Absent Memory:
A Study of the Historiography of the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990

by

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Introduction

On April 13th, 1975, Maronite Christian militiamen attacked and murdered twenty-three Palestinian refugees as they attempted to travel through Beirut. The massacre, which was arguably either a product of revenge or self-defense, instigated one of the longest and bloodiest wars in Lebanese history. The conflict engaged every sect in the multi-confessional state, destabilized the government and, by the war's end in 1990, resulted in the death of over 100,000 individuals. Despite this devastation, after the war few attempts were made to address the situation. The political system was fundamentally unchanged and the sectarian parties that were previously at war once again vied for power within Lebanon's Parliament. While the Lebanese people attempted to reconstruct the country in the decades following the war, they were determined to suppress the memories of the conflict.

In his work *War and Memory in Lebanon*, sociologist Sune Haugbolle writes that in 1998 his Lebanese host mother told him that "when the [civil war] ended in Lebanon, it was like it never happened."[1] While this "amnesia" has been seen in the immediate aftermath of similar conflicts around the world, the enduring nature of the Lebanese silence some twenty-two years after the war's end is unique. Other countries have conducted war crime tribunals, constructed memorials for the conflicts and established dates of national remembrance but these acknowledgements are curiously lacking in Lebanon. In an attempt to understand this historical amnesia of the war, I have turned my attention to the historians, sociologists and journalists who

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[1] Sune Haugbolle, *War and memory in Lebanon*, Cambridge Middle East studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). 1.

documented the origins and events of the Civil War of 1975-1990. My thesis focuses on the historical memory of the civil war and attempts to determine why the Lebanese refuse to acknowledge the conflict.

This thesis seeks to first consider how Lebanese and foreign intellectuals depict the war. More specifically, I want to examine the ways in which historians, journalists, and sociologists frame the causes of the Civil War. I will analyze their texts in order to determine the persons and groups that the authors believe instigated the war. The question of who started the war is still contested. My analysis will seek to categorize the causal argument put forward, as well as the authors' characterizations of those responsible. I wish to examine how this historical debate surrounding the civil war affects and is affected by the current political struggle. The historical accounts of the war are embroiled in a debate over the effectiveness of the government structure which can be understood by investigating the authors' causal arguments and personal histories.

Secondly, I will examine how literary authors and film directors frame the civil war. These artistic accounts differ from the historiography of the conflict in that they lack a detailed discussion of the instigators of the fighting. Instead, these representations of the war debate whether the Lebanese people were responsible for the conflict or not. I will argue that those writers and directors who deny Lebanese agency in the war are attempting to discourage a social conversation about it, and that these artists are expressing the public fear of such a debate. In contrast, the artists who hold the Lebanese people responsible for the war are attempting to address this

period of conflict and the tensions that led to the fighting. I want to investigate the

motives for both of these trends to determine which groups are attempting to repress

an open discussion of the war and which groups embrace it.

Finally, I will try to understand how the conflict affects the Lebanese

understanding of the civil war. Haugbolle depicts Lebanese history after 1990 as a

cycle of political destabilization and security. In turn, he suggests that the Lebanese

people are caught up in a similar cycle of memory suppression and remembrance that

mirrors the political phases.[2] While Lebanon experiences periods of violence and

nonviolence, the tensions that create these outbreaks of violence are ever-present in

the country. The conflict is better understood as an enduring struggle that, though

generally non-violent after 1990, continues to affect the Lebanese people. As a result,

Lebanese and foreign intellectuals have been unable to engage in a nuanced and

careful discussion of the events of the war. As demonstrated by the historiography

and the artistic works pertaining to the conflict, the dialogue remains stagnant.

By comparing the Lebanese historical memory of the Civil War of 1975-1990

to the French historical memory of the Vichy Regime during World War II, I hope to

identify the emotional pressures that are created by on-going conflict and alter the

historical, literary and public accounts of the event. The French experienced these

pressures in the first decade after World War II and were able to overcome them as

time passed, providing them with emotional distance from the conflict. As the

pressures abated, the French were able to carefully consider their multifaceted role in

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[2] Ibid., 229.

World War II. In contrast, the Lebanese were unable to escape these pressures after the war's end, due to the recurring sectarian tensions. This lack of emotional distance results in one-sided historical accounts of the war and a societal fear that prevents the conflict from being publically addressed. While the conflict is ongoing, the country will not be able to carefully address the complex internal and external tensions that lead to war.

Chapter One: Historical Context

The history of Lebanon's breakdown and the subsequent Civil War of 1975-1990 resulted from many factors. It can be best understood, however, by examining this pluralistic country's underlying political framework, that of a confessionalist government. Confessionalism is a system of government that operates by distributing political and institutional power proportionally among religious sects. This was the political system that Lebanese leaders implemented with Lebanon's independence in 1943, and, despite the brutal sectarian violence that the country experienced during the war, it was this system that the warring sides returned to at the end of the fighting in 1990. Many historians argue that it was confessionalism that created the insurmountable religious tensions within the Lebanese population that eventually led to the Civil War of 1975-1990. Even if it was not wholly responsible for the violence of 1975-1990, the confessional system was certainly an element that contributed to the collapse of Lebanese society in 1975 and it is necessary to understand the origins of this political structure to examine the war itself.

Prior to 1918, the territory that would become Lebanon was indirectly controlled by the Ottoman Empire.[3] However, a portion of that land, Mount Lebanon, was a semi-autonomous province that, although still under nominal Ottoman rule,

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[3] This historical account is primarily based on Michael Young, The ghosts of Martyrs Square : an eyewitness account of Lebanon's life struggle, (Simon & Schuster, 2010).
 Farid El-Khazen, *The breakdown of the state in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).
Deeb, *The Lebanese civil war*.
and Kamal S. Salibi, *Crossroads to civil war : Lebanon, 1958-1976* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1988).
Other sources consulted on specific topics will be references individually

was directly controlled by feudal lords.[4] During the 19th century, two communities inhabited this region, the Maronites, members of a Christian sect and the Druze, an offshoot of Islam. Throughout this period, relations between the two communities were strained, as the Druzes viewed the Maronites' expansion and settlement in areas that were traditionally Druze with resentment. Nonetheless, a tenuous coexistence between the two existed until Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Egypt's governor, occupied Lebanon in 1831. Ibrahim intensified the animosity between the Maronite Christians and the Druzes by favoring the Christians in his government. When the Ottoman government regained control of Mount Lebanon in 1841, the Druzes attempted to reclaim some of their lost political power and successfully deposed the Ottoman-appointed ruler (known as the emir) of Lebanon.

The Ottomans, in an attempt to instill peace in the region, yielded to the Druzes' discontent and replaced the overthrown emir. Additionally, they formed two districts, a northern Christian district on Mount Lebanon and a Druze district in territory to the south of Mount Lebanon. The two districts, which were known as Kisrawan and Shuf respectively, were each under the power of a *qa'immaqam*, a sub-governor who was drawn from the religious sect he ruled over. Both *qa'immaqams* were accountable to indirect Ottoman rule via a governor in Beirut. But the Ottoman governor was unable to control the newly established regions. This resulted in an uprising from the Druze community, who reclaimed portions of the Maronite territories.

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[4] Mount Lebanon actually refers to a mountain range that extends across the entire Lebanese country and parallels the Mediterranean Sea. See image 1

The animosity between the Druze and Maronite communities erupted in May of 1860 when the Druzes attacked all Christian settlements in the region, killing thousands of Maronite Christians, along with members of other Christian sects. The slaughter lasted until August, when French troops landed in the area and restored Ottoman control of Lebanon. In an effort to restore peace yet again, the Ottomans eradicated the old, ineffective *qa'immaqam* system and implemented an autonomous governate, the *Mustarrifiyya*. In this system, an Ottoman Catholic Christian was required to be the single head of the government. He regulated the region from outside of Lebanon. Furthermore, an administrative council of twelve men, with proportional representation from Maronite, Druze, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Sunni and Shia communities, would control Lebanon itself. The agreement established a tradition of religious governance and thus began the informal partitioning of the region as a means of promoting coexistence among religious factions. This strategy would alternate between success and failure over the next 150 years.[5]

With the collapse and partition of the Ottoman Empire at the conclusion of World War I, France created the modern day state of Lebanon. In an attempt to regain lost territories, the Ottomans had sided with Germany and its allies after the start of the war. During the resulting German defeat in 1918, the Ally powers overwhelmed and crushed the Empire. France and England dismantled and partitioned the Ottoman territories after the government dissolved. The Middle East was divided among

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[5] Gábor Ágoston and Masters Bruce Alan, "Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire," in *Facts on File library of world history; Variation: Facts on File library of world history.* (Facts On File, 2009).

French and British mandates, with Greater Syria and Mount Lebanon placed under

French control. In 1920, France further divided these regions into six states, one of

which had the boundaries of present day Lebanon, known as the Republic of

Lebanon. This boundary included Mount Lebanon, but it also incorporated a portion

of Sunni dominated land into the Republic. Whereas Mount Lebanon was previously

dominated by Maronite and Druze communities, the Lebanese Republic now had to

incorporate the interests of a large Sunni population into its government. The prospect

of maintaining peace seemed dubious. Yet, independence from France would require

not only stable borders but a stable government built upon a common Lebanese

identity as well. Maronite Christians argued for a state that was unique in the Middle

East. They claimed that while the rest of the Middle East was part of the Arab world,

the Lebanese were of Phoenician rather than Arab origins. From this perspective, they

argued that Lebanon should be a Western-influenced country that was largely

uninvolved in "Arabic" interests and Middle Eastern politics. In contrast, many Sunni

Muslims wanted to merge with the states around them and create a larger pan-Arab

country.[6]

This conflict came to a temporary end when, in 1943 the French-appointed

leaders of the Republic, Christian President Bishara al-Khuri and Sunni Prime

Minister Riyad al-Sulh, agreed on the National Pact. The Pact was an unwritten

agreement that sought a compromise between Maronite and Sunni desires; al-Khuri

and al-Sulh agreed that Lebanon would not seek a union with Syria or ally itself with

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[6] The Maronite and Sunni communities were the most politically powerful sects in the Republic because the Maronite Christians were under French protection and because the Sunni Muslim population was much larger than the other sects in the area, such as the Druze, Greek Orthodox Christian and Shia communities.

any European colonial power. The two men decided that the state system would be divided among major religious groups with a Maronite Christian serving as President while the position of Prime Minister would always be held by a Sunni Muslim. A Shia would always be assigned as the president of the Chambers of Deputies and a Greek Orthodox would hold the offices of vice prime minister and vice president of the Chambers of Deputies. Furthermore, Parliament would be apportioned among the Lebanese religious communities so that there would be six Christian deputies for every five Muslim deputies. With this agreement, France ended its Mandate over Lebanon and the country gained independence.

Within the new republic, Maronite Christians generally were politically conservative, whereas Sunni Muslims were active in progressive Left-wing politics. The Druze community often oscillated between the Right and the Left. While it was not large enough to sway the country politically, both the Right and the Left sought Druze support to tip the balance in their favor in parliament. Within the constrictions of the confessionalist system, large political parties were and still are essentially absent in Lebanon, although with the Civil War of 1975-1990 came a rise of many militias with their own political ideologies.

Some historians trace the recurring instability in Lebanon to the National Pact of 1943, and in particular, the disjuncture between the state and society that resulted from giving the powerful post of the presidency to the Maronite Christians.[7] Within fifteen years of the Pact's creation, these tensions erupted into civil war in 1958. The

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[7] Marius Deeb, *The Lebanese civil war* (New York: Praeger, 1980).

war, which consisted of confessional fighting that was confined in Beirut, began when President Camille Chamoun attempted to amend the constitution and extend his term. Chamoun was a Maronite who polarized the country with his anti-Nassarite, pro-Western policies. Many Sunni groups were already disgruntled by the President's refusal to join Egyptian President Gamal Nassar's United Arab Republic, which was established between Egypt and Syria on February 1st, 1958. Maronite Christians generally supported Chamoun's Western political stance, but the Muslim population felt that by extending his term, Chamoun was furthering Western control over Lebanon and they wanted his political career to end. In response to Chamoun's perceived power play, the Muslims took up arms.

In contrast, the Maronite Christians feared the Pan-Arabist movement that was growing in Lebanon and they responded violently to Muslim unrest in an attempt to protect their fragile hegemony of economic and political power. As the country descended into open street fighting, President Chamoun implored American troops to help him restore order. The situation was resolved when American marines deployed to Beirut. This violent episode was seen by many to be a precursor to the civil war that began in 1975 and indicative of the problems that plagued the country. However, some argued that the fighting in 1958 was unrelated to the tensions that caused the war in 1975.[8] Both interpretations agree that by the following year, the Lebanese government was able to regain what tenuous control it had over the country before the May battles of 1958 erupted. However, the government did not attempt to foster

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[8] Michael Johnson argues that the confessional fighting in 1958 was unrelated to the confessional fighting in 1975, as the former was inspired by political rivalries and the latter indicative of a Mediterranean culture of honor and violence inherent to Lebanon.

peace between the Maronite Christians and the Sunni Muslims, nor did it implement security measures to prevent future violent outbreaks.

After the unrest of 1958, Lebanon experienced a period of economic prosperity, intellectual awakening and political stability. Outwardly, Beirut appeared to be the "Paris" of the Middle East, and Lebanon a country with exceptional promise as a successful pluralistic society that offered opportunity for all. During the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon's economic success had come from its silk industry. However, with the introduction of rayon, a synthetic silk, into the world market, Lebanon's prosperity vanished as the Ottoman Empire came to a temporary end. Yet the Lebanese were resilient in the face of these new economic realities; the country evolved into a market economy where Christian and Druze peasants became land owners and bankers. Similarly, merchants gained social and political prominence. The urban population tripled from 1958 to 1970 and Lebanon became a popular destination for many Western tourists.

This economic growth was uneven, however, resulting in rising social tensions. While the period between 1958 and 1975 created a substantial middle class, the Maronites continued to dominate the upper-class. The Maronite community's success was largely the result of the French favoritism that supported it in Lebanon's early years, allowing the Maronites to control the economy. While some Sunnis enjoyed similar economic prosperity, social mobility and economic success was largely unavailable to minority communities such as the Shia Muslims of Beirut. This

uneven development polarized religious communities into politically conservative and progressive camps.

The temporary, perhaps superficial peace between 1959 and 1975 was disrupted by the aftermath of the Israel-Arab war. In June of 1967, Israel won a decisive victory over the Arab forces of Egypt, Jordan and Syria after only six days of fighting. An estimated 300,000 Palestinians were displaced as a result of the war.[9] While many fled to Jordan, Lebanon also saw a surge in its refugee population. More significantly, the state was forced to contend with an increasingly radical, angry Palestinian population. Prior to the 1967 war, the refugees in Lebanon had been peaceful and thus were relatively ignored by the larger Lebanese population. In the aftermath of the war, a violent Palestinian Resistance Movement developed which fought Israel with guerilla attacks and missile strikes.

At first this movement was largely contained in Jordan, where most of the displaced Palestinian population lived. In 1964 four hundred Palestinian delegates met in Jordanian controlled East Jerusalem to form the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The PLO would become one of the most prominent members of the Palestinian Resistance Movements in the years to come. The Organization included a Parliament, the Palestinian National Council, and an army to fight against the state of Israel. But while the group's radical manifesto promised to restore Palestine to its rightful territory, at the time of its creation the PLO lacked the organization to effect any change in the area. After its formative meeting, many members of the group

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[9]Rosemary Sayigh, *Too many enemies* (London: Atlantic Highlands, 1994).

migrated to Jordan in an attempt to establish themselves with the Palestinians there, while a smaller faction also developed in Lebanon. In the late 1960s, the Lebanese PLO was led by older, more traditional Palestinian leaders who denounced the violent resistance seen from groups in Jordan. While these leaders objected to the Israeli control of their homeland, they felt that Arab governments in the Middle East were responsible for the struggle against Israel.

But in the face of the humiliating loss that the Arabs suffered in 1967, the Lebanese Palestinian youths began to object to the PLO's passive policies and joined other resistance groups. These groups, including Yassar Arafat's Palestinian National Liberation Movement (*Fatah*) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine had begun actively fighting Israel in 1965. Collectively known as the Palestinian Resistance Movement, the organizations were responsible for rocket attacks and guerrilla warfare against Israeli. The Jordanian faction was the most active, launching many attacks from towns on the Jordanian border to Israel.[10] When Israel began to retaliate by invading the country, King Hussien banned the popular Palestinian movement and the Resistance faced a temporary set-back which forced the faction's relocation. By late 1971 almost all of the Palestinian "freedom fighters" turned to Lebanon.

At that time, Yasser Arafat was president of the Palestinian National Council. *Fatah* was incorporated into the PLO, and the group welcomed the wave of

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[10] Fatah was based in Damascus, but Syria encouraged the group to launch attacks against Israeli at the Lebanese-Jordanian border, hoping to direct Israel's counter-attacks at the weaker Jordanian state

Palestinian rebels from Jordan.[11] Soon, Arafat began to lead raids into Israel from

Lebanon's Southern Frontier while simultaneously fight the Lebanese Army. The

army, disturbed with the arrival of the Jordanian Palestinian Resistance Movement,

attempted to limit Arafat's growing power and control the guerilla factions. The

army's stance demonstrated a growing discord between the religious sects. While the

Palestinian movement had the support of the majority of the Muslim Lebanese, the

Maronite Christians and many government officials feared Israeli reprisals.

Within months, these Maronite fears came true. In response to the PLO

attacks, Israeli forces retaliated by launching air strikes into Lebanon, wounding and

killing scores of Lebanese civilians. The deaths that resulted from the strikes were

always disproportionately larger compared to the original Palestinian attacks.[12] While

King Hussein of Jordan had enough military strength to expel the Palestinian

Resistance Movement from his country, the Lebanese government was far weaker. As

a result, the Lebanese Army's effort to control the guerillas was ineffective and the

Israeli strikes continued.

