lara W. Khattab, and Shoghig Mikaelian, *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (Pluto Press, 2015), 24; and John Nagle, "Between Entrenchment, Reform and Transformation: Ethnicity and Lebanon's Consociational Democracy," *Democratization* 22 (July 2015): 1-21.

<sup>15</sup> Salim Nasr and Claude Dubar, *Al-tabaqat al-ijtima'iya fi lubnan: muqarana sosyolojiya tatbiqiya* (Beirut: Mu'asassat al-Abhath al-'Arabiyya, 1982); Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (Pluto Press, 2007); idem, *Al-tabaqat al-ijtima'iya fi lubnan: ithbat wujood* (Beirut: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Brendan O'Leary, "Foreword: The Realism of Power-Sharing," in *Imposing Power-Sharing: Conflict and Coexistence in Northern Ireland and Lebanon*, ed. Michael Kerr (Irish Academic Press, 2006), xvii-xxxv.

<sup>17</sup> Timothy D. Sisk, "Power Sharing in Civil Wars: Puzzles of Peacemaking and Peacebuilding," *Civil Wars* 15 (2013): 7-20.

<sup>18</sup> Melani Cammett and Edmund Malesky, "Power Sharing in Postconflict Societies: Implications for Peace and Governance," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 6 (December 2012): 982-1016; Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, "The Art of the Possible: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Democracy," *World Politics* 67, no. 1 (January 2015): 37-71; Wolf Linder and André Bächtiger, "What Drives Democratization in Asia and Africa?" *European Journal of Political Research* 44, no. 6 (October 2005): 861-80; John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, "Iraq's Constitution of 2005: Liberal Consociation as Political Prescription," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 5 (2007): 670-98; Pippa Norris, *Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Brendan O'Leary, "The Federalization of Iraq and the Break-up of Sudan," *Government and Opposition* 47, no. 4 (October 2012): 481-516.

<sup>19</sup> Maren Milligan, "Fighting for the Right to Exist: Institutions, Identity, and Conflict in Jos, Nigeria," *Comparative Politics* 45, no. 3 (April 2013): 313-34; Chandra Lekha Sriram and Marie-Joëlle Zahar, "The Perils of Power Sharing: Africa and Beyond," *Africa Spectrum* 44, no. 3 (2009): 11-39; and Nussaibah Younis, "Set Up to Fail: Consociational Political Structures in Post-War Iraq, 2003-2010," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 4, no. 1 (2011): 1-18.

<sup>20</sup> McGarry and O'Leary, "Iraq's Constitution of 2005"; and Allison McCulloch, "Consociational Settlements in Deeply Divided Societies: The Liberal-Corporate Distinction," *Democratization* 21 (2014): 501-18.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Kanchan Chandra, "Introduction," in *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics*, ed. Kanchan Chandra (Oxford University Press, 2012); and Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Melani Cammett, "The Syrian Conflict's Impact on Lebanese Politics," United States Institute of Peace, November 18, 2013, 3, <http://www.usip.org/publications/the-syrian-conflict-s-impact-lebanese-politics>. See, more generally, Melani Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon* (Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Marie-Joëlle Zahar, "Power Sharing in Lebanon: Foreign Protectors, Domestic Peace and Democratic Failure," in *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, eds. Philip G. Roeder and Donald S. Rothchild (Cornell University Press, 2005); and Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation Building in Lebanon* (Hurst & Company 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Salim Nasr, "Roots of the Shii Movement," *MERIP* 133 (June 1985): 10-16; Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shia: Struggle for the South of Lebanon* (University of Texas Press, 1987); and Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*.

<sup>26</sup> ICG, "Lebanon's Self-Defeating Survival Strategies."

<sup>27</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, "Beyond Sectarianism: New Middle East Cold War," Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, July 11, 2014, 8, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/07/22%20>

beyond%20sectarianism%20cold%20war%20gause/english%20pdf.pdf.

<sup>28</sup> Bassel F. Salloukh, "Democracy in Lebanon: The Primacy of the Sectarian System," in *The Struggle over Democracy in the Middle East*, eds. Nathan Brown and Emad El-Din Shahin (Routledge Press, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> See the text of the resolution at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sc8181.doc.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Bassel F. Salloukh, "The Arab Uprisings and the Geopolitics of the Middle East," *The International Spectator* 48, no. 2 (June 2013): 32-46.

<sup>31</sup> Gause, *Beyond Sectarianism*, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Waleed Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State': The Contentious Politics of Plural Governance in Lebanon since 2005," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 6 (January 2016): 1053-70.

<sup>33</sup> Namely the Kfar-Shouba Heights and the contested Shebaa Farms. See Ibid, 1061.

<sup>34</sup> Bassel F. Salloukh and Shoghig Mikaelian, "Hezbollah in Lebanon," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, eds. John L. Esposito and Emad Shahin (Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch, "Syria: From 'Authoritarian Upgrading' to Revolution?" *International Affairs* 88, no. 1 (January 2012): 95-113.

<sup>36</sup> Aram Nerguizian, "Assessing the Consequences of Hezbollah's Necessary War of Choice in Syria," Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 17, 2013, <http://csis.org/publication/assessing-consequences-hezbollahs-necessary-war-choice-syria>.

<sup>37</sup> See the texts of Hezbollah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah's speeches reproduced in *al-Safir*, November 12, 2011, January 4, 2013, and, more importantly, May 27, 2013.

<sup>38</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Shoghig Mikaelian and Bassel F. Salloukh, "Strong Actor in a Weak State: The Geopolitics of Hezbollah," in *Fragile Politics: Weak States in the Greater Middle East*, ed. Mehran Kamrava (Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>39</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), "Lebanon's Hezbollah Turns Eastward to Syria," Report 153, May 27, 2014, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/lebanon-s-hizbol-lah-turns-eastward-syria>.