On November 3rd, 1969, in an attempt to suppress the fighting between the

Army and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the Lebanese Parliament signed

the Cairo Agreement with Arafat. The treaty was a concession by the government as

it legitimized the Palestinian military presence in the south of Lebanon and prevented

the Army from further attempts at subduing the group. With this agreement the

government ended the conflict between the Army and the Palestinian resistance

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[11] Arafat was elected in 1969

[12] Robert Fisk, *Pity the nation : the abduction of Lebanon* (New York: Atheneum : Maxwell Macmillan International, 1990). 74.

movement but the Palestinian commandos were able to continue to attack Israel. As a result, Lebanon increasingly became a target of the Israeli retaliation strikes. The Maronite Christians, already dissatisfied with the Palestinian presence in the country, grew increasingly unhappy with what they saw as a pan-Arab movement in Lebanon. The conflict between the Army and the Palestinian refugees added to sectarian tensions that existed since the 1958 Civil War. This resulted in violence between the Maronite Christian Right and the Muslim Left.

The precursor to the 1975 Lebanese Civil War is generally traced to economic protests in the town of Sidon in the south of the country. The former President, Camille Chamoun, attempted to monopolize fishing along the Lebanese coast for his company and claimed the seashore and waters off the coast for his protein supplement plant.[13] Muslim protestors countered that historical evidence proved that they had a claim to this area of the Lebanese coast.[14] The general public's sympathy for the Sunni fishermen was bolstered by the discontent with the state and the economic monopolies that were prevalent at the time. Demonstrations against Chamoun's scheme quickly evolved into a political movement, mobilized by the Left, and supported by the Palestinian Liberation Organization. In an attempt to suppress these protests, a sniper, reportedly employed by the government, assassinated Maroof Saad, the popular Muslim Mayor of Sidon.[15] Saad's death and the government's inability to put down the protests created a deep sectarian divide in the country.

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[13] Sandra Mackey, *Mirror of the Arab world : Lebanon in conflict* (2008). 103.
[14] Ibid.
[15] El-Khazen, *The breakdown of the state in Lebanon, 1967-1976*: 278.

The events in Sidon polarized the political factions across the country into two camps, the right wing, Western-oriented, Christians and the left leaning, pan-Arabist Muslims. Tensions were further inflamed when the PLO used the conflict to bolster Muslim support for the Palestinian Resistance Movement. This sectarian uneasiness escalated into violence on April 13th, 1975 when PLO guerillas attacked a Maronite church in the Christian East Beirut suburb of Ayn al-Rummaneh. In the shooting, Pierre Gemayel, popular founder of the Kataib, a right-wing, largely Maronite party, was targeted. Though Gemayel escaped unharmed, four individuals with him were killed in the assault, including two Kataib members.[16] The Kataib party routinely opposed the Arab nationalism that the Muslims advocated, and furthermore condemned the PLO as terrorists. Since the Kataib had previously been very active in its financial support of the Maronite Church, it was assumed that the attack on the small church in Ayn al-Rummaneh was an attack on the Kataib Party. In response, a few hours later Maronite gunmen ambushed a bus carrying Palestinians, killing twenty-seven of the passengers and three bystanders.[17] The attacks signified the start of a civil war that would be marked by extraordinary sectarian violence.

The war began as a battle between militias. The Maronite Right was pitted against Leftist, Sunni militias that were generally allied with the PLO. This Leftist front, the National Movement, was relatively young and largely inspired to act as a response to the Arab defeat in 1967 and the "Arab" ideology that developed as a result. In 1972, the Leftists and progressive forces united as the *Jabhat al-Ahzab wal*

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[16] Michael Johnson, *All Honorable Men: The Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (New York: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford in association with I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2001). 61.
[17] Ibid., 62.

Qiwa al-Wataniya wal-Taqaddumiya, the Front of National and Progressive Parties

and Forces (FNPPF). The FNPPF was led by the traditional Druze leader Kamal

Jumblatt and included Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party and the Arab Ba'ath

Socialist Party of Syria. The FNPPF joined the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the

Independent Nasserites Movement and the Lebanese Communist Party to form the

National Movement. While many Muslims were Leftist, the National Movement was

not simply a Muslim organization. The National Movement called itself a Pan-

Arabist, democratic movement that denounced the Maronite dominated sectarian

order that ruled Lebanon. At the start of the war, the LNM allied with the PLO to

oppose the conservative Right.

Opposing the Leftist, pan-Arabist National Movement was the Lebanese

Conservative Front. The Front was comprised of several factions, notably Pierre

Gemayel's Maronite Christian Kataib Party. The Kataib played an active role in

Lebanese independence, mobilizing Maronite Christians to demonstrate against the

French Mandate. In the years leading up to the Civil War of 1975-1990, the party

earned a reputation for loyalty to the government, especially because of its support of

the Shihab regime (1958-1967) that was in power after the civil unrest of 1958. The

Kataib remained a Maronite Christian dominated party and developed a strong militia

right before the 1975 war. The Kataib party united with smaller groups such as

Camille Chamoun's National Liberal Party, the Lebanese Forces, the Guardians of

the Cedars and the Marada Brigade to form the Conservative Front. The Conservative

Front fought to defend the status quo against the National Movement's attempts to

overthrow the confessional regime and the Maronite domination of the economy and

government. The Right and the Left both developed militias and military branches that acted as the primary fighters in the Civil War.

The start of the war was marked by random acts of violence perpetuated by each side. The Army clashed with the PLO, but because of the confessional nature of the brigades, which were organized by religious sect, neither the government nor the fighting parties could garner the troops' support. As the conflict between the religious militias intensified, the Lebanese Army began to break down over the internal sectarian conflict within its units.

While the Air Force remained neutral, much of the Army did not. Christian troops were loyal to Frangiyeh and followed his orders to protect the Christian sections of Beirut. At the same time, the Muslim troops strongly objected to the President's orders and, siding with the Leftist militias, refused to be deployed. The disintegration of the Army continued, reaching its peak when officer Ahman al-Khatib defected and created an alternative to the Lebanese Army. Al-Khatib led his Lebanese Arab Army against the Right and attempted an unsuccessful coup d'état against Frangiyeh. The majority of the Lebanese Army either supported or actively defected to the Lebanese Arab Army. In the spring of 1976, the Lebanese Arab Army attacked two predominately Christian towns, al-Qibbiyat and 'Andaqt, without provocation. As the violence continued to escalate, militias began to "religiously cleanse" their opponents, stopping civilians at roadblocks in Beirut and killing them based on the religious identifications printed on their Lebanese identity cards. The PLO and Christian militias began targeting religious communities as well. In response

to the killings many civilians fled to towns or villages in the neighboring mountains that were under the protection of their own sects.

The inherent weaknesses of the political framework that characterized Lebanon since 1943 were emphasized as the Army and State apparatuses split apart. The fighting in Beirut caused a cabinet crisis with the Parliament's response to the violence divided. Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt sided with the PLO and blamed the fighting on the Maronites. Jumblatt and his Palestinian allies accused the Maronites of deliberately attempting to create conflict with the Palestinian Resistance Movement by attacking the bus of refugees. Jumblatt attempted to isolate the Kataib party by boycotting their motions in Parliament. In response, the Kataib and their allies resigned, temporarily paralyzing Parliament. Jumblatt was blamed for weakening Parliament in a time of crisis and Prime Minister Rashid, who was politically supported by Jumblatt, was forced to resign. In his resignation speech, Rashid echoed Jumblatt's accusations against the Kataib, enraging the Maronite Christians who voiced their dissatisfaction by staging violent protests and attacks around Beirut.

Despite his declining authority, President Frangiyeh attempted to quell the fighting and restore order. When meetings between Palestinians, Arab Ambassadors and Lebanese officials failed to produce results, the President formed a "military cabinet" on May 23rd, 1975.[18] Frangiyeh intended to use the cabinet to consolidate political power it the office of the Presidency. The attempt failed. All of the eight

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[18] El-Khazen, *The breakdown of the state in Lebanon, 1967-1976*: 294.

members were forced to resign one day after its formation because of intense Sunni

opposition. During the attempts to create a new cabinet, a power struggle developed

between Frangiyeh and the Sunni candidates for Prime Minister. Sa'eb Salam held

the position before Frangiyeh's failed military cabinet and Frangiyeh favored the less

radical Salam. However, Salam did not have the support of the majority of the Left

party, who preferred Sunni candidate Rashid Karami. Likewise, Jumblatt and his

party would not support Salam's campaign for prime minister and Frangiyeh was

forced to form a cabinet with Karami. Maronite-Sunni politics had never been so

deadlocked as in mid-1975 as the country descended into widespread sectarian

violence. When Frangiyeh and Karami's cabinet could not stop the fighting, the

government called for Syrian aid in June of 1976.

Syria answered the government's call for aid by sending army troops to

support the Maronite militias. The militias had previously been outnumbered by the

combined PLO-Leftist forces, and it seemed that the Maronites would soon fall. But

Syria's President Hafez Assad attempted to stabilize the failing government and

supported the Christian fighters with hopes that he could prevent a PLO victory.

Although the Syrian government had long supported the Arab Nationalism that

provided the ideology of the Leftist groups, Assad feared the outcome of a Muslim

victory. With the memory of the Jordanian experience at hand, Assad worried that

Israel might invade Lebanon. Furthermore, he believed that if Lebanon descended

into deeper chaos, the conflict and the Palestinian Resistance Movement could spread

to Syria. The Syrian ambassadors helped the Lebanese government form a new

cabinet with Frangiyeh and Karami. Stabilized by the Syrian intervention, the

government created a temporary peace. At the time, many countries viewed this Syrian sponsored settlement to be the end of the Lebanese Civil War.

Despite this tenuous period of calm, regional political conflicts continued to destabilize Lebanon's fragile attempts at coalition government. A few months after the Syrian intervention, the PLO resistance fighters launched renewed attacks against Israel. On March 11th, 1978, Palestinian guerillas attacked an Israeli bus in the Galilee region, prompting an Israeli counterstrike into Lebanon four days later. The Israeli "Operation Litani" included four unprovoked air strikes on southern Lebanon, which Israel called pre-emptive strikes against future attacks from the Palestinian Resistance. In June, the United Nations deployed an international security force in southern Lebanon and called for Israel to withdraw immediately. Israel officially complied with the order, but it retained control of the southern region of Lebanon by creating a 12 mile "security zone" along the border between Lebanon and Israel. Israel supplied arms to the Southern Lebanese Army (a militia composed of Christian and Shia fighters) and in exchange the militia fought to maintain the zone. Despite the attempts of the UN security force, the PLO, SLA and Israeli army clashed violently in the "security zone" in the South.

Further aggravating the situation, in 1978, Syria withdrew its peace-keeping forces in Lebanon. The government also ended its military support for the Christian militias in favor of the PLO and Leftist militias. This sudden change was a result of the Egypt-Israeli Camp David agreement, which ended the war between Egypt and Israel and attempted to create a plan for Middle East peace. Assad was unhappy with

the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, viewing it as a concession to Israel and a blow to Arab Nationalism. To retaliate against this agreement and the West, Syrian troops switched sides fought against the Israeli-supported Christian militias and the remainder of the Lebanese Army. The fighting between Christians and Syrians escalated when Israel sided with the Maronites and shot down a Syrian helicopter. In turn, Syria deployed antiaircraft missiles into Lebanon. In the summer of 1978, Syrian forces invaded East Beirut. They were met by Christian forces in what was to become one of the bloodiest chapters of the civil war.

The conflict between the Christian militia and Syrian army, later known as the "100 days War", led to a Syrian siege of Beirut when the troops could not defeat the Christian militias holed up there. The siege and bombings lasted for three months, resulting in thousands of civilian deaths. Eventually, international pressure against Assad coupled with US negotiation attempts, forced him to end the siege and withdraw Syrian troops from East Beirut. Despite the high death toll, the Syrian retreat was seen as a major victory for Christian leader Bashir Gemayel, who emerged as the popular face of the Christian forces.

On June 6th, 1982, Israel launched a second invasion into Lebanon, once again hoping to expel the PLO. Israel also hoped to bring Bashir Gemayel to power as President of the still ineffective Lebanese government. The Rightwing Maronites had elected Gemayel as president, but the Left refused to attend Parliament or form a government. Gemayel allied himself with the Israelis and along with many Christian militias, he supported the newly elected Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon when

Sharon ordered Israeli troops to lay siege to Western Beirut. By August, the dire situation of the besieged region prompted an American intervention. United States envoys negotiated a deal between the PLO and Israel in an attempt to restore the Lebanese government to power. The Israeli-Palestinian agreement stipulated that the PLO would leave Lebanon provided that the Palestinian women and children were protected. At the insistence of the peace keeping force, Muslims agreed to Gemayel's election and the formation of a new government. Despite this agreement, many Muslims were still greatly alarmed at Gemayel's willingness to sign treaties with Israel and Leftist militias called for the end of his presidency. Just three weeks later, Gemayel was assassinated.

Despite the death of its ally, Israel increased its effort to rid Lebanon of the remaining Palestinian Resistance fighters. On September 15th, Israeli soldiers again invaded Western Beirut, and a day later Christian militias entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila which were located in that section of the city. In retaliation for Gemayel's assassination, the militias massacred the civilians living there while the Israeli Defense Force surrounded the camps to prevent escape. The exact death toll is disputed by each side, with ranges from several hundred to more than a thousand people killed reported.

In the wake of the killings at Sabra and Shatila, new elections were held in an effort to restore the Lebanese government. Bashir's brother, Amin Gemayel was elected president and another multinational peace keeping force returned to Beirut to assist the Lebanese government. It established a period of calm, despite growing

tensions between Christian and Druze militias, who were attempting to control the mountain regions. On May 17th, 1983, Gemayel, Israeli ambassadors and United States envoys signed an agreement that outlined the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, on the condition of on the departure of Syrian troops. The pact also stated that the war between Lebanon and Israel had ended, effectively serving as a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon.

Israel began the withdrawal of its troops in August of 1983, removing them from the southeast area of Beirut first. Without the buffer of Israeli troops keeping them apart, Christian and Druzes forces clashed. Although the Druzes quickly gained control over most of southeast Beirut, Israel abandoned its former Christian allies to their fighting and continued to withdraw, until only its troops in the security zone in southern Lebanon remained. Muslims were outraged at the peace agreement and Israel's continued occupation in Southern Lebanon. From the Muslim perspective the treaty failed to address the ongoing Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon which appeared to them as a de facto annexation.

The peace settlement notwithstanding, Syria was not prepared to vacate Lebanon. Ignoring Gemayel's call to withdraw, several hundred Syrian soldiers supported by the Syrian intelligence services and led by Brigadier General Ghazi Kanaan, entered West Beirut to end the fighting there. Syrian troops had not been in Beirut since the killings at Sabra and Shatilla. The troops helped to maintain order until Gemayel's term came to an end on September 23, 1988. The Lebanese state regained some stability during Gemayel's presidency, but after his term ended the

political climate was unable to support another election. The stability that had been gradually building in the country was shaken and split asunder. Gemayel appointed Michel Aoun as acting Prime Minister and the head of an interim military government in an attempt to maintain order. However, the Syrian government and the Leftist militias supported a competing government headed by the Sunni politician Salim al-Hoss.

To complicate matters, Iraq and Iran were becoming involved in Lebanese affairs. As the only Shia dominated country in the Middle East, Iran had long supported the Shia population in Lebanon. Iran armed and financially supported Hezbollah/HizbAllah, a Shia militia group that emerged in 1982 in response to Israel's invasion. Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini hoped to increase the Shia's political power and spread the Iranian Revolution to Lebanon by supporting Hezbollah/HizbAllah's paramilitary wing. However, the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988) increased Iraqi involvement in Lebanon, as Saddam Hussein used Lebanon as a proxy-battlefield for the war. Hussein began arming Christian militias to counter Khomeini's attempts to spread his revolution to Lebanon. With Gemayel's presidency coming to an end, and more international powers becoming involved in the country, the Lebanese government collapsed and Beirut was again divided, this time between Aoun's government in the East and al-Hoss' government in the West.

In March 1989, Aoun attempted to take control of the government by announcing his "war of liberation" against Syria and its Lebanese Leftist allies. Syria responded by attacking those areas of East Beirut that sheltered the militias. Despite

the growing pressure against his forces, Aoun persisted with his war, encouraging supporters to "save" Lebanon from the forces that he claimed were occupying the country and continuing the civil war. Furthermore, Aoun denounced Assad's regime in Syria, stating that Syrian forces had to be thrown out of Lebanon for the country to win its independence. Although there was significant Christian support for Aoun's war, the Muslims in the country still largely viewed him as a sectarian leader who was uninterested in uniting Lebanon. Aoun's legitimacy was widely challenged throughout the country, as many continued to support the West Beirut government lead by al-Hoss. As a result of his declining support throughout Lebanon, Aoun's war was largely unsuccessful. Instead, much of Eastern Beirut was damaged in the fighting and there was a massive Christian emigration out of the city.

With Aoun's faction losing power, the Lebanese parliamentarians attended a conference in Taif, Saudi Arabia from September 30th to October 22nd, 1989 in an attempt to create a peace-agreement for Lebanon. A committee of Arab delegates, appointed by the Arab League and chaired by politicians from Kuwait, had attempted to formulate solutions for the Lebanese problem since January of 1989. The committee, which included envoys from Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco, proposed the Taif Agreement to the Lebanese Parliament when they met in September. The agreement included weakening the Maronite presidency and introducing a one to one ratio of Christians to Muslims in Parliament, which had previously followed the six to five ratio. Furthermore, the committee suggested a large role for Syria in Lebanese affairs, including a Syrian military presence in Lebanon to prevent further fighting. The parliamentarians returned to Lebanon and

agreed to ratify the Taif agreement on November 4th. Rene Mouawad was elected as Lebanese President the following day and he began to form a new cabinet.

However, peace was not so easily established. Aoun rejected the agreement on the grounds that it did not include a deadline for Syrian withdrawal. He additionally refused to recognize Mouawad's presidency, which threatened his own ambitions to gain control of Lebanon. The government was at a standstill again when, sixteen days after his election and Aoun's opposition, Mouawad was assassinated by a car bomb in Beirut. Elias Hrawi was quickly elected to replace Mouawad and he continued to reform the government. Aoun again rejected the election, this time calling for the dissolution of Parliament.

In the weeks that followed, Aoun inexplicably abandoned his "Liberation War" and recalled all of his forces back from the fight with Syria, only to pit them against Samir Geagea's Christian Lebanese Forces militia. Geagea's forces had previously supported Aoun in his fight against Syria. However, when Aoun failed to achieve any progress against the Syrian and Leftist armies, the Lebanese Forces began to doubt his leadership and started articulating their discontent. Perhaps fearing that Geagea would overthrow him or support Parliament's Taif agreement, Aoun declared an "elimination war" against the Lebanese Forces. But Aoun's plans backfired; the war ended in a stalemate and it greatly weakened the Christian forces overall. As Saddam Hussein turned his attention to Kuwait, Aoun lost his international support and no longer had the political or military strength to sustain his ambitions for the presidency. On October 13th, Syria took advantage of Aoun's

weakened position and launched a major operation to strike the last of Aoun's strongholds around the presidential palace. Aoun fled to the French Embassy and negotiated a ceasefire with Syria and its Leftist allies in West Beirut. The following day, he announced his surrender and the end of the Liberation War. Much of the sectarian violence throughout Beirut and the surrounding countryside came to an end. Aoun's admission of defeat eventually came to signify the end of the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990.

Without Aoun's objections, the Lebanese Parliament, which had not obeyed Aoun's orders to dissolve, began to implement the constitutional amendments proposed by the Taif accord. In August of 1990, President Hrawi and Parliament agreed to the constitutional amendments set forth in the Taif agreement. The National Assembly expanded to 128 members and was, for the first time, evenly divided between Christians and Muslims. In May of 1991, the militias, with the exception of Hezbollah/HizbAllah, were dissolved and the sectarian violence came to a gradual end. The Lebanese Army began to rebuild its forces, becoming Lebanon's only non-sectarian institution and Parliament granted immunity to many the individuals who were involved in the war.

While Parliament was expanded and Muslims gained equal representation, the government did not seek to abolish the confessional system or implement safeguards against future sectarian tensions and violence. Furthermore, the Lebanese people also did not explore the causes of the sectarian violence. Though there was an effort to rebuild national institutions and boost the economy, there was no attempt to openly

discuss what had occurred through public discourse. When the war ended, it was as the violence of the last fifteen years had not happened.

The conflict destabilized much of the country, both politically and socially, and subsequently the government struggled to rebuild Lebanon and regain power in the decade following the fighting. Though few benefited from the war, some militias such as Hezbollah/HizbAllah, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization became politically established in Lebanon and the Middle East as a result. After its withdrawal in 1982, the PLO was initially forced to relocate to Tunis, Tunisia. Due to the distance between the PLO and the Palestinian population, the PLO was less influential during the 1980s. But by 1993, the PLO, after signing the Oslo agreement with Israel and gained the right to self-government in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Yassar Arafat was elected president in 1996. With the Oslo agreement, the PLO was transformed from a resistance group to a governing authority. Though it was not active in the First Intifada, the 1987 collective Palestinian uprising, the PLO played a large role in the Second Intifada that began in 2000 and has never officially ended.

Hezbollah/HizbAllah similarly expanded from a militia to a political party. By 2005, it had gained fourteen seats in the one-hundred-twenty-eight seat Parliament. It was also responsible for social improvements throughout Lebanon including running hospitals, news services, and educational facilities that were especially targeted at Hezbollah/HizbAllah members.

As a whole, Lebanon experienced considerable stability until February 2005, when Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated. Pro-Western parties, including

Sunnis and Maronite Christians, accused Syria of the attacks because of their large military presence in the country. Protests were staged through a series of demonstrations called the "Cedar Revolution". The revolts ended in April, when Syria pulled its troops from Lebanon, restoring stability until Lebanon's month long war with Israel in 2006. Known as the Israeli-Hezbollah/HizbAllah war or the July war, it resulted in significant civilian deaths and severe damage to much of Lebanon's civil infrastructure.

Fighting continued to plague the country when, in October 2007, President Emile Lahoud's term ended and new elections failed. Hezbollah/HizbAllah seized Western Beirut, in what the government called an attempted coup. Pro-government and opposition militias continued to clash until May 2008, when the Arab League brokered a peace treaty between the two sides. In the agreement, former head of the army, Michael Suleiman, was elected president and the government was restored. In January of 2011, the international Special Tribunal for Lebanon moved to indict Hezbollah/HizbAllah members for the assassination of Hariri resulting in the resignation of eleven members of the cabinet, severely compromising the political power of the government. Hezbollah/HizbAllah led the "March 8 Alliance" which was a coalition of various Lebanese parities that objected to the Special Tribunal and supported Syrian presence in Lebanon. The government was restored when a March 8 Alliance member, Najib Mikati, was elected Prime Minister and charged with assembling a new cabinet. Hezbollah/HizbAllah continues to gain political power to the displeasure of many Maronite Christians. Many fear that the Lebanese government will be further destabilized in the years to come. Similar to

Hezbollah/HizbAllah, the PLO continues an attempt to increase the political

recognition of a Palestinian state. When peace talks between Palestine and Israel

failed, the PLO and the Palestinian government approached the United Nations in

2011 in an attempt to gain membership. Though the United States objected to this

quest, on October 31st the UN cultural agency, UNESCO, granted the membership to

the Palestinians.

In the face of this reoccurring sectarian tension, it is imperative that one

attempts to form an understanding of the causes of the conflict that led to the 1975-

1990 war, for many of these causes continue to exist today. However, due to the

longstanding political silence surrounding the conflict, it is necessary to consider

alternative sources. By examining the historical accounts of the war and identifying

the origins of the violence, we can better understand the current conflicts that are still

destabilizing the country.

Chapter Two: Exploring the Historical Analysis of the War

The Taif Accord of 1989 seemingly marked the end of the violent Lebanese Civil War of 1975. But was it a genuine settlement of the long standing grievances that severely fractured the society, or was it merely another pause in an unresolved conflict that will inevitably continue until an effective political structure emerges that ensures lasting peace for Lebanon? The ongoing government crises and the recent violent outbursts of 2005 and 2007 suggest that the latter is true. While the Taif Accord officially signaled the end of the violence, the agreement did little to address the roots of the conflict. Although the number of seats in parliament was expanded, the imbalances inherent in the confessionalist system were preserved and the accord essentially reaffirmed the government structure that was established with the National Pact.

In the wake of the political establishment's unwillingness to openly discuss the ongoing conflict, a framework for understanding the ideological origins of the conflict can be found by assessing the historiography of the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990. As the conflict is not decisively resolved, the historical assessments of the origins and consequences of the Lebanese Civil War are unsurprisingly at odds. In many respects these historical accounts closely represent expressions of the partisan arguments that remain and continue to fuel ongoing disruptions in Lebanese society.

Essentially, two competing hypotheses on the origins and consequences of the civil war have emerged in the historical literature. One interpretation rests on a hypothesis of evolving sectarian demographic inequalities and animosity. From this

viewpoint, historians argue that the ongoing tensions in society are best explained by an imbalanced political structure that is incapable of fostering equilibrium among Lebanon's many sects, thereby fueling broader factional discord. Opposed to this interpretation are those who argue that the crises resulted from external forces that entered Lebanon and disrupted the tenuous balance of influence between the Left and the Right. Curiously, instead of moving towards a unified understanding of the war, this debate has only intensified over the years. The cause of such intensification can be traced to the enduring conflict that created an orthodoxy of silence in the political establishment. A close examination of the emerging historical record will provide a window into these unresolved sectarian tensions. Equally so, the causal arguments that these intellectuals put forth as a historical interpretation can be read as ardent expressions of either support for the existing political establishment, or the need for political reform.

The historical interpretation of the roots of the Civil War of 1975-1990 to date is contradictory, even on reaching consensus in documenting the details of several of the key inciting events: the Palestinian bus attack of 1975 and the Syrian invasion of 1976. These events are a common topic of analysis in the study of the civil war. Thus, a detailed examination of the historical interpretations of these two significant moments in the Civil War of 1975-1990, will help explain the perspectives and biases of these accounts, and clarify the sources and views of the ongoing sectarian discord.

Many intellectuals trace the start of the war to the attack of a Palestinian bus in April 1975. The attack set off a series of violent incidents between the Kataib and

the PLO that involved three distinct phases. The first event took place on the morning of April 13th, when masked men attempted to assassinate the popular Maronite leader Pierre Gemayel. This prompted the second event, a Kataib massacre of Palestinian refugees. These attacks created a sense of victimization on both sides and sectarian warfare broke out around Beirut as militias sought revenge. The violence in turn triggered a government crisis, the third and final event. Through their unique framing of these crises, intellectuals Kamal Salibi, Samir Khalaf, Farid el-Khazen, Marius Deeb and Rashid Khalidi debated not only the causes of the civil war, but also the effectiveness of the enduring political system. Their dissimilar depictions of the same event reveal their biases and perspectives on the conflict.

The Attack on Gemayel:

Historian Kamal Salibi framed the fundamental underpinning of the civil war as a sectarian struggle between the Maronite Right and the predominantly Muslim Left.[19] Salibi wrote his account in 1976, during the early stages of the war. His understanding of the origins of the conflict reflected an interpretation of events prior to 1976, and thus was uninfluenced by the changing alliances and massacres that came later. So too his personal history and religious affiliation undoubtedly influenced his interpretation of the events. Salibi was born to a Protestant family in Beirut in May of 1929 and his religious upbringing granted him a unique perspective

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[19] Salibi's account is representative of other historical works that present a similar sectarian thesis such as Sandra Mackey's *A Mirror of the Arab World*; Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies* and Michael Oren's *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East*

on the sectarian factions in his country.[20] Salibi's personal background did not predispose him to either a Maronite or Sunni cause. Thus, free from specific sectarian allegiance, he argued that the Right and the Left had equal roles in instigating the violence of the war, with the corresponding implication that the political structure was incapable of resolving the sectarian tensions.

Salibi's "sectarian thesis" was apparent in his description of the attempted assassination of Pierre Gemayel. Salibi understood that the attack on Gemayel was a part of an ongoing struggle between the militias of the Maronite Right and other militant groups in Beirut. On the morning of April 13th, Pierre Gemayel was attending a consecration of a Maronite church in the Christian suburb of 'Ayn al-Rummaneh. The church leaders were known affiliates of Gemayel's party and the church was named after the popular leader. Due to the publicity of the event, the Maronite party brought armed members of the Kataib militia to protect Gemayel from any potential threats.[21] But the peace was disrupted:

> The Kataib militiamen were guarding the approaches to the church [and] stopped a car which was passing by with its license plate covered, and forced it to change its course, after having a row with the men inside. Following this encounter, another car with a covered license plate broke through the Kataib security lines and men from the second car shot in the direction of the church entrance killing four men, two of them members of the Kataib militia and one the bodyguard of Pierre Gemayel.[22]

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[20] While most Maronites were firmly on the Right, other Christian sects such as Greek Orthodox and Protestants were evenly divided between the politic Right and Left. The Protestant place in the Maronite and Muslim sectarian conflict was less defined and free from an allegiance to one side.

[21] Salibi, *Crossroads to civil war : Lebanon, 1958-1976*: 98.

[22] Ibid.

Salibi revealed his sectarian view-point by suggesting that the Maronites had anticipated such a conflict and were prepared to fight. The Kataib had formed a militia which was present at the consecration, not to celebrate, but to act as bodyguards. Furthermore, Salibi was careful to avoid depicting either party as the victim. He refused to speculate about the identity of the assailants and did not suggest that Gemayel was the target of the attacks. Other historians exaggerated these events to invoke sympathy or antagonism for the parties involved. His description of the attack on Gemayel suggested that the violent exchange between militias was a longstanding pattern of equal involvement and indicative of systemic problems within Lebanon.

Sociologist Samir Khalaf presented a differing view of the origins of the conflict. He traced it not to an eruption of sectarian discord, but to the Palestinians' arrival in Lebanon and the development of a violent PLO base in the country that destabilized the tenuous existing political and social order, inciting the civil war. Khalaf, currently the director of the Center for Behavioral Research at the American University of Beirut, has written extensively on the moral consciousness of the Lebanese people.[23] Khalaf's argument typifies the position of the current Lebanese Right, which strives to protect its political power in an increasingly Muslim Middle East. In a 2012 editorial on his book *Lebanon Adrift: From Battleground to Playground*, Andrew Arsan with the Lebanese English-Language newspaper the

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[23] Ibid.

Daily Star, notes that "Khalaf is unabashedly nostalgic for the Lebanon he knew before 1975."[24]

To support this thesis, Khalaf depicted Gemayel and the Maronites as unwitting victims of a violent assault.[25] While Khalaf and Salibi's descriptions were generally similar, Khalaf shaped the recreation of events leading to the outbreak of violence by omitting details unfavorable to his thesis. To this end, Khalaf traced the origin of the violence to the instance when a car with unidentified assailants and a concealed license plate broke through a Kataib security line. The passengers in the car "fired at the Sunday church congregation. Four men, including two of Gemayel's personal bodyguards were killed."[26]

This sympathetic depiction of the Maronites as victims justified Khalaf's overarching thesis that Lebanon was peaceful prior to the arrival of the Palestinians. Khalaf rejected Salibi's theory that longstanding hostilities existed between the Maronites and the other sects. This is demonstrated by Khalaf's depiction of the Kataib as civilians, part of the "Sunday congregation" as opposed to armed soldiers. In this way, he defended the current government structure by suggesting that prior to the attack on the Maronites, Lebanon was peaceful and the political structure allowed camaraderie between sects. Moreover, Khalaf emphasized that the Maronites were victims of the attack by implying that the murdered Maronites were "personal"

[24] Andrew Arsan, "From Battle to Play: Just a Few Words on What's Gone Wrong," *The Daily Star*, 3 Jan. 2012, 16.

[25] Khalaf's account is representative of other works that present a similar "foreign instigators" thesis such as Mahmoud Labadi's *Abduction of Lebanon*; Itmar Rabinovich's *The War for Lebanon*

[26] Samir Khalaf, *Civil and uncivil violence in Lebanon a history of the internationalization of communal contact* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). 226. 226

bodyguards of Gemayel who died to save their leader. By prefacing the bus tragedy with a Christian tragedy, Khalaf presented the Palestinian bus attack that followed as an act of justified retaliation as opposed to unprovoked violence.

Historian Farid el-Khazen similarly blamed the destabilizing influence of the Palestinians. However, El-Khazen went further and suggested that the Palestinians were puppets of an unnamed international agency that used the PLO's aggression to weaken Lebanon. Roots of this perspective are revealed in el-Khazen's familial history. The current patriarchs of the el-Khazen family trace their ancestry back to the foundation of Lebanon, in the 16th century, describing themselves as "great fathers of the Lebanese nation, more specifically the Maronites."[27] El-Khazen's book *The Breakdown of the State of Lebanon* was published in 1999 and reflected this strong sense of family history. Similar to Khalaf, el-Khazen echoed the Maronite view-point during the conflict and used this as the foundation for his understanding of the underpinnings of the civil war. Like Khalaf, his account defended the Maronite-supported political structure.

El-Khazen supported his thesis that Palestinians were the instigators of the civil war by describing the attack on Gemayel as a carefully planned assault by the PLO rather than a continuation of fighting between sectarian groups long at odds. According to his account, the first car was "forced to break through a police blockade of the area and drove at the crowd."[28] The driver was only stopped when a Kataib

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[27] Malek el-Khazen, "Great Fathers," De Khazen, www.khazen.org.
[28] El-Khazen, *The breakdown of the state in Lebanon, 1967-1976*: 287.

member "shot him in the hand."[29] The second car arrived an hour later and was forced to break "through an Internal Security check point that was set up in response to the first shooting."[30] The car had "licenses plates covered by paper, displaying guerilla slogans" and the armed men in the car fired at the people gathered outside of the church entrance.[31] In the second shooting, "Gemayel's bodyguard, Joseph Abu 'Assi, a Kataib member Antoine al-Husseini, and two other individuals were killed."[32] The violent attack left the Kataib Party "on full alert, following the killing a few hours earlier of two people by Palestinian gunmen."[33] They created road blocks and armed themselves in anticipation of more fighting.

By depicting the Maronites as victims of a violent attack, el-Khazen justified his thesis that foreigners instigated the war and destabilized what was a functional political system. Though Khalaf and Salibi were unwilling to speculate on the identity of the assailants, el-Khazen acknowledged the assailants as Palestinians to establish them as outsiders. Furthermore, el-Khazen exaggerated the details of the assault to demonize the Palestinians and depict the Maronites as victims. Unlike Salibi's account, in el-Khazen's account the occupants of the first car did not argue with the Kataib but instead attempted to kill Maronite civilians by driving at the crowd. When the Palestinians successfully murdered Maronites in the second attack, el-Khazen identified the dead by name in an attempt to elicit an emotional connection with the readers. Both el-Khazen and Khalaf's versions of the events suggest that the

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[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 286.

Maronites were forced to engage in the violent struggle by the aggressive

Palestinians. Like Khalaf, el-Khazen depicted the Maronites as victims to justify the

subsequent bus attack.

The Attack on the Palestinian Bus:

Salibi's sectarian thesis was likewise apparent in his description of the

Palestinian bus attack. By his account, on the morning of the 13th, a Palestinian

"commando parade" was held in the Muslim quarters of Beirut "to celebrate a

successful guerilla operation inside Israel."[34] After, a group of Palestinians attempted

to return to the Tal al-Zatar camp by bus and "Christian gunmen who were believed

to be members of the Kataib militia ambushed the bus as it passed through 'Ayn al-

Rummaneh and shot all the passengers dead."[35] Furthermore, while the gunmen who

attacked Gemayel "were not necessarily commandos, the Kataib Party seemed

convinced they were" and killed the Palestinians to prevent more disturbances.[36]

Salibi thus rejected the popular Maronite notion of Palestinian instigation by

incorporating the Muslim community into the conflict between the Maronites and the

Palestinians.

Salibi established the PLO as allies of the political Left and therefore part of

the sectarian struggle. He suggested that the Palestinian relationship with the Muslims

already existed prior to the attacks by noting that the Muslims allowed the parade to

occur in their quarter and likely supported the PLO action against Israel. Furthermore,

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[34] Salibi, *Crossroads to civil war : Lebanon, 1958-1976*: 98.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

by emphasizing the pre-existing Maronite and Palestinian militias, he assembled a selective accounting of the event consistent with his overarching thesis of sectarian tension.