<sup>40</sup> Tobias Schneider, "The Decay of the Syrian Regime Is Much Worse Than You Think," *War on the Rocks*, August 31, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/08/the-decay-of-the-syrian-regime-is-much-worse-than-you-think/>.

<sup>41</sup> Toby Matthiesen, "Transnational Diffusion between Arab Shia Movements," POMEPS, August 16, 2016, <http://pomeps.org/2016/08/16/transnational-diffusion-between-arab-shia-movements/>.

<sup>42</sup> Israeli estimates place the number of Hezbollah casualties in Syria between 1,500 and 1,600 with another 5,000 to 6,000 injured as of summer 2016, with the battle for Aleppo proving especially costly. See Avi Is-sacharoff, "A Third of Hezbollah's Fighters Said Killed or Injured in Syria," *Times of Israel*, December 15, 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/a-third-of-hezbollahs-fighters-said-killed-or-injured-in-syria/>; and idem, "Thanks in No Small Part to Russia, Hezbollah Is Now a Full-Fledged Army," *Times of Israel*, June 30, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/thanks-in-no-small-part-to-russia-hezbollah-is-now-a-full-fledged-army/>. See also Alexander Corbeil, "Hezbollah Is Learning Russian," Sada, February 26, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/62896>.

<sup>43</sup> See the text of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah's interview with Jean Aziz on OTV, reproduced in *al-Safir*, December 4, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Mamoon Alabbasi, "Fall from Grace: Hezbollah in the Eyes of Sunni Syrians," *Middle East Eye*, February 24, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/fall-grace-hezbollah-eyes-sunni-syrians-2034442637>.

<sup>45</sup> Phillips, "Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria."

<sup>46</sup> International Crisis Group, "A Precarious Balancing Act: Lebanon and the Syrian Conflict," Report 132, November 22, 2012, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/precious-balancing-act-lebanon-and-syrian-conflict-0>.

<sup>47</sup> ICG, "Lebanon's Self-Defeating Survival Strategies."

<sup>48</sup> Mona Alami, "The Impact of the Syria Conflict on Salafis and Jihadis in Lebanon," Middle East Institute, April 18, 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/content/impact-syria-conflict-salafis-and-jihadis-lebanon>.

<sup>49</sup> ICG, "A Precarious Balancing Act," 5.

<sup>50</sup> Most recently on January 21, 2017, by a former Asir partisan, Omar al-Assi, who was captured by the LAF's Military Intelligence branch before he detonated his suicide vest inside a coffee shop in Beirut's Hamra street.

<sup>51</sup> Alami, "The Impact of the Syria Conflict."

<sup>52</sup> International Crisis Group, "Arsal in the Crosshairs: The Predicament of a Small Lebanese Border Town," Report 46, February 23, 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/arsal-crosshairs-predicament-small-lebanese-border-town>.

<sup>53</sup> Jean Aziz, "Arsal: The Battle That Begins a Long War," *Al Monitor*, August 11, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/08/arsal-dela-militants-lebanon-army-government.html>. Under the auspices of Qatar's intelligence agency, all of the hostages were later released except for nine soldiers who remain in ISIS custody.

<sup>54</sup> This is especially the case with placards and posters throughout the southern suburbs celebrating the Shia-Alawi alliance in Syria.

<sup>55</sup> Such as the reorganization of Saraya al-Mouqawama al-Lubnaniya (Lebanese Resistance Brigades) that gathers Shia and non-Shia volunteers and supports the party's security responsibilities in Lebanon but is not part of its complex and highly secretive military structure. See ICG, "Lebanon's Self-Defeating Survival Strategies," 8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> See Salloukh et al., *The Politics of Sectarianism*, chapter 6.

<sup>58</sup> Saad al-Hariri is favored neither by King Salman's royal entourage, but especially Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, nor by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, of whom he spoke in derogatory terms to STL interrogators.

<sup>59</sup> Cammett, "The Syrian Conflict's Impact," 2.

<sup>60</sup> Diala Haidar, "Beirut Madinati Electoral Campaign: Redefining Lebanese Politics," *New Arab*, April 22, 2016, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/4/22/beirut-madinati-electoral-campaign-redefining-lebanese-politics>.

<sup>61</sup> Through the use of a simple plurality vote system, and the proviso that voters cast their votes not where they live and pay taxes, but rather in their ancestral villages.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Bahout, "Local Lessons," *Diwan*, September 14, 2016, <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/64568>.

<sup>63</sup> "North Lebanon Local Elections Dethrone Traditional Sunni Leaders," *New Arab*, May 30, 2016, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/5/30/north-lebanon-local-elections-dethrone-traditional-sunni-leaders>.

<sup>64</sup> Rifi accused Hezbollah of refusing to transfer to the Judicial Council the case against the pro-Syrian former minister Michel Samaha, accused of participating in a terror plot at the behest of Syrian intelligence officers.

<sup>65</sup> His resignation was not accepted by the prime minister.

<sup>66</sup> See the text of the indictment in *al-Nahar*, September 3, 2016.

<sup>67</sup> See the Arabic text of the Baabda Declaration at <http://www.presidency.gov.lb/Arabic/News/Pages/Details.aspx?nid=14483>.

<sup>68</sup> Hazbun, "Assembling Security," 1063.

<sup>69</sup> ICG, "Lebanon's Self-Defeating Survival Strategies," 16.

<sup>70</sup> Bassel F. Salloukh, "Lebanese Protesters United against Garbage... and Sectarianism," *Washington Post*, Monkey Cage Blog, September 14, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/14/lebanese-protesters-united-against-garbage-and-sectarianism/>.