Khalaf described the same event through a different perspective. He argued that the Maronites armed themselves and attacked the Palestinians out of fear of another assault from the unpredictable commandos. "The people of 'Ayn al-Rummaneh were anxiety-ridden after the shooting at the church."[37] He identified the Palestinians who attended the parade as "commandos" and not simply supporters of the commando raids in Israel. Khalaf revealed his perspective even more clearly when he wrote that the "outraged Christian militias were in no mood but to assume that the armed Palestinians in the bus were coming back to provoke another confrontation."[38]

With this description, Khalaf subtly shifted the responsibility for the attack from the Christians to the Palestinians. By arguing that the Maronites were not naturally aggressive, and that such a massacre would not have occurred if they had not first been attacked, Khalaf framed the Palestinians as the responsible party that incited the cascade of events. This is further demonstrated by Khalaf's depiction of the Palestinian refugees as "commandos" rather than civilians.

El-Khazen reinforced his thesis of foreign instigators by suggesting that a foreign government orchestrated the Palestinian bus attack. He described the

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[37] Khalaf, *Civil and uncivil violence in Lebanon a history of the internationalization of communal contact*: 229.
[38] Ibid.

Palestinian presence in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh as a direct threat to the Maronites due to an agreement between the Maronites and the PLO days prior to the attack. "In anticipation of a Palestinian rally and Pierre Gemayel's attendance at a church ceremony" Lebanese security forces signed an agreement with Palestinian officials that prevented convoys of armed guerillas from passing through 'Ayn al-Rummaneh on the 13th.[39] However, unlike Khalaf, el-Khazen argued that the commandos did not intend to threaten the Maronites that afternoon.[40] He argued that, "an official internal security report" stated that the Palestinian presence in the neighborhood was not an accident. The bus driver, who was Lebanese, knew the area well enough to avoid 'Ayn al-Rummaneh. But the driver claimed that an unidentified policeman instructed him to drive through the area anyways. After the attack, Lebanese authorities never discovered "how the policeman surfaced and he disappeared leaving no trace."[41] When the bus full of commandos illegally approached the church, the Kataib "believed that they were under attack for a second time. They fired at the bus to protect those still at the church."[42]

El-Khazen further defended the existing political structure by blaming the bus attack on foreign influence, namely the Palestinians and a foreign intelligence agency, as demonstrated by the addition of "the policeman." The policeman's identity was untraceable, which, el-Khazen suggested, proved that the man was a foreign intelligence officer who intentionally misled the bus driver to incite the Maronites.

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[39] El-Khazen, *The breakdown of the state in Lebanon, 1967-1976*: 286.
[40] Ibid., 287.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

El-Khazen did not absolve the Palestinians of some accountability for the violence; he noted that "one cannot but suspect that what happened in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh was not merely an accidental act of violence" but rather a Palestinian ploy to incite the Kataib.[43] By depicting the combined assaults by the Palestinians and the foreign intelligence agency, el-Khazen implied that the Maronites were forced to act. By this description, any Lebanese responsibility for the ensuing violence is conspicuously missing. Absolving the Lebanese of responsibility for these events is a common motif in Lebanese historical writing that journalist Robert Fisk described as "The Plot…a conspiracy of treachery in which a foreign hand…[is] always involved."[44]

Historian Marius Deeb presented a sectarian conflict-based thesis for the origins of the war. He argued that a power imbalance that favored the Maronites and repressed the Left, thus creating inevitable sectarian conflict. Deeb, an American citizen, was born to Lebanese parents who lived through the civil war.[45] He was a professor at the American University of Beirut and is a frequent commentator in broadcast and print media especially in regards to conflict in the Middle East.[46] His negative view of the Lebanese government likely developed as a result of his parents' experienced during the war. In his book, *the Lebanese Civil War,* which was published in 1980, Deeb supported Salibi's view that mounting sectarian conflicts triggered the war, and further condemned the Maronites as a power-hungry political group that suppressed the Left.

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Fisk, *Pity the nation : the abduction of Lebanon*: 78.

[45] Deeb, *The Lebanese civil war*: I.

[46] Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, "Johns Hopkins SAIS Academics ".

His account was unconcerned with the attempt on Gemayel's life and instead depicted the Maronites as a violent, repressive force. Deeb argued that politicians and the militias of the political Right created tension in Lebanon. He rejected el-Khazen and Khalaf's defense of the Maronites and proposed an alternative victim, the Palestinians. His description of the April 13th attack was short: "a bus with mostly Palestinians, as well as some Lebanese passengers, was ambushed by a group of armed Phalangists at 'Ayn al-Rummaneh suburb of Beirut…twenty seven passengers were killed and twenty others were wounded."[47]

The attack on Gemayel, an event that Khalaf and el-Khazen used to garner sympathy for the Phalangists, was entirely omitted from Deeb's historical account. Thus, from his account it appeared that the Kataib offensive was vicious and unprovoked as the Palestinian civilians were not a threat. With this thesis, Deeb challenged the Maronite political establishment by suggesting that they dominated the political system even to the point of violence, as witnessed by the bus attack.

The Government Crisis:

In the days after the bus attack, subsequent fighting led to governmental instability. Salibi's depiction of the government crisis as a part of a longstanding battle between the Right and the Left was the culmination of his argument that the political institution was incapable of preventing the civil war. On the evening of the 13th, Leftist leaders met at Kamal Jumblatt's house. They planned to call for "the immediate disbanding of the Kataib party from Parliament" and the removal of two

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[47] Deeb, *The Lebanese civil war*: 1.

Kataib ministers from the government in response to the Palestinian bus attack.[48] But according to Salibi's account, continued fighting between the Kataib and Palestinian commandos prevented the PLO and National Movement leaders from "[concerting] their political moves with the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh incidents."[49] In response to the Left's plan, the Maronites forced the Prime Minister to resign.

Salibi suggested that the long-held Maronite control of Lebanese politics and economy antagonized the Left, as evidenced by the Leftist leaders' attempts to use the bus attack to usurp the Maronites. He reinforced the idea of a Palestinian-Leftist alliance by noting that the Left represented the Palestinians' political concerns in government. His account included the Palestinians as one of many equals in the sectarian struggle, thus he implicitly rejected the thesis that they were the foreign destabilizing force causing war. Instead, Salibi's focus remained on locating responsibility for the conflict in an inherently imbalanced political structure which was unable to accommodate mounting sectarian discord, as manifested by his depiction of the failed Leftist attempt to expel the Maronites.

In contrast, el-Khazen argued a Maronite perspective of the government crisis, describing the political breakdown as a Palestinian attack on the Right. Though the National Movement supported the Palestinian attempt to undermine the Maronites, according to el-Khazen's account, the majority of the Left did not actively participate in the political struggle. Kamal Jumblatt was the only non-Palestinian aggressor who played a large role in the political war on the Kataib. The Leftist parties only

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[48] Salibi, *Crossroads to civil war : Lebanon, 1958-1976*: 99.
[49] Ibid.

publically supported Jumblatt to "prevent military escalation by the PLO."[50] El-Khazen went on to assert that, in response to the bus attack, Arafat, Jumblatt and another Palestinian leader, Zuheir Mohsin, "called for the Kataib to be banned" from government.[51] This resulted in retaliation from the Right, placing intense pressure on the government to prevent Arafat's plot, and ultimately forcing the Muslim Prime Minister to resign.

El-Khazen downplayed the role of the National Movement and emphasized the Palestinian faction while deemphasizing sectarian animosities. To this end, he suggested that the Leftist parties were not inherently opposed to the Maronite hegemony, but felt pressure to support Jumblatt, or risk further Palestinian aggression. Furthermore, he emphasized Jumblatt and Arafat's roles, in the conflict. While Khalaf omitted the discussion of the government crisis, likely to avoid discussing the sectarian tensions in the country, el-Khazen suggested that the PLO was attempting to control Lebanon politically and militarily. The sectarian balance that existed prior to the Palestinian arrival was therefore upset and the PLO, not the political system, was responsible for the government crisis.

Deeb represented yet another prevailing view of this event. In support of his one-sided sectarian thesis, he argued that the Maronites were responsible for the government turmoil, and agreed with Salibi's account that the government structure was incapable of effectively balancing power. However, he rejected Salibi's suggestion that the Left and Right were equally involved and thus equally

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[50] El-Khazen, *The breakdown of the state in Lebanon, 1967-1976*: 288.
[51] Ibid.

accountable for the violence that followed. Deeb argued that the Muslim Prime Minister Rashid al-Sulh, "who was backed by Kamal Jumblatt and his leftist allies" was forced to resign on May 15th.[52] Al-Sulh was pressured out of his position because the Maronite cabinet members resigned from government when Jumblatt attempted to hold the Kataib accountable for the bus attack. "Their resignation was in protest to Jumblatt's attempt to boycott and isolate politically, in both Lebanon and the Arab world, the Maronite Right, which Jumblatt believed was responsible for the bus ambush."[53]

By describing the Left as the victims of the government crisis, Deeb continued to build an argument that the repressive Maronite Right attempted to protect the unbalanced system. Deeb carefully organized his account of the events, beginning with al-Sulh's resignation to make the Prime Minister appear to be a victim. Deeb ended his description with Jumblatt's attempt to oust the Maronites from government, an event that actually occurred first and therefore caused al-Sulh's eventual resignation. In this way, Deeb attributed al-Sulh's resignation to the Maronite boycott. He admitted that Jumblatt had a role in the government crisis, but failed to acknowledge that the National Movement supported Jumblatt. This omission concerning the role of the National Movement and the inversion of events, intended to suggest that the onus for the government crisis lay with the Maronites, who were not only guilty of senselessly murdering the Palestinians but also of repressing the Left.

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[52] Deeb, *The Lebanese civil war*: 1.
[53] Ibid.

The fighting between the Kataib and the Palestinian commandos continued during this government crisis. On April 16th, peace attempts failed and the situation deteriorated into civil war.

International Politics:

Historian Rashid Khalidi's 2009 account *Sowing the Crisis* represented a unique offshoot of the "foreign instigators" thesis. He absolved the Lebanese of accountability for the civil war in developing his thesis that international machinations were the real origins of instability. Khalidi, the son of a Palestinian and Lebanese American, became politically active in Lebanon during the 1970s. His direct involvement in the war as a spokesperson for the Palestinians undoubtedly inspired this thesis, which implicitly defended the Palestinians, and Khalidi, for their roles in the war. Khalidi's perspective therefore rests on the ideological periphery when weighed against the arguments articulated by Salibi, Deeb, Khalaf and El-Khazen.

Khalidi's description of the internal conflict in the country was cursory, as manifested by his omission of the assassination attempt on Gemayel and the government turmoil. He claimed the start of the war was "ignited by the massacre…of twenty-seven Palestinians traveling by bus through the 'Ayn al-Rummaneh suburb of Beirut."[54] His account of the Lebanese Civil War rapidly moved to a depiction of regional power balance and its effect on Lebanon. He noted

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[54] Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing crisis : the Cold War and American dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009). 142.

that American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had just brokered a disengagement agreement between the Egypt and Israel, which from this historical interpretation created further instability in the region instead of diffusing regional tensions. This was reflected in passages where Khalidi noted that "this began a period of acute tension in the Arab world" especially for the Syrians and the Palestinians, who feared the loss of their Egyptian ally.[55] Likewise, Soviet Russia was concerned about the Egyptian-Israeli situation. They "feared …that they were in consequence losing their privileged position in Egypt to the Americans. They were just as suspicious of Kissinger and Sadat as were the Palestinians and Syrians."[56] As a result of these fears, the Soviets decided to support the Palestinian and National Movement's interests in Lebanon, hoping to challenge American influence in the Middle East. This "pitted the Palestinians, their leftist and Muslim allies in the Lebanese National Movement and Syria…against right-wing Lebanese parties."[57] In response, the United States and Israel quietly supported the Maronite right-wing.

Khalidi developed his thesis of foreign instigation by suggesting that the Lebanese people did not have control over the events that occurred within their country. By his account the Soviet government controlled the National Movement and the Palestinians and was therefore responsible for instigating the war. He supported this by implying that the Soviets did not support the Lebanese Left out of concern for Muslim interests in the conflict. Rather, the Soviets offered aid to the Muslims in an attempt to retaliate against Kissinger's pact with Egypt and Israel.

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

Furthermore, Khalidi suggested that the United States and Israel challenged the

Soviet's pact with the Muslims in an attempt to maintain dominance in the Middle

East. The United States and Israel accomplished this by supported the National

Movement's enemies, the Maronites. Thus, the Maronites and the National

Movement were depicted as pawns in a cold war battle. Khalidi subtly defends the

confessionalist structure as he implied that the various sects in the country would not

have been able to sustain a war had foreign powers not intervened.

The Syrian Invasion:

The diverse interpretations of the Palestinian bus attack are echoed in

historical accounts of the first Syrian invasion of Lebanon. It is understood by some

as an invasion that undermined Lebanese agency while others argue that Syria entered

Lebanon in defense of the central government with the intention of saving the country

from war. Once again, these varying interpretations serve as transparent voices for the

opinions of the factions vying for power in present day Lebanon. The author's

characterization of the leading political figures in the crisis unmistakably identifies

their underlying theses and is a lens by which the Syrian invasion can be assessed.

El-Khazen depicted the Maronite ally Assad as a sympathetic figure, while his

account presents the Palestinian leader Arafat in an unfavorable light to support his

Palestinian-instigation thesis.[58] El-Khazen presented the sequence of events as

follows: the Syrian invasion was preceded by the first combined PLO-Leftist strike

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[58] Assad is seen as a sympathetic figure in Maronite perspectives until the Syrians switch
alliances.

against the Christian village of Kahhalen on Mount Lebanon. President Assad
attempted to broker a peace settlement by meeting with Jumblatt. But when Jumblatt
refused to accept a cease-fire, Assad attempted to convince Arafat to end his assault
in the mountains and convince his allies to end their attacks against the Maronites.
However, Arafat would only agree a cease-fire if Assad provided the PLO with
weapons for their fight in Beirut and against Israel. When Assad refused, Arafat
returned to Lebanon, leaving the Syrian President little choice but to invade and
protect the Maronites.

By depicting the Syrian invasion as a justifiable peace-keeping mission
against the PLO, El-Khazen implicitly absolved, and therefore defended, the existing
Lebanese political structure. Through his depiction of the Palestinians, outsiders, as
the aggressors who perpetuated the war, el-Khazen suggested that the violence would
have ended if the Palestinians had agreed to a cease-fire. This account viewed
Arafat's decisions and objectives as the responsible party for the conflict, as
evidenced by Arafat's refusal to sign the peace treaty that Assad created, and as
evidenced by the PLO leaders' demand for weapons. From el-Khazen's perspective,
the Syrian invasion was a heroic attempt to restore peace to Lebanon. He furthermore
insinuated that anyone challenging the Syrian invasion was not acting in the best
interest of Lebanon.

Khalaf ended his narrative of the civil war in January of 1976 and was
therefore silent on the issue of the Syrian invasion. However, his thesis of a
Palestinian cause is echoed by many other historians. One such author, Theodor Hanf,

supported this argument, saying that "what started as primarily a surrogate war over Palestine has become a conflict over coexistence between various Lebanese groups as well."[59] Hanf wrote his account, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*, in 1997. In his review of *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon,* Asad abu Khalil suggested that Hanf's German ancestry affected his work. Abu Khalil said that "Hanf clearly shares the views of the [Kataib] Party, and he makes an effort to present the party in the best light possible."[60] On the other hand, Hanf understood Islam from a stereotypical perspective of "German Orientalism" and therefore argued that the Palestinians were incapable of allowing Israel and Lebanon to be ruled by Jewish and Christian leaders as it was condemned by Islam.[61] Hanf's analysis of the Syrian invasion demonstrated this biased belief in a Palestinian cause for the war.

Hanf's thesis was apparent in his description of the Syrian invasion as a peace-keeping mission that resulted from Arafat's refusal to sign a cease-fire agreement. Hanf agreed with el-Khazen's depictions of the meetings between Assad, Jumblatt and Arafat. Assad devised a Lebanese constitutional document that "fulfilled practically all of Jumblatt's demands, yet the latter had…unleashed a new round of fighting" and would not submit to the plan without Jumblatt's support of the joint PLO-Leftist attempt to destroy Maronite hegemony.[62] When Assad turned to Arafat

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[59] Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon : decline of a state and rise of a nation* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I.B. Tauris, 1993). 5.

[60] Asad AbuKhalil, "Review of Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29(1997).

[61] Ibid.

[62] Hanf, *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon : decline of a state and rise of a nation*: 218.

for assistance, reasoning that "the Palestinian fight in the [Lebanese mountains] [was]

definitely not fighting for Palestine" Arafat refused to support the peace plan.[63]

Hanf theorized that Arafat gave Jumblatt an opportunity to repress the

Maronites, forcing Assad to intervene and restore control. In support of the

government structure, Hanf emphasized that Assad had faith in confessionalism and

wished to return to the system that existed prior to the war. Hanf suggested that while

Jumblatt was driven by sectarian anger, this anger would not have developed into

violent warfare had Arafat not supported the Leftist cause. Moreover, Hanf argued

that Arafat and the PLO had no grievances against the Maronites yet they maintained

the war. Unlike el-Khazen's thesis of Palestinian puppets, Hanf suggested that Arafat

was the puppeteer who was manipulating Jumblatt. Arafat used the Leftist complaints

against the Maronites to establish a Muslim rule in Lebanon and support his war

against the Israelis.

Salibi's work *Cross Roads to Civil War*, as it has been noted, was published in

1976 and he did not continue to analyze the events of the war in later works.

However, his influential argument is a respected thesis for the origins of the civil war.

Dr. Robert Rabil used it to explore the events of the rest of the war in his 2011 work

Religion, National Identity and Confessional Politics in Lebanon. He argued that "the

civil war initiated the process of dividing Lebanon along heavily armed sectarian

lines."[64] Notably, Rabil wrote his analysis of the war more than twenty years after its

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Robert G. Rabil, *Religion, national identity, and confessional politics in Lebanon : the challenge of Islamism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). 9.

conclusion, during a period in which sectarian violence returned to the country. Therefore, his thesis was likely affected by the popularity of Salibi's account and the new sectarian crisis afflicting Lebanon.

Rabil's account depicted Assad as a mediator who attempted to instill peace by ending the sectarian violence. In Rabil's view, Jumblatt planned and executed the military strike against the Maronites with the help of the Sunni Left. The Druze leader directed the offensive against the Maronites to "overthrow Maronite hegemony over the Lebanese system".[65] Jumblatt and his Leftist supporters believed that this military offensive was an act that would "[save] Lebanon and its Arabism" from the Maronite attempts to Christianize and conquer the country.[66] The fighting was an issue of concern for the Syrian president, who feared that Lebanon would fracture as Palestine had. "Assad had a long stormy meeting with Jumblatt during which the latter refused to obey a Syrian request for an immediate cease-fire" and so Assad invaded.[67]

Rabil supported Salibi's sectarian thesis by ignoring Arafat's role in the fighting and emphasizing the unsolvable struggle between the Left and the Right. By acknowledging the Maronite hegemony in the Lebanese system, Rabil established sectarian relations as the central grievance in the war: the Maronites were attempting to "Christianize" Lebanon while the Muslims were trying to "Arabize it", causing internal discord. Rabil argued that Jumblatt and his Leftist allies would not surrender to a Maronite dominated government, thus forcing Assad to invade. Furthermore,

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[65] Ibid., 23.

[66] Ibid

[67] Rabil, *Religion, national identity, and confessional politics in Lebanon : the challenge of Islamism*: 25.

Rabil omitted the role of the Palestinians, particularly Arafat's meeting with Assad, to emphasize the struggle between the Left and the Right. The absence of the PLO in the narrative challenged accounts, like el-Khazen's, that argued that a foreign presence destabilized the country

Deeb presented a similar sectarian thesis, but emphasized the idea that Syrian invasion occurred because of Maronite violence in the mountains. The Syrian offensive was the result of the assassination of Kamal Jumblatt's sister and the coinciding conflict between the Lebanese Arab Army and Maronite soldiers. While the Maronites officially welcomed the Syrian presence in Lebanon and praised Assad's attempt to foster peace in the country, the sect was quietly "reserved."[68] As with the Left, the conservatives believed that the foreign army presented a threat to its political control in Lebanon. However, the Christians quickly supported the unjust Syrian invasion when, on June 8th, the PLO successfully arranged an emergency meeting with members of the Arab League. This meeting enraged the Maronite leadership and they feared that the League would soon pressure them to negotiate with the Palestinians. After the PLO-Arab League meeting, Frangiyeh issued a second, more complimentary welcome to the Syrian forces, saying that their intervention "was temporary and would end when peace and security was established."[69]

Deeb's description of the Syrian invasion as undesirable furthered his argument that the Maronites were manipulative and attempted to repress the Left and

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[68] Deeb, *The Lebanese civil war*: 51.
[69] Ibid.

gain power. Deeb suggested that the Maronites feared Assad's invasion, but publically embraced it to maintain their political control, as evidenced by Frangiyeh's changing statements. The Maronites were willing to uphold their hegemony regardless of the cost. Deeb furthermore continued to exonerate the National Movement's role in the conflict. He did not acknowledge the fighting in the mountains and rather noted that the invasion was due to the assassination of Jumblatt's sister and a conflict involving Maronite soldiers. He used this idea of deception to solidify his depiction of the Maronites as a power-hungry confession determined to suppress the PLO and other Muslim sects to maintain control of the government.

Khalidi's thesis of external causes was apparent in his description of the Syrian invasion in Lebanon as the result of Cold War inspired external international influence, and not internal societal strife. Assad was becoming "concerned about the growing strength of the PLO-LNM alliance and its increasing independence from Syria."[70] The Syrian President resented this increasing lack of control over the PLO and feared the Israeli invasion that might result if the alliance succeeded in defeating the Lebanese Right. When Assad could not manipulate forces already in place in Lebanon, the Syrian army invaded the country in June of 1976. Unlike the previous accounts of the Syrian invasion, Assad was largely undisturbed with the outcome of the civil war unless it threatened Syria.[71]

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[70] Khalidi, *Sowing crisis : the Cold War and American dominance in the Middle East*: 142.
[71] Ibid.

Khalidi continued to develop this external argument by suggesting that the Syrian invasion depended on support from the United States thus implying that during the Cold War the United Sates government controlled all of the major political events in the Middle East. Khalidi suggested that US politicians and Assad orchestrated the invasion for their own political gain. The US hoped that a Syrian invasion in Lebanon would "turn one Soviet client against another", thereby strengthening America's position in the Cold War.[72] The invasion occurred not only because of the US manipulation, but also because the Soviets were too weak to stop it. The Soviet Union "saw perfectly well the game Kissinger was playing," but it was unable to intervene militarily and was forced to sit idly by as Syria invaded Lebanon.[73]

Thus, Khalidi argued that the Syrian invasion was a situation that was carefully manipulated by the United States. All of the foreign powers involved were interested solely for their own gain and each government considered the response of other foreign powers before acting. Lebanon, however, had no such role in the war. The fighting began, not because of an unsound government structure and sectarian tensions but because the United States and the Soviet Union were fighting a proxy war in Lebanon. Similarly, the Syrian invasion was a continuation of this foreign manipulation and Lebanon was powerless to act against it.

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[72] Ibid., 143.

[73] Ibid.

Situating the Historiography in Time:

While a nuanced examination of the intellectuals' accounts is necessary to understand their causal arguments, situating their works in time is equally important. Such a study adds another dimension to the investigation of the influences of the conflict.

Salibi, who published *Crossroads to Civil War* in 1976, and Deeb, whose account, *The Lebanese Civil War*, was published in 1980, studied the conflict during the outset of the war, when it was yet unclear what the extent of the damage would be. Both men labeled it the Civil war of 1975 to 1976 and they believed that Lebanon was once again returning to the orthodox system of confessionalism.[74] The return to Maronite hegemony likely explains the comparatively smaller amount of "foreign instigator" theses. However, those historians who embraced what the Daily Star's Brooke Anderson called Salibi's "secular and inclusive voice" amongst a divided Lebanon were concerned that sectarianism would create continuing conflict.[75] Some of these sectarian voices, like Deeb, attempted to support the "Arabism" movement that had developed in the country prior to the war, in an effort to challenge the Maronite overrepresentation in government.[76] The one-sided sectarian thesis of instigation was likely an attempt to preserve this movement and challenge the Maronite hegemony that was sustained after the fighting in 1976.

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[74] Salibi, *Crossroads to civil war : Lebanon, 1958-1976*: 2. and Deeb, *The Lebanese civil war*: 156.
[75] Arsan, "From Battle to Play: Just a Few Words on What's Gone Wrong."
[76] Salibi, *Crossroads to civil war : Lebanon, 1958-1976*: 37.

Hanf's 1993 account was written on his tour of the country in the first few years after the war's end. Much of Lebanon was wearied by the fighting. As a consequence, they embraced the idea that "the threat of violence [was] less pronounced in [Lebanon] than in the relevant studies of them."[77] This concept was later challenged by historians who argued that as many as 100,000 individuals were killed and many more were displaced.[78] However, at the time, the return to normalcy was embraced.[79] Hanf's opinions of the situation, which were already influenced by what Asad abu Khalil referred to as Hanf's German Orientalist view of the Muslims, were likely also affected by this desire to maintain peace.

El-Khazen wrote his account during the late 1990s, a period that was marked by a general sense of confusion about the fate of political fate of the country. In 1993, there had been a series of "general strikes" over the dismal state of the Lebanese economy. At that time the country was economically polarized, with the majority of the population living below the poverty line.[80] While this poverty did not directly affect much of the Maronite elite, it echoed the period of financial polarization that existed in the decade prior to the war. In response, the Syrian-controlled government deployed the army "to the streets" to repress the uprisings.[81] It was this Syrian hegemony that challenged Maronite control in the country and invoked hostility in the community. Many Maronite leaders, such as Aoun, Dory Chamoun (the son of the former President) and Amin Gemayel remained in exile after the war and they

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[77] Leila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (University of California Press, 1999). 101.
[78] Lee Hockstader, "Lebanon's Forgotten Civil War," *The Washington Post* 1999.
[79] Haugbolle, *War and memory in Lebanon*: 65.
[80] Johnson, *All Honorable Men*: 235.
[81] Ibid.

encouraged the Maronite community to boycott the first elections in 1992. The subsequent low turn-out "reflected the initial disillusionment with the…opposition to Syrian military occupation."[82]

While there was a larger turn out in the 1996 elections and many Maronite leaders had returned to the country by 1999 to attempt to participate in the government, the Maronite hostility towards the Syrian presence in the country prevailed. For el-Khazen, who wrote at the start of this period of Maronite antagonism, and for Khalaf, who wrote during the late 1999s and published in 2002, as the period progressed, the Syrian occupation had a significant impact on their accounts. The direction of the government was still unclear, and the Maronite community was afraid that the Syrian occupation of the country would permanently end their political and economic hegemony.

After 2005, both the "sectarian thesis" and the "foreign instigators" thesis were established in the historiography of the war. While the struggle between Syrian and Maronite hegemony still prevailed, some politicians, like President Rafik Hariri, considered challenging the state-sponsored silence of the war.[83] However, his efforts did not come to fruition, as he was assassinated in February of 2005.[84] The United Nations mandated an investigation of Hariri's death and many feared or celebrated the possibility of a larger investigation of the conflict that instigated the war.[85] However, due to political pressure from Hezbollah/HizbAllah, the investigation was

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[82] Ibid., 237.
[83] Haugbolle, *War and memory in Lebanon*: 56.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Young, *The ghosts of Martyrs Square : an eyewitness account of Lebanon's life struggle*. 251.

abandoned.[86] The confusion of this period is best typified by Michael Young's study of Hariri's assassination, in which he condemned what he viewed to be the popular defamation of sectarianism but, at the same time, agreed that such a system was crippling the Lebanese government.[87] Rabil's 2011 account and Khalidi's 2009 account typified this pervasive struggle between instigating foreigners or the cross-sectarian animosity.

In summary, the diverse Lebanese historical interpretations of the underpinnings of the Civil War of 1975-1990 are in many respects less important for their different conclusions and more significant for reflecting the unsettled tensions that remain to this day. Khalaf, el-Khazen and Hanf furthered a Maronite argument of an external instigator, the Palestinians,. In turn they implied support for the Lebanese government, suggesting that there was little discord in the political system before the arrival of the Palestinian refugees. Khalidi similarly argued that foreigners, US, Soviet, Israeli and Syrian politicians, were the instigators of the war. He likewise pardoned the Lebanese people by presenting them as incapable of sustaining such a war.

In contrast, Deeb Salibi and Rabil suggested that there were inherent flaws in the government system. Deeb argued that the sectarian imbalances, especially those imbalances that favored the Maronite political dominance, doomed the existing political system because it was incapable of effectively channeling these mounting

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[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid

tensions. Salibi and Rabil were critical of the actions of both the Left and the Right, implying that the political system had allowed these sectarian issues to proliferate.

All of these factors contributed to the decimation of Lebanon from 1975-1990. The country was forced to contend with Middle Eastern and Cold War politics and to manage a discontented refugee population. However, the disparities of political authority within the government created an imbalance of power between religious sects and ultimately pitted sectarian groups against one another. Moreover, the political imbalances in the government were not resolved with the war's end. Lebanon must still contend with this problematic system and sects continue to be alienated from each other. By unintentionally voicing their biases and concerns about this system, historians have identified the fundamental issue that continues to create tension in Lebanon.

However, because these historical accounts focused on the politics of the war, they did not offer much insight into the Lebanese public perception of the concept. Lebanese fiction, both novels and films, depict how this ever-fluctuating crisis touches the lives of the Lebanese people and it is useful to examine the interpretations of events that emerge from these art forms as another window into understanding the origins and consequences of the Lebanese Civil War.

Chapter Three: The Artistic Representation of the War

The aftermath of catastrophic events naturally produces an emerging historical interpretation of the conflict, as well as popular expressions of the crisis, often revealed through many art forms. Literature and cinematography, two such forms of expression that give popular voice to public perception of complex events, in part use their enormous power of flexible format to accomplish this. Event details are retold with varying degrees accuracy and levels of emotions that convey the prevailing public orthodoxy war. These two examples of artistic form serve as a window into how the Lebanese people characterized the origins of the civil war, and just as importantly, how they framed the stability of their post-civil war society. To develop a better understanding of this, it is critical to evaluate these artistic works within the context of three periods occurring after the war. The first period occurred shortly after the formal end of hostilities in 1990, the second in the wake of the government's "reconstruction plan", and the third during the mid-2000s, when literary writers began to challenge the silent historical memory of the war. Understanding the development, or lack of, the artistic depiction of the war is another means of critically analyzing the origins of the Lebanese Civil War and its repercussions, as viewed from the perspective of the greater Lebanese population.

A consistent theme in Lebanese civil war literature and cinematography was, and still is the unwillingness to challenge the historical silence. In a 1999 interview with the Washington Post, Randa Chahal Sabbag, a Lebanese film maker living in France, commented on this phenomenon when her film, *Les Infidèles*, was censored.

She recalled that "[my Lebanese friends] said to me, 'Why do you want to talk about the war?"[88] She noted that this attitude is commonplace and "there has been a huge national effort to erase and forget all traces of the war."[89] When writers and directors address the subject of accountability for the crisis it is presented as either the fault of "foreigners" or that of the Lebanese people themselves.[90] Some artists, freed from the conflict due to an exodus from Beirut or driven by the fear of continuing violence, did embrace, and continue to embrace a more open discussion of the war. However, the theme of "historical amnesia" about the causes and consequences of the war remains pervasive even in the decades after the "official" end of the conflict.

The Early 1990s:

In the early 1990s the Lebanese people attempted to return to normalcy after the war's end. Lebanese politicians believed that this normalcy could be best achieved by silencing the public memory of the war. In 1991, a general amnesty law was passed for all crimes, including crimes against humanity.[91] The Lebanese citizens, weary after 15 years of widespread violence, the worst of which many then current political leaders were tied to, chose not to challenge this "state-sponsored amnesia."[92] Reflecting the orthodoxy of the period, cinematography and literature generally supported this historical amnesia. Films, especially, were beholden to the Lebanese General Security – a military department within the Ministry of Interior that

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[88] Hockstader, "Lebanon's Forgotten Civil War."
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Haugbolle, *War and memory in Lebanon*: 69.
[92] Ibid.

censored any content that was deemed too controversial.[93] Those works that did

challenge the orthodox silence received "limited readership."[94]

Director Samir Habchi's film *The Tornado* is a representative depiction of the

"historical amnesia" prevalent in Lebanon in the first decade after the civil war. The

violently graphic film, which, "[presented] the war as a profanity" followed Akram, a

young Lebanese man who fled the ongoing civil war to attend school in Russia.[95] He

was drawn back to Lebanon after hearing news reports of the violence, and once he

became immersed in the conflict, it drove him mad. Habchi promoted the popular

image of the Lebanese as victims throughout the film and its graphic nature attempted

to dissuade further violence. This "focus on victimization [lessened] the impact

of…the [sectarian differences that caused the war]"[96] and appealed to politicians of

the early 1990s. Dr. Lina Khatib, an expert on Middle Eastern cinema at Stanford

University observed that "when the film was banned, the Lebanese President

interfered to let it be filmed because he said it was a film advocating peace."[97] Yet,

The Tornado was later censored for being too graphic in its depiction of the violence,

despite the view of the President and others who believed that this imagery would

deter further violence. Subsequently the film was never shown in Lebanon, instead

being released in Russia. Though his film was violent, Habchi seemly defended the

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[93] Lina Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond* (I.B. Tauris, 2008). 34.
[94] Haugbolle, *War and memory in Lebanon*: 76.
[95] Miriam Cooke, *War's Other Voices: Women Writers on the Lebanese Civil War* (Syracuse University Press, 1996).
[96] Leila Fawaz, "Review of *Once Upon a Time in Beirut* by Jocelyn Saab; Phillippe Paringaux; Roland-Pierrce Paringaux; *A Susspended Life* by Jocelyn Saab; Gerard Brach; *The Tornado* by Samir Habchi; *Time has Come* by Jean-Claude Codsi; Talal Haidar," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 1 (1997): 253.

[97]Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond*: 70.

"state sponsored amnesia" at least in part, as he relied on the government to produce

his film.[98] Moreover, like many Lebanese, he was weary of the fighting. In an

interview with Khatib, the director noted that he didn't "remember a time in [his]

childhood or teenage years where there was no war."[99]

While later films depicted Lebanon as the victim of a "war of foreigners,"

Habchi's approach in the early 1990s more subtly implied that the Lebanese did not

control their fates. As demonstrated by his manipulation of the film's musical score,

the anonymity of the assailants and protagonist's eventual loss of self-control, Habchi

portrayed the Lebanese as individuals who were encompassed by "a state of fear,

being victimized" but who never truly assumed the role of the victimizer.[100]

A manifestation of the "war of foreigners" is apparent in Habchi's use of

music in the film. Music has played a significant role in Arabic cinematography since

the industry's inception and has been utilized to connect with the audience on an

emotional level.[101] Habchi achieved this by infusing the background music in *The

Tornado* with traditional Lebanese folk songs.[102] These songs were renditions of

maqams, the "basic formula of Arabic music" that were especially popular in the

early years of Arabic cinema.[103] In *The Tornado*, the *maqams* were used to evoke a

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.,34.
[100] Ibid.
[101] V. Shafik, *Arab cinema: history and cultural identity* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2007). 111.
[102] Samir Habchi, *The Tornado*, (Seattle, Wash. : Arab Film Distribution, 2006), Visual Material, 1 videodisc (90 min.)
[103] Ibid.

strong emotional reaction of joy in concert with the peaceful moments in the film.[104] In one such moment, Akram returned to his apartment in Lebanon, to the sight of a beautiful woman belly dancing in her window. As a *maqam* played in the background, there was an uncharacteristic lack of gun-fire.[105] Habchi juxtaposed this music and its imagery with harsh electronic nineties music to draw the sharp contrast between peaceful and violent Lebanon.

Akram's return to Lebanon was heralded by harsh "electronica" music and his arrival to his old apartment was accompanied by equally jarring sounds. This particular musical selection seemed to be intended to frighten viewers, making them question Akram's return to the country. Significantly, electronica music, which originated in America, was depicted as an unwelcome Western influence corrupting Lebanon and it was invariably associated with the most nefarious moments in the film.[106] The use of non-Arabic music, specifically Western music, in Arab cinema developed in the 1900s and was viewed by some Arab filmmakers as "selling out" of Arabic culture.[107] Habchi adopted this theme by associating Lebanese folk music with the more positive and hopeful scenes of the movie while using Western background music to evoke the opposite effect.

Habchi further developed his thesis of "Lebanese victims" through his characterization of the aggressors of the film. He omitted the religious identities of the assailants, never mentioning Palestinians, Maronites, Muslims or the other

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[105] Shafik notes that *maqams* are formed by a certain melodic mode with fixed intervals
[106] Tony Verderosa, *The Techno Primer: The Essential Reference for Loop-Based Music Styles* (Hal Leonard, 2002). 28.
[107] Shafik, *Arab cinema: history and cultural identity*: 11.

political players. Furthermore, the identifiable Lebanese citizens, such as Akram's neighbors and friends, did not fight.[108] In his depiction of a war that consumed the majority of the country, Habchi's many supporting characters were curiously uninvolved in the conflict. The identity of the film's assailants were never clearly conveyed, they emerged and retreated in the storyline as anonymous instruments of violence, signaling the director's transparent intention to avoid blaming the various Lebanese factions.

Current day Lebanese film maker Borhan Alawiyeh argues that this was a popular cinematic device that catered to the general Lebanese perception of the war: "Everyone talks about only as victims…no one considers that they could have been responsible."[109] Habchi maintained this lack of Lebanese agency even after the movie's protagonist committed murder. Immediately afterward, the film descended into a confused, dreamlike state, making it unclear if a crime was committed. In the climactic scene, Akram looked to the sky, to "the symbol of God", and questioned if he controlled his own fate. Khatib argues that "the shots of the sky can be read as invocations of blame, where God is alluded to as either supervising the violence on earth or as being absent – and in either case, guilty."[110]

Habchi's support for Lebanon's pervasive "historical amnesia" was further evidenced in his depiction of Akram's desperate fate. At the beginning of the film, Akram was living in Russia, safe from the war and only peripherally aware of the tensions between the sects. As Akram returned to Lebanon, the violence was

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[108] Habchi, *The Tornado*.
[109] Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond*: 97.
[110] Ibid.

presented in the abstract, in the background. But as the film evolved Akram's dreams, which play a significant role in the plot, led him through a graveyard, which heralding the violence soon to consume him in an increasingly hostile Lebanon.

Toward the end of the movie, much to his shock, Akram was beaten in the streets of Beirut and in response killed his assaulter. This act plunged him into a series of ever more violent dreams that, as they continued, became at once more ferocious and more outlandish. During one dream sequence, the audience viewed a church full of murder victims. "Jesus" appeared, but when the one elderly man still alive reached out for salvation, "Jesus" dropped his robes and revealed a machine gun, which he used to kill the man.

In the final dream sequence, a similarly chaotic scene was depicted. Akram stood in the middle of a massive funeral march for the victims of the church shooting. The relatives of the dead danced around to circus music as they playfully shook pictures and machine guns. They too were shot down by onlookers until only a lone woman with a rifle still stood. All of the people that Akram saw were victims of disembodied attackers and the film "[sustained] the image of Lebanon that revolves around…victimization."[111] Akram, terrified by the dead, ran screaming until he found himself at the top of a mountain overlooking the city. The movie ended as he shot at the air and blood emerged from the sky. Habchi used Akram's simultaneous chronicles of escalating violence and eventual understanding of the conflict as a

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[111] Ibid.

metaphor for the risks Lebanon faced in openly confronting the reality of the civil

war.

While Habchi's film embodied the orthodox historical silence representative

of the time period, *Beirut Blues*, a novel by Hanan al-Shaykh, opposed the pervasive

silence by addressing the Lebanese role in the war. Miriam Cooke, author of *The*

War's Other Voices: Writers on the Lebanese Civil War, interviewed al-Shaykh in

1984 to discuss impact of the Lebanese woman's novels. In *The War's Other Voice*

Cooke reflected that al-Shaykh "writes novels in which characters are

interwoven…[with] the war so that the plots and the characters' profiles are a lengthy

reflection and analysis" of the fighting.[112] Al-Shaykh published *Beirut Blues,* her

third novel, in 1992. It told the story of a Muslim woman, Asmahan, who survived

the war by writing letters to family and friends who had escaped the violence. Al-

Shaykh, a Lebanese Shia, fled Lebanon at the start of the war and was thus spared

from the guilt that silenced many of her fellow Lebanese.[113]

Al-Shaykh confronted this historical amnesia with the argument that religious

zealots instigated the war. The protagonist, Asmahan routinely described these

"fanatics" as religious Lebanese men who wanted to dominate the country and thus

acted as "jailers" of the city.[114] Unlike Habchi, al-Shaykh thrust her characters

directly into the conflict, as depicted by Asmahan's descriptions of her neighbor,

Ricardo, and his friends as members of Hezbollah/HizbAllah. These men identified

many of the sects and political players behind the violence with a transparency that

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[112] Cooke, *War's Other Voices: Women Writers on the Lebanese Civil War*: 36.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Hanan Al-Shaykh, *Beirut Blues* (Anchor Books, 1996). 36.

Habchi carefully avoided. At the novel's onset, Ricardo informed Asma that "if [the Lebanese had] fought Israel with [their] religion, [they] would have overcome [Israel]."[115] At the same time, Al-Shaykh also depicted instances of cross-sectarian harmony in the novel. In one such instance, a Muslim taxi driver from West Beirut comforted Asma's Christian friend, Fadila, when Fadila had to cross from East Beirut to West Beirut and was convinced that she would be murdered on the trip.[116] The author used the instances of animosity and kindness between the various sects as a vehicle to engender a more inclusive understanding of the broad dimensions of the reality of the conflict. In this way she challenged the historical silence and recognized the "[humanity]" in the fighters, so that the "evil [would] withdraw" and the Lebanese people could recover from the conflict.[117]

Al-Shaykh advocated for an open, public discussion of the war because she believed it would help resolve the lingering tensions in society and the absence of such discourse heightened the risk of the resurgence of sectarian violence.[118] Arguably this fear was explicit in al-Shaykh's treatment of the diaspora population in the novel. The Lebanese citizens who left the country during the war were depicted as foreigners who were incapable of being Lebanese, as exemplified by Asma's former friend Hayat. Hayat fled to Belgium at the start of the war and Asma attributed the rift between them to this exodus, saying that they could have only a "marginal relationship" because Hayat was no longer Lebanese.[119] In contrast, Asma was

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[115] Ibid., 21.
[116] Ibid., 14.
[117] Cooke, *War's Other Voices: Women Writers on the Lebanese Civil War*: 136.
[118] Ibid., 142.
[119] Al-Shaykh, *Beirut Blues*: 2.

unwilling to abandon her home. When her lover tried to take her abroad Asma refused: "Beirut came back to [haunt] her."[120] Instead, she held on to the dream of reconstruction.

By running away from the war, Hayat embodied those who refused to confront the harsh realities of the ongoing sectarian conflict in Lebanese society. Moreover, Asma's insistence to remain in her homeland and refuse to escape the war represented al-Shaykh's belief in the importance of acknowledging the conflict. During the interview Cooke, she reflected on her own "obsessive images of herself" during the war to encourage an open conversation about the conflict.[121] Through *Beirut Blues* and the interview, al-Shaykh implied that if the Lebanese people, like Asma, addressed the issues that caused the war and the current tensions, they would be able to overcome their differences and regain a sense of unity.

The Late 1990s:

Roughly six years after the war's end, the many factions throughout the country began to rejoin the political system once again. This fragile political coexistence was held together even more tenuously by the tacit agreement of "historical amnesia". Slowly, some artists began to question the wisdom of studious avoidance of the civil war. However, these works were not well established in

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Cooke, *War's Other Voices: Women Writers on the Lebanese Civil War*: 142.

Lebanon as many people still believed that a shared national history of the war would only serve to provoke more violence.[122]

Lebanese film maker, Ziad Doueiri, represented this persisting orthodox view. In his 1998 film *West Beirut*, he shifted blame away from Lebanon by implicating external forces. The movie depicted the progression of the war through the life of a Lebanese Sunni teenager, Tarek; his mother and father, Hala and Riad; and two friends Omar and May. The movie was initially a lighthearted take of three children's adventures during the war. However, as the film progressed, the trio became aware of the mounting sectarian tensions; at the film's conclusion, the friends realized that the war would have a profound, negative, effect on their futures. Despite such a somber ending, Doueiri managed to utilize humor throughout the film as a tool to demonstrate his indifference towards the causes of the war.[123] It was this levity that appealed to the public and government officials at the time of its release, as manifested by the fact that the film was one of the few to be released in Lebanon in its full uncensored state.[124]

Doueiri believed that these comedic moments and the historical silence was an essential component for artistic representations of the war. In a 1999 interview with Cynthia Joyce of "Salon", an online American magazine, Doueiri indicated that he feared the Lebanese could not cope with a more nuanced exploration of the conflict. He explained that "today, we're a light culture. [When you make a movie] you have

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[122] Haugbolle, *War and memory in Lebanon*: 81.
[123] Bert Cardullo, In search of cinema : writings on international film art, (Ithaca, 2004). 211.

[124] Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond*: 35.

to pass some messages through with a lot of humor and lightness" because people often are reluctant to acknowledge painful experiences.[125] By deemphasizing the Lebanese role in the civil war in *West Beirut*, Doueiri attempted to protect this "light culture" from the harsh realities of the internal tensions dividing the country.

Avoiding any depiction of the cruelty of Lebanese citizens in the war, Doueiri blamed foreigners for the events that precipitated and comprised the conflict. At the start of the film, Tarek witnessed masked men ambush a bus and kill the occupants; accompanying the scene was a subtitle, which informed viewers of the date - April 13th. Given this detail, Doueiri implied that he was depicting the very massacre that began the war. Historical evidence suggested that the shooters Tarek saw belonged to the Kataib, and that the individuals on the bus were Palestinians.

Although Doueiri did not challenge these facts outright, he failed to provide the audience with this relevant historical context. Instead, he seemingly misled viewers to the conclusion that the Lebanese were not involved in perpetrating the massacre. When Hala asked Riad who was behind the attack, he told her that he believed the Israelis "were retaliating against the Palestinians."[126] Riad reminded Hala of the civil wars of 1958, 1964, and 1973, telling her that the country was used to "these dog fights between Syrians and Israelis."[127] Historian Sune Haugbolle notes that Riad "[distanced] himself as a Lebanese from the incident" and that "[his] statements echo a sentiment that is prevalent in Lebanon after the war, where the war

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[125] Cynthia Joyce, "Arabian Knights," *Salon* 1999.
[126] Ziad Bréhat Jean Bouchareb Rachid Doueiri Rami Chamas Mohamad Al-Amin Rola Doueiri, *West Beyrouth*, (New York : New Yorker Video, 2001), Visual Material, 1 videocassette (105 min.).
[127] Ibid.

was referred to 'the war of others on our land.'"[128] Instead of depicting Riad as misinformed, Doueiri supported the character's beliefs throughout the rest of the movie. In the film, radio commentators announced that the popular Maronite politician Gemayel "accused Israel of committing the attacks" and that only served to reaffirm Riad's misdirected accusations.[129] Through these depictions, Doueiri attempted to absolve Maronites' of their role in the massacres and, in doing so, misrepresented the religious tensions at the start of the war. This sense of victimization only "[added] to the film's popularity" as it implied that the Lebanese were not "perpetrators of the war."[130]

In general, Doueiri's characters resisted the developing animosity around them and embraced this sentiment of a neutral Beirut. Rather than highlighting the sectarian tensions, *West Beirut* emphasized the Lebanese ability to coexist. While cameo characters fell victim to the sectarian tensions of the war, the heroes of the film, such as Tarek and his parents, remained willfully defiant in the face of this sectarian divide. Days after the bus attack, as the city descended into chaos, Tarek befriended May, a Christian girl and she joined Tarek and Omar in their attempt to reach East Beirut to develop film. Though the city was divided between East and West, Muslims and Christians, Tarek, Omar and May did not adhere to these boundaries. Thus, the struggle between the religious sects was undermined by the trio's many adventures and the children were "full of life despite the…destruction

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[128] Haugbolle, *War and memory in Lebanon*: 65.
[129] Doueiri, West Beirut
[130] Ibid., 127.

that [surrounded] them."[131] Further highlighting this cross-sectarian harmony, Tarek

continually discovered resistance to the sectarian tension, as exemplified by his

encounters with Umm Walid, a brothel owner who offered a safe haven to all of

Beirut's citizens. She told Tarek that "[In the brothel] there is no East or West. Here

it's Umm Walid's Beirut!"[132]

By emphasizing this cross-sectarian harmony and framing international

powers as instigators of the conflict, Doueiri attempted to protect the fragile "light

culture" of Lebanon. Haugbolle correctly argues that *West Beirut* is the archetype of

those authors and directors who encourage the Lebanese to forget history:

> The image of sectarianism invading and permeating liberal Beirut and
> undermining Lebanon is a theme…that public memory is often forced to
> dodge because it clashes with important tenants of post-war nationalism and
> Doueiri *West Beirut* effectively undermined this problematic topic.[133]

Current day proponents of an open dialogue about the war, such as the film critic

Abbas Beydoun, agree with Haugbolle and argue that "this account almost made it

seem like 'the war never happened.'"[134]

The 2000s:

The early 2000s saw the emergence of several publications that challenged the

pervasive historical amnesia of the war.[135] These authors and journalists were

generally associated with the political left and thus objected to the existing political

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[131] Cardullo, *In search of cinema : writings on international film art.* 211.

[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Leslie Tramontini, *"East is East and West is West"?: talks on dialogue in Beirut* (Ergon in Kommission, 2006). 31.
[135] Stefan Christoff, "Lebanon: Shadows of War," *The Dominon*, no. 44 (2007).

establishment of confessionalism.[136] Furthermore, Lebanese Prime Minister (1992-

1998 and 2000-2004) Rafiq al-Hariri, attempted to foster a reconstruction project in

Beirut and challenge this state-sponsored historical silence.[137] However, his death in

2005 brought a halt to this attempt and in his absence the Lebanese politicians who

favored the historical amnesia were able to silence the memory of the war once again.

Films were still censored by the government and thus, the directors that challenged

the historical silence were generally unable to screen their movies in Lebanon.

However, some fiction writers were able to challenge this trend.

One such author, Rawi Hage believed that an open discussion of the war was

the only way that Lebanon would recover from the conflict. The Lebanese-

Canadian's beliefs were apparent in his debut novel *De Niro's Game*, which he

intended to be "a small slice of the collective memory of Lebanon."[138] The 2006

novel centered around two friends, Bassam and George, and their attempts escape

war-torn Beirut. When George joined a local militia the boys were entranced by the

freedom and power that the anarchic militia granted them. However, after

experiencing corruption of the war and George's betrayal, Bassam fled the country.

Through the novel, Hage argued that sectarian tensions formed the foundations of the

conflict and that Lebanese citizens prolonged the war because of their egotism.

Hage's characterization of Bassam and George suggested that ignoring the tensions in

the country would perpetuate the cycle of violence that Lebanon had experienced

from its inception. Hage's personal exile from Lebanon to America during the war

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[136] Haugbolle, *War and memory in Lebanon*: 81.
[137] Ibid., 84.
[138] Christoff, "Lebanon: Shadows of War."

likely had great influence on shaping his views in this regard. In America, Hage

encountered racism and longed to return to his homeland.[139] Thus, Hage was focused

on resolving the issue so that he could return to Lebanon. From the safety of America,

Hage was spared from the fears of violence that silenced other authors.

Though Hage did not present a causal argument for the start of the war in *De

Niro's Game*, he subtly alleged that the conflict was a result of sectarian tensions and

greed. Hage's disdain for the Christians and Western powers was most blatant. As

reflected through the words of his protagonist, Bassam, Christians were like

"meticulous cats that [licked] their paws under small European cars…that [leaked]

corporate oil extracted and exploited by Nigerian workers."[140] Bassam implied that

the Christians were richer than the Muslims as a result of the Maronite alliance with

Western governments. Furthermore, Hage's protagonist concluded that these

Christians were unwilling to address the violence that engulfed the country because

doing so would force them to abandon their rich allies. The protagonist similarly

implied that the Western powers were indifferent to the fighting that occurred

throughout the country as they were too occupied with exploiting Lebanon.

Hage condemned the Muslims as well, though more subtly. Various militias

employed George and Bassam, Christians who were living in West Beirut, to smuggle

goods to the Muslim community. Bassam's first job was to deliver cheap Romanian

whisky, "a few thousand imitation Johnny Walker bottles and fake labels" to the

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[139] Daniel McCabe, "The Journeys of Rawi Hage," *Quill and Quire* 1(2008).
[140] Rawi Hage, *De Niro's Game* (Harper Perennial, 2008). 14.

Muslims in his neighborhood.[141] The man who hired him assured Bassam that he didn't need to worry about encountering any violence. The Christians and Muslims put aside their differences when they needed to trade illicit goods. Bassam encountered this immorality and greed again, after he finished a different job. When he reported back to the militia he spoke to Said, a Muslim who was enraged when Bassam told him that "many Christians [lived] on the West Side of Beirut…and no Muslim ever [bothered] them."[142] Said yelled that these Muslims were all traitors and communists. These few amoral Muslims were Hage's only representation of the community. They appeared to ignore the laws of Sharia and, like the Christians, they used the war for economic gains.

Hage's novel found fault with foreigners and narrow-minded sectarians alike, and advocated that an open dialogue about the war was necessary to resolve the longstanding sectarian tensions. Indeed, Hage implied that all of the sects perpetuated the civil war because they failed to intercede or prevent senseless violence due to their rampant greed. In a 2007 interview with the author, Montreal journalist Stefan Christoff noted that "through *De Niro's Game*, Hage [offered] a biting critique toward the sectarian fighting, foreign intervention and gangster politics which fuelled the civil conflict in Lebanon."[143] Hage defended this stance in his interview with Christoff. He felt that "sectarian chaos" divided the country and that the many religious groups were responsible for Lebanon's violent transformation.[144] Unlike Doueiri's unwillingness to acknowledge the tensions between the various

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[141] Ibid., 103.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Christoff, "Lebanon: Shadows of War."
[144] Ibid.

communities, Hage posited that the Lebanese people were responsible for the war in an attempt to foster a discussion of the conflict.

Hage's impetus for such a conversation seems to have arisen, at least in part, from a fear that the deteriorating sectarian relations would result in another war. This fear was reflected early in the novel, when Bassam and George were fully enmeshed in the violence, as evidenced by Bassam's symbolical statement that "ten thousand bombs had landed on Beirut and [he] [was] waiting for George."[145] Neither of the boys recognized this violence as problematic. Rather, they accepted the war as a way of life, becoming more corrupt and more involved in the conflict. For Hage, this unquestioning behavior was problematic and representative of the enduring historical amnesia. He argued that because the political elite refused to "preserve the history of the war [and]…understand the issues that created the war in the first place" the sectarian tensions persisted.[146]

Hage used George, the secret keeper, and Bassam, the confessor, to represent the two choices of either ignoring the sectarian tensions in the country or acknowledging them. By keeping secrets, George became more embroiled in the conflict, only escaping Lebanon in death. His fate mirrored Hage's fears that the enduring refusal to acknowledge the war would renew the sectarian aggression. In contrast, Bassam managed to escape the war by confessing his crimes. His exodus from the country was symbolic of his acknowledgement of his role in the crisis and his attempts to atone through confession. Hage felt that Lebanon needed to similarly

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[145] Hage, *De Niro's Game*: 11.
[146] Christoff, "Lebanon: Shadows of War."

come to "terms with and understand the history of war…to deal with it, as Lebanese, for future generations."[147]

Like Hage, author Elias Khoury advocated a public discussion of the tensions that persisted after the war. For Khoury, a more open discussion would not only be redemptive, but would also importantly provide the necessary climate to prevent future government abuses. In an interview with the Washington Post in 1999, Khoury stated that "the most tragic thing about the Lebanese Civil War is that it is not a tragedy in the consciousness of the Lebanese" but rather it is a forgotten memory.[148] His novel *Yalo* was written in 2008, and was set in contemporary Lebanon. It depicted the progression of an interrogation of a rapist, Yalo, who was unknowingly a suspect of a bomb plot. As Yalo continued to tell multiple versions of his life story to his interrogator, he slowly came to terms with his role in the civil war and the crimes that he committed after it. Khoury identified the Lebanese as instigators of the violence, arguing that manipulative Lebanese politicians initiated the civil war, recruiting Lebanese citizens through propaganda and lies. This antagonism for political leaders and institutions likely stemmed from an experience of police brutality that Khoury encountered while protesting against the death of a Palestinian in Lebanese custody.[149]

Khoury used Yalo's interrogation and personal memories as a symbolic representation of the Lebanese experience during the war. When Yalo recalled the

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[147] Ibid.
[148] Hockstader, "Lebanon's Forgotten Civil War."
[149] Jeremy Harding, "Jeremy Harding Goes to Beirut to Meet the Novelist Elais Khoury," *London Review of Books* 7, no. 28 (2006): 7.

war during his interrogation, he remembered his recruitment at age fourteen and the fervent feeling of excitement at the prospect a of heroic fight. He remembered that politicians told him that the war was a "[battle] in defense of his long forgotten ancestors."[150] The politicians had not provided him with a detailed discussion of the motivation for such a war. But at the time he, like many Lebanese, was unconcerned with these "[complications] and [convolutions] of the war."[151] Yalo told the interrogator that only his mother objected to the useless fighting and attempted to convince him to return to school, but the politicians had too much sway over him. After the war, Yalo understood that his mother was correct and as a teenager he had been trapped in the "tedious" and "repugnant" war.[152]

Yalo's interrogation illustrated what Khoury saw as the suppressed acknowledgement of the political elite's accountability for the conflict. Khoury was clearly disdainful of the Lebanese politicians who governed the country in the years leading up to the war and argued that they instigated the senseless fighting. He did not go so far as to exonerate Yalo or those people who fought in the war, however. Khoury explicitly described the protagonist's crimes during the war and after the fighting and Yalo eventually assumed responsibility for these wrongs when he was finally able to recover a clearer frame of mind. Yet Khoury implied that, in an attempt to gain power, politicians of all sects manipulated their followers by convincing the Lebanese people that the war was a battle of honor. Khoury's objective, then, was to generate public pressure which would reject the sectarian rhetoric of politicians and

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[150] Elias Khoury, *Yalo* (Picador, 2009). 139.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid., 140.

confront the "historical amnesia" that only served to protect the political elite from assuming accountability for their role in the crisis.

Khoury's perception of Lebanese politicians as abusive leaders was most evident in Yalo's interaction with the interrogator at the Jounieh police station.[153] The interrogator attempted to "remind" Yalo of crimes that the protagonist did not commit and, when Yalo did not understand what wrongdoings he was supposed to fabricate, he was subjected to torture. As the interrogation persists, Yalo's mental state symbolically deteriorated.

Yalo's mental unreliability persisted throughout the novel and played an active role in Yalo's self-defense. His story routinely differed from that of his victim, Shirin who accused him of raping her in the woods, stealing from her lover and abusing her. Shirin's story was never directly told to readers; rather, it was told as quotes that Yalo repeated and rejected. He agreed that "what he [did to her] could be called rape" but it was actually an act of love.[154] In the beginning of the novel it seemed that Yalo was simply a madman who was rejecting Shirin's claims. Yet as the story progressed the certainty of Yalo's guilt and Shirin's innocence faded. While it was likely that Yalo raped her, Khoury suggested that Yalo loved her and that Shirin voluntarily dated him for many months after this rape. Khoury never clarified the nature of Yalo's relationship with Shirin, which left readers to debate the nature of Yalo's guilt and Shirin's victimhood.

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[154] Khoury, *Yalo*: 111.

The theme of substituting real, repressed memories with forced revisionist history continued to emerge over the course of the interrogation. Instead of questioning the complexity of Yalo's relationship with Shirin, the interrogator subjected Yalo to a series of sadistic tortures, including anal rape and genital mutilation.[155] It was only after these torture sessions commenced that Khoury revealed that the interrogator was attempting to force Yalo to confess wrongfully to terrorism. The interrogator symbolically repressed Yalo's memory of the war and sought to revise it. As the tortures worsened, Yalo's mental state deteriorated until he was unaware of his location, the identity of the interrogator (who Yalo believed was his grandfather), and his own identity. It was only when Yalo escaped into his insane mind, away from the interrogator's manipulation, that he began his "[search] [for] redemption" and started to acknowledge his role in the war and the offenses that he committed after it.[156]

Yalo only found redemption after he acknowledged his crimes, a clearly symbolic statement of Khoury's desire for an open discussion of the war. Once Yalo began to recognize his offenses, the book switched from a disjointed third person narrative to a first person account and Yalo thus developed a clear perspective. Khoury "let [readers] witness the making of a monster, but without giving [them] the possibility of judging [Yalo] or feeling morally superior to him."[157] Though Yalo committed atrocities during the war, readers embraced him for his confessions. This acknowledgement of his crimes and his subsequent return to sanity was only possible

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[156] Adam LeBor, "The Confession," *The New York Times* 2008.
[157] Laila Lalami, "Bound by Tragedy," *Los Angeles Times* 2008, 1.

when he mentally escaped the manipulation of the interrogator. Khoury used this abusive relationship to express his fears that the persisting historical amnesia would allow Lebanese politicians and police forces to continue to manipulate the public for their own gains. Notably, Yalo reaffirmed the symbolic nature of tortuous journey back to sanity, when he stated that "Yalo's story…has a name — war."[158]

Summary:

Literature and art allow for the expression of viewpoints that are often not shared by the ruling elite or possible in any other form. Thus, they serve as a valuable insight into public understanding of the origins and unresolved tensions of the Lebanese Civil War. While the works cited here cannot be said to represent all opinions in this complex society, most effectively convey the prevailing orthodoxy of their time. The unwillingness on the part of many cinematographers and literary writers to address the war represented a larger public refusal to discuss the conflict. Some authors and directors challenged this historical amnesia from its onset. Though such accounts increased throughout the decades after the war, they were generally written by members of the Lebanese diaspora. Furthermore, the Lebanese ambivalence over broad public discussion of the civil war persists despite such attempts. A definitive and accepted interpretation of the causes and consequences of the Lebanese Civil War, whether in historical accounts or popular media, remains as unsettled as the war itself, and the prevailing historical amnesia of the war, found in

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[158] Ibid.

both the historiography of the conflict and the literature of the war, can be attributed

to this unresolved tension

Chapter Four: Stagnant History and Vichy France

Those seeking to explain the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990, whether they are historians, fiction authors, or film makers, cannot escape the fact that as the conflict remains unresolved and highly contentious, so too do their attempts to understand it. While no historical account is unaffected by personal biases, the enduring nature of the Lebanese conflict introduces added social, economic and political pressures that inhibit a nuanced discussion of the war. El-Khazen, Hanf and Doueiri's accounts represent how the intellectuals' problematic involvement in the conflict sways their narratives. In comparison, the evolution of the French historiography of the Vichy regime during World War II demonstrates how the passage of time creates distance from the event, thus alleviating some of the pressures that silence both intellectuals and the general public. Immediately after the liberation, unresolved conflicts effectively stymied open discussions of divergent French responses to the Nazi invasion. In the decade that followed the war, French intellectuals were only willing to consider the history of the Resistance in France. However, with time, historians, journalists and intellectuals began to address the reality of the French involvement in the war. In turn French society began to discuss the complexities of the Vichy regime and French Resistance during World War II. The comparison of this development to the stagnant Lebanese historical memory demonstrates the detriment of the enduring conflict in Lebanon.

The pressures that silence Lebanese historians are apparent in el-Khazen's account of the civil war. The Maronites are currently struggling to maintain their

political power and the structure of the government. A 2001 survey of "Maronite

Christian Socio-Political Attitudes in Postwar Lebanon" by Simon Haddad

determined that Maronites continue to feel "…positive intragroup attachment, strong

group preference for Maronite leaders and… a feeling of pride and distinctiveness

from all other Lebanese groups."[159] Moreover, these Maronites indicated a strong

preference to maintain the government structure. El-Khazen's familial ancestry and

these strong views apparent in his community indisputably influence his account. He

was raised in a Maronite household and likely experienced the war from a solely

Maronite perspective, with little knowledge of Muslim or Druze views of the fighting.

Had the political conflict not continued after the end of the war, it is possible that el-

Khazen could have incorporated these diverse viewpoints into his understanding of

the fighting. However, the continuing tension prevents him from integrating these

perspectives into his accounts. Maronite intellectuals such as el-Khazen undoubtedly

feel pressure from their communities to argue a Maronite perception of the civil war.

If they do not, these historians and intellectuals risk blaming their families and friends

for playing a role in instigating and perpetuating the war. In addition to potential legal

repercussions, a more comprehensive and dispassionate exploration of the sources of

the conflict risks fueling the tensions that persist to this day.

Thus, historians and intellectuals make the Maronites appear more favorable

in the ongoing debate by presenting the Maronites as victims of the war and unwilling

participants in it. An anti-Palestinian viewpoint of the war strengthens the Maronites'

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[159] Simon Haddad, "A Survey of Maronite Christian Socio-Political Attitudes in Postwar
Lebanon," *Islam and Christian Relations* 12, no. 4 (2001): 265.

argument that the government structure should not be altered, as it was sound prior to the war and the arrival of the Palestinians. Therefore, el-Khazen and other Maronite historians and intellectuals are burdened with the pressure to defend their families against prosecution and support Maronite attempts to preserve the government structure through their historical accounts. While many Sunni historians argue for a different understanding of the civil war, they are affected by the same desire to protect their own respective community and promote their vision of an ideal government structure. As a result of these influences, many Lebanese historians present one-sided versions of the war.

Like the varying Lebanese perspectives, the international community contains competing factions that are vying to influence current events by framing their analyses of the civil war to suit their nationalistic objectives. Hanf's perspective represents this foreign view of the war and, like el-Khazen's work, the ongoing conflict creates pressures that affect his account. Germany currently plays an active role in the Lebanese conflict as the German Navy patrols the Lebanese coast to ensure peace between Israel and Hezbollah/HizbAllah forces and to assist in Lebanese reconstruction.[160] Furthermore, as evidenced by Khalidi's account, many foreign politicians from countries such as United States, Russia and Syria are involved in the ongoing Lebanese conflict, concerned with maintaining stability of the Middle East while sustaining their political influence in the region. Consequently, often based on their own agendas, these politicians ally themselves with one particular side of the

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[160] Patricia Haack, *Talking Intervention- Attitudes Towards German Foreign Policy and the Conditional Influence of Emphasis Frames* (GRIN Verlag GmbH, 2007). 53.

conflict; they employ political tactics and utilize the media to propagate a history of the war that supports their Middle Eastern allies and condemns their enemies.[161] As long as the conflict persists, politicians will continue to support a one-sided view of it that negatively portrays the opposing community. As Hanf's account demonstrates, these stereotypes, such as the anti-Muslim view that he expresses, are difficult to dispute when they are so blatantly supported by the public. By perpetrating these stereotypic viewpoints in his historical accountings, Hanf is more likely to receive public and political support.

Unlike el-Khazen and Hanf, Salibi's account of the war meticulously considers the roles of the many factions involved. He and other historians have judiciously examined the conflict, their accounts competing with more biased histories. However, as the conflict continues, more balanced histories cannot be fully accepted by the Lebanese since the various factions continue to argue over political power, thus only accepting and perpetuating the histories that favor their cause.

As with the historians' accounts, works by Lebanese novelists and film directors are affected by similar pressures that alter their depiction of the war. Doueiri's film is emblematic of the bias of these pressures. Doueiri refuses to address the tensions in the country because he fears that currently, Lebanese society is not capable of handling the intense emotions of the war.[162] Many filmmakers and authors feel similarly, and believe that challenging this "war of others" myth will resume the fighting. Those filmmakers who do attempt to challenge this silent historical memory

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[161] Khalidi, *Sowing crisis : the Cold War and American dominance in the Middle East*: 237.
[162] Joyce, "Arabian Knights."

must contend with governmental censorship of films, which is "handled by the…General Security – a military department within the Ministry of Interior." This department censors films that contain "political and religious material, which could harm the national security of the country."[163] Therefore, those films that do challenge the mythology are generally inaccessible in Lebanon. While Lebanese authors are not so censored, they still must contend with the prevailing historical amnesia that many politicians and Lebanese citizens embrace. A social conversation is nearly impossible so long as the long standing animosity between the many religious sects persists. The Lebanese people cannot, through discussion, come to understand the harmful and destructive effects of their wartime actions as many presently experience or perpetuate the sectarian animosities that instigated the war.

In contrast, the French historical memory of World War II and the Vichy government evolved from one-sided accounts of the French Resistance to nuanced discussions of the complexity of the French collaboration with Germany. This development correlated with the passage of time and was likely a product of an emotional distance from the war. "There [was] a widespread recovery of public memory of the events…[at] the end of the 1980s" that resulted in war crimes tribunals, memorials of victims, and restoration actions. These events, which are notably absent in Lebanon, indicated a public willingness to address and accept the dual French roles of resisting and aiding the Nazis. The arrest and subsequent trials of two Vichy collaborators, Maurice Papon, a Vichy government official and Klaus Barbie, an *SS-Hauptsturmführer* known as the "butcher of Lyon", demonstrated this

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[163] Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond*: 34.

shift from historical and public denial to a general acceptance and subsequent investigation of the complexities of the French role in the war.

<u>The 1950s and 1960s: The De Gaulle Mythology</u>

In the years immediately following World War II, both the French people as well as the French historians generally refused to openly discuss the actions of the Vichy government. As the world learned about the extent of the Nazi crimes, the French attempted to distance themselves from the Germans, both to escape their guilt and to avoid censure from other governments. Prior to Barbie's trial "few [people] ever talked about the taboo subject of war-time collaboration. Certainly no one ever talked about the fate of the 76,000 Jews." [164] This public silence, like the silence that developed after the Lebanese civil war, was a product of the French guilt for the Vichy alliance with the Nazis.

To counter this shame, a "mythology" developed in the 1950s during the de Gaulle presidency which emphasized the French resistance to Nazi Germany and denounced the collaborators to the Vichy regime as a few traitorous men and women who had been executed immediately after the war.[165] This exclusive focus on the Resistance became the government-supported history of the war. French textbooks "ignored the Occupation except to honor the Resistance." In 1953 a general amnesty law was passed by the National Assembly. This effectively absolved the remaining

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[164] Erna Paris, *Unhealed wounds : France and the Klaus Barbie affair*, 1st Grove Press ed., An Evergreen book; (New York: Grove Press, 1986), Biography (bio). 11.
[165] Ibid.

Vichy collaborators of their crimes so as to end the public trials of accused collaborators and suppressed the memory of the regime.

Many historians, literary writers and film directors propagated this Resistance mythology. Immediately after the liberation, the Commission d'Histoire de l'Occupation et de la Libération de la France (CHOLF) was established to study the history of the French resistance to the Nazis. This organization, which included historians such as Henri Michel, Georges Lefebvre, and Edouard Perrory, published a number of works that celebrated and exaggerated the French resistance of the Nazi occupation.[166] Prominent politicians, including de Gaulle and members of the Resistance such as Pierre Guillain, added to this literary celebration of the Resistance and were similarly unwilling to present a nuanced discussion of the Vichy regime.

Historian Robert Aron was one of the few intellectuals of the early 1950s who explored the actions and motivations of the Vichy Regime. However, he concluded that there were two authorities in Vichy France, Petain and Laval, and argued that the collaboration was a result of Laval's greed. He asserted that Petain did not anticipate the extent of the Nazi occupation. Furthermore, he concluded that the Vichy government officials conducted secret conversations with the Allies and only feigned their support for the Nazi occupation. Though Aron addressed shortcomings of the Vichy regime, like the other historians and politicians, he was unwilling to consider the possibility of a willful collaboration with the Nazi party. He condemned Laval

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[166] Rousso, 242

and pardoned the majority of the Vichy politicians. Thus, intellectuals of the 1950s collectively silenced any memory of the French participation in the occupation.

Over time, some foreign intellectuals challenged this political and social silence. Their works surfaced in the late 1960s, when the immediacy of the war's memories and guilt had subsided. Films, such as Marcel Ophul's *The Sorrow and the Pity*, confronted the Vichy crimes by depicting the French population as guilty players who collaborated with the Nazis. It must be noted that foreign intellectuals such as Ophul did not experience the same repressive pressures the French did. Ophul was a German Jew who, though he moved to France prior to the war, certainly did not participate in the Nazi regime.

There also were a small number of French historians who were able to investigate the complexity of the Vichy regime in the years immediately after the war. Charles Micaud challenged the de Gaulle mythology in his account *The French Right and Nazi Germany* in 1964. He wrote that his careful account of the Vichy government was the result of his move to "America some seven years [before writing his book] and [that in America he] [acquired] a more detached and undoubtedly clearer picture of a very complicated scene."[167] His historical account did not resonant with the French public and it had no immediate impact on French historiography of the war. Though the war ended fifteen years prior, the intellectuals who dominated the French historiographical scene had lived through the war and were still struggling with their participation in the conflict.

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[167] Ibid.

The 1970s: A Shift Towards Acceptance:

A shift began to occur in the 1970s, when a new generation entered the political and social scene. These men and women were curious about the taboo topic of collaboration. At this time, "the subject [of collaboration] was no secret in modern France…But the subject remained highly controversial and, at a psychological level, unacknowledged."[168] The emergence of a new generation of French historians and intellectuals enabled this investigation as they were free from their parents' guilt and unscarred by the war that they had not lived through. In the early 1970s an American historian harnessed this curiosity and spurred a movement. In January 1973 Robert Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* was translated and published in France. The book challenged many of the established myths concerning the Resistance and implicated almost all of France in its collaboration with the Nazis.[169] Paxton argued that the Vichy regime was not involved in secret conversations with the Allies. Rather, the regime attempted to transform French society and actively sought out collaboration with the Nazis. Furthermore, the regime was not only accountable for enforcing the policies against the Jews, it was also responsible for establishing some of these policies.[170] This book expanded on the many arguments that had been put forth by other historians such as Eberhard Jackel

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[168] Paris, *Unhealed wounds : France and the Klaus Barbie affair*: 192.
[169] Henry Rousso, *The Vichy syndrome : history and memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991). 253.
[170] Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: old guard and new order, 1940-1944*, 1 ed. (New York: Knopf; distributed by Random House, 1972).

and Henri Michael. But most significantly, Paxton boldly challenged mythologies that French specialists "approached only with the greatest circumspect."[171]

Paxton's account was not immediately embraced by the French public. Many historians, especially those who supported the political Right, vehemently objected to Paxton's interpretation of the regime. However, those authors who disagreed with him were not able to cite many sources that refuted Paxton's conclusions.[172] Furthermore, many French historians did agree with Paxton's findings and, according to French historian Henry Rousso, the account "powerfully (if unintentionally) drove French scholars out of their ivory tower" and forced them to dissect de Gaulle's mythology of the Resistance.[173] Paxton's work resonated with the younger French generation; it began an historical movement, the progression of which was evident through the trials of Barbie and Papon. In the 1970s, the men and women who lived through World War II were still prominent in the general public and prevented this historical recognition from developing in the public sphere. It was not until Barbie's public trial in the 1980s that the crimes of the Vichy government became the topic of popular discussion.

The Trial of Klaus Barbie:

Klaus Barbie was born near the city of Bonn, Germany in 1913. He joined the *SS-Hauptsturmführer* in 1935 and shortly thereafter was appointed as the head of the

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[171] Rousso, *The Vichy syndrome : history and memory in France since 1944*.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.

Gestapo in Lyons, France.[174] During this time, Barbie oversaw the arrest, torture

and/or execution of approximately 11,000 to 25,000 individuals, including the

deportation of 7,500 French Jews.[175] Barbie also led the search for Jean Moulin, a

popular member of the French Resistance and it is likely that Barbie killed Moulin

when Gestapo officers caught Moulin and his group in Lyons in 1943.[176] After the

war, Barbie fled to Bolivia to escape persecution. While the French government

called for his arrest in 1950, politicians had effectively forgotten Barbie. When a Nazi

hunter, Beate Klarsfeld, discovered Barbie in Bolivia in 1971, French politicians

demanded that Bolivia extradite Barbie and after eleven years, he was deported to

France and arrested.[177]

Barbie's trial commenced in 1987 and lasted for eight weeks. While the

French public was mainly concerned with Barbie's alleged murder of Jean Moulin

and other Resistance fighters, he was not charged with their deaths. Instead, Barbie

was charged with "crimes against humanity" for the kidnapping and murder of Jewish

children from the town of Izieu.[178] The judge and the prosecutors worried that

acknowledging the Resistance publically would challenge the mythology that had

dominated France since the 1950s. Barbie had threatened to name the French

collaborationists with Vichy. Many of these men had already been pardoned and

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[174]Wolfgang Saxon, "Klaus Barbie, 77, Lyons Gestapo Chief," *New York Times* 1991, 1.
[175] Ibid.
[176] During his trial, Barbie denied killing Moulin and suggested that the Frenchman took his own life when he realized that Barbie had converted members of the French Resistance to work for the Nazis
[177] Saxon, "Klaus Barbie, 77, Lyons Gestapo Chief," 1.
[178] Ibid.

some had even been named as heroes of the Resistance.[179] To prevent this,

prosecutors decided to ignore the issue of the Resistance entirely.

However, Barbie's lawyers were not as willing to overlook the issue of French

collaboration. Barbie's most prominent lawyer, Jacques Verges, used the trial as a

means of prosecuting the French government. Verges accused politicians of the same

crimes that they brought against Barbie, arguing that the French acted like Nazis

during the Algerian fight for independence and that the Vichy politicians were

complicit in the deportation of the French Jews. For his part, Barbie refused to take

the stand and was unapologetic for his crimes and his continuing allegiance to the

Nazi party. A jury convicted Barbie and he was sentenced to life in prison.

Barbie's trial exemplified the evolution of the public view of the French role

in World War II. The trial encouraged the French to remember and openly discuss the

war. However, while newspapers covered Barbie's story extensively and there was

mass interest in the trial, the discussion of the war did not result in an immediate

acceptance of Vichy crimes. Barbie, a Nazi German, was a convenient villain. His

trial allowed the French to celebrate Jean Moulin, a member of the French resistance

and the government was still unwilling to condemn French collaborators.[180] Barbie's

trial awoke public interest in the reality of the Vichy regime. The significance of this

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[179] The prosecution also suppressed these charges because France's legal code stated that no one could be prosecuted for a crime that was more than ten years old. The exception to this rule was those crimes that were considered "crimes against humanity." It would have taken years to establish that the murder of each Resistance member could be considered as such and many feared that Barbie, who was seventy at the time, would not live that long.

[180] Rousso, *The Vichy syndrome : history and memory in France since 1944*.

recognition became apparent with Maurice Papon's arrest and his subsequent trial marked the culmination of this social, historical and political acknowledgement.

The Trial of Maurice Papon:

The discovery of Papon's crimes occurred in the midst of Barbie's trial. Unlike Barbie, Papon was a Frenchman who was born in Paris in 1910.[181] He joined the civil service in 1930 and was a successful bureaucrat. By the time Papon turned thirty-one, he was appointed to the position of General-Secretary of the Prefecture of Gironde in the Vichy government. In the early years of the Vichy government Papon, who was in charge of Jewish affairs, enjoyed a close relationship with the German SS agents in France.[182] However, in 1943 German government became frustrated with Papon and believed that he was pro-American. In turn, Papon hid a Jewish resistance fighter, Roger-Samuel Bloch. When the war came to an end, Papon escaped the short period of purges that the French government led against known Nazi sympathizers.[183]

Instead of investigating Papon's associations with the Nazis, French officials incorporated him into the government. Immediately after the war, Papon moved to Paris to accept the position of "Prefect de Police" under General de Gaulle until 1968. He continued to climb politically throughout the 1970s. His participation in the Vichy regime was discovered in 1981, as Paxton's historical movement was developing and the Barbie affair was beginning. A French historian, Michel Bergès, who was doing research in the departmental archives of the Gironde, discovered the

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[181] Saxon, "Klaus Barbie, 77, Lyons Gestapo Chief."
[182] Ibid.
[183] These purges included trials and executions of known Nazi supporters and the public shaming of women who knowingly associated with Nazi

archives of the department of Jewish affairs, which contained documents concerned

with the forced deportation of the Jews from Bordeaux to a transit camp at Drancy

Paris.[184] These papers were signed by Papon. Bergès sent the documents to "Le

Canard Echainé", a weekly French newspaper-that published the documents.[185] At the

time of this discovery and publication, Papon was the minister for the budget in the

administration of Prime Minister Raymond Barre.[186] While the discovery damaged

Papon's political career, it did not instantly result in an arrest and a trial.

As Barbie's trail demonstrated, the historical interest in the Vichy regime was

not yet present in French politics and public life during the 1980s. The government

was hesitant to formally arrest Papon. Instead Papon faced a "jury of honor…

composed of patriotic and distinguished French men and women."[187] At this pseudo

trial, Papon submitted that "as an official he was obliged to obey orders. Had he not

done so then the Germans would simply have taken over and destroyed the identity of

the Vichy state that was governing France."[188] The jury of honor concluded that

though Papon should have resigned his position in the préfecture, he was not guilty of

crimes of treason and in fact was a member of the French resistance due to his

protection of Jews after 1943.[189] Even as the French prepared to try Barbie, many

politicians agreed with this verdict and felt that since the jury of honor appropriately

dealt with Papon, a trial was unnecessary. However, the findings upset the surviving

families of the deported French Jews, and they demanded Papon's arrest. Though he

[184] Saxon, "Klaus Barbie, 77, Lyons Gestapo Chief," 1.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Douglas Johnson, "Maurice Papon, Obituary," *The Gaurdian* (2007).
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid
[189] Saxon, "Klaus Barbie, 77, Lyons Gestapo Chief."

was officially charged with crimes against humanity in 1983, legal and government officials, including President Mitterrand, were "[reluctant]" to persecute Papon and did not bring him to trial.[190] Despite Barbie's very public trial, the French people were still unwilling to fully address the crimes of the Vichy regime. But as curiosity about the war grew, so too did the French desire to confront men like Papon.

During the 1980s, Bergès' historical revelation and Barbie's trial added to the growing social debate created by Paxton's account of the Vichy regime. Prior to Barbie's trial, Aron's account of the Vichy government was still the accepted historiographical explanation of the time. However, as a new generation began to address the French role in Vichy crimes, the historical accounts that challenged the resistance myth became more accepted. This political resistance could not withstand the revelations that occurred during the Barbie trial. After the Barbie affair there was a reawakening of cinematic interest in World War II and fourteen films that depicted the Vichy government were produced within a year of the trial. These films presented a much more complex view of the Vichy regime, in contrast to previous films that either strongly opposed or celebrated the de Gaulle mythology.[191] This cinematic interest paired with the historiographical study of the Vichy regime that had been developing since Paxton's account was published.

While the public struggled to process Barbie's trial and the arrest of Papon, historical studies of the war flourished. A new institute, the Institute d'Histoire du Temps Présent, was created to study World War II in the context of the history of the

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[190] Ibid.

[191] Rousso, *The Vichy syndrome : history and memory in France since 1944*: 236.

twentieth century. French historians and journalists began to tenaciously explore and unveil the dark secrets of Vichy France. Such examples include Amouroux's *Grand Histoire des François sous l'Occupation*. By the late 1980s, 240 scholars were working in this field compared to the 90 advanced dissertations on World War II in 1971.[192] This increase of historical and journalistic explorations of the crimes of the Vichy regime and the culmination of Barbie's trial resulted in a widespread public interest in the French collaboration with the Germans. It was this interest that led to a general demand for Papon's trial and the French willingness to face the reality of the Frenchman's role in the Vichy collaboration.

Finally, fifteen years after Papon's arrest, an appeals court in Bordeaux ordered his trial to commence in 1996. Prosecutors argued that he was responsible for the deportation and murder of 1690 Jews, including 223 children from Bordeaux, to death camps in Germany. In turn, Papon's lawyer used the de Gaulle myth as the basis of his defense, arguing that Papon had no knowledge of the death camps and was forced to follow Nazi orders. This defense, which had been the core idea in the French historiography of World War II, no longer resonated with the jury or the French people. In 1998, Papon was convicted of "complicity in crimes against humanity and sentenced to a 10 year prison sentence" and the verdict was celebrated by the French public.[193]

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[192] Ibid., 256.
[193] Johnson, "Maurice Papon, Obituary."

<u>Comparing Lebanon and France</u>:

Comparing the evolution of French historiography of World War II and the public acceptance of the complex Vichy regime to the skewed Lebanese historical accounts of the wars and Lebanese society's refusal to discuss the conflict reveals the necessity of time and distance from the conflict. Without this distance, historical and public memory of the conflict is distorted by social, economic and political pressures. Though France had been liberated, the immediacy of the war hindered a historical exploration of the conflict and a social conversation of the French role in the collaboration with the Nazis, just as Lebanon is still unable to carefully analyze or discuss their civil war and fully understand the factors that instigated the war. In the aftermath of the conflicts, both the Lebanese and the French felt a sense of shame for their role in the fighting. Furthermore, the international community and the French and Lebanese people looked to their governments and intellectuals to explain why this conflict began, and to ensure that it would not occur again. As a result, the intellectuals in both countries attempted to protect their community and blamed outside sources as opposed to exploring each groups' role in the fighting.

But because the French government necessarily changed after the war and the Vichy regime became obsolete, the French were able to escape this cycle of blame. Historians could then address the complexities of the conflict. In turn, the public was able to better explore discussions of the roots of this conflict. Unlike France, Lebanon has not been able to confront their one-sided accounts of the war due to the enduring sectarian conflict. Lebanese historians, intellectuals, literary writers and film directors

are currently conflicted by the same questions of responsibility to their communities that plagued the French historians prior to Paxton's groundbreaking account. The on-going nature of the conflict is a threat to their factual accounting of the war. It creates pressures on historians to describe only one understanding of the war, as opposed to a more nuanced understanding of the conflict. Those historians who do write careful analyses of the civil war are not readily accepted by the public.

Similarly, many literary authors and directors are unwilling to support a more candid and comprehensive discussion within the society because they fear the possibility of violent repercussions and they believe a frank depiction of the civil war would not appeal to audiences. Moreover, because of the persisting sectarian tensions, it is likely that many of these historians, writers, directors, politicians and Lebanese citizens are divided on one side of the conflict and are not interested in hearing an argument that challenges their position. In this way, the Lebanese people are unable to progress past the pressures that are silencing the general public and biasing the accountings of their historians, literary authors and directors. The evolution that France experienced will only be possible for Lebanon if the conflict in the country is resolved and the Lebanese people are allowed to overcome the same pressures that the French people overcame after the end of World War II.

Conclusion

In light of this exploration of the historical and literary debates of the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990, the observation of Sune Haugbolle's host mother, that with the war's resolution the Lebanese people suppressed all memory of the fighting, seems to be at once fitting and false. The many accounts of the intellectuals, literary authors and directors demonstrate that, superficially, there is a mass attempt to restore these historically memories. Yet these works are not explorations of the complexity of the civil war. Rather, they are part of subtle conversations that seek to address the enduring political crisis and debate the necessity of publically addressing the impact that this conflict has on the country. Having examined and compared these subtle conversations to the French historiography of the Vichy regime, it is clear that a nuanced historical, literary and public discussion of the Lebanese conflict will only be possible when the tensions have been resolved.

The historiography of the civil war is widely contributed to, but it has not evolved since its infancy at the start of the war. At a superficial level, these historical accounts are part of a continuous debate concerning the instigators of the war. While some historians suggest that sectarian tensions led to war and argue that all of the Lebanese communities took part in the fighting, others blame one community, such as the Maronites, the Palestinians or international powers. This causal argument cloaks a larger political conversation that is echoed by the religious sects and debates the effectiveness and fairness of the current governmental structure. Foreign and Lebanese intellectuals are swayed by their personal investments in the enduring

conflict and, as a result, their causal arguments intentionally or unintentionally lend support to one side of the political debate.

Likewise, the literary and cinematic accounts of the war are part of a stagnant argument. While the writers and directors debate the instigators of the war, they are unconcerned with the more nuanced causal-arguments that historians engage in. Instead, they partake in a conversation concerning the Lebanese responsibility in the war. Many literary authors and film directors refuse to depict the Lebanese people as culpable participants in the conflict, fearing that because the government was not restructured after the war and religious groups continue to vie for political power, a social conversation of the conflict would emphasize these persisting tensions rather than resolve them. These literary writers and film directors therefore use their works to argue against a social discussion of the war. In contrast, authors and directors from the Lebanese diaspora unabashedly depict the Lebanese people as the instigators of the war. These members of the diaspora see a social conversation as a means of understanding and progressing past the tensions that caused the war because they do not fear the same violent repercussions.

The French were able to overcome this problem of a one-sided historical memory after sufficient time passed and the French people were more emotionally distanced from World War II. This successful development of French historiography emphasizes the stagnation of the Lebanese historical memory of the war. The Lebanese are stuck in the first stages of this development and demonstrate the same evasiveness and social silence that the French experienced in the first decade after World War II. Because the Lebanese have not been able to experience an emotional

distance from the war due to the enduring conflict, it is likely that this historical and literary stagnation will persist. Unless an effort is made to address the persisting tensions, Lebanon will be unable to discuss the complex nature of the civil war.

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Appendix

Image 1: