TRACES OF EMPIRE:
DECOLONIZATION AND THE UNITED STATES IN LEBANON, 1941-1967

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how the United States became an “imperial” power in Lebanese imaginations after its political decolonization. As Lebanon obtained its full constitutional independence in 1946, a shift occurred in how Lebanese peoples perceived and encountered U.S. global power. Despite the United States’ anti-imperial rhetoric and support for Lebanese self-determination, many Lebanese increasingly grew disenchanted with real and imagined U.S. interferences in national and regional affairs, as well as Washington’s apparent blatant disregard for Arab human rights. In particular, U.S. public declarations in favor of Zionism and support toward the creation of Israel—a perceived product and surrogate of Western imperialism—in May 1948 led many to question U.S. motives in the Middle East, interrogate the United States’ so-called anti-imperial tradition, and equate Lebanon’s post-independence present with its colonized past.

Despite being self-governing, Lebanese society imagined itself in a constant state of decolonization as traces of empire remained and jeopardized Lebanon’s sovereignty. The U.S. military intervention in the Lebanese civil war of 1958 contributed to ongoing constructions that considered Washington to be openly disregarding Lebanese public opinion and stepping into the shoes of fading imperial
powers in the Middle East: Britain and France. The U.S. sale of Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Israel in 1962 and, finally, the popular belief that the United States colluded with Israel during the third Arab-Israeli war of 1967 formalized the process in which U.S. “empire” became a reality in Lebanese mindscapes. By the war’s end, many Lebanese peoples viewed the United States as being far from exceptional as it had fully embraced an “imperial” policy and culture like others before it and stood at odds with decolonization.
DEDICATION

For Katie
I will never forget where I was when I first heard about the tragic events of September 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2001. I was eighteen and a senior at l’\textit{Ecole secondaire l’Héritage} in my hometown of Cornwall, Ontario, Canada. The bell signaling the break between first and second period had just gone off. As walked to my locker, I crossed the daytime custodian. Immediately following our regular morning greetings, she delivered the shocking news: the Twin Towers had been attacked. My first reaction—like that of many in my high school, the United States, and across the globe—was: who had done this and why? So many lives lost; and for what? For the remainder of the day, my Franco-Ontario friends and I turned to our teachers, wondering how such a tragedy could take place, and attentively tuned into CNN later that day for news. Born and raised in Cornwall, many of us often crossed the St. Lawrence River and traveled a mere ten minutes south into upstate New York. Many of us, therefore, felt connected to the United States. It was a part of our daily lives. Relatives of mine lived in nearby Massena, New York, and I visited them myriad times a year throughout my childhood. This said, \textit{Le Monde}’s memorable September 12\textsuperscript{th} headline, \textit{“Nous sommes tous Américains,”} adequately represented the feelings of many in my small, non-American town, myself included.
Long after U.S. president George W. Bush stood before the world and asked “why do ‘they’ hate ‘us’?,” 9/11 continued to impact my intellectual development. Prior to my high school graduation, my mother and aunt took my sister and I to New York City for a weekend of sightseeing. Transformed into a mere construction site, I personally encountered Ground Zero and witnessed all the messages left behind by others before me. A mere nine-months or so later, I sat in my first-year world history since 1945 class at the Université d’Ottawa and engaged in vibrant discussions over the global war on terror and the United States’ invasion of Iraq. Puzzled as to how and why such events took place, I developed an interest in the histories of U.S. involvement in the Middle East and Washington’s relations with Arab-Muslim peoples. More specifically, I felt a need to challenge dominant stereotypes of Arab anti-Americanism and place the latter in its proper historical context. This dissertation, while far from offering definitive answers, is the culmination of ten-years of curiosity, dedication, and hard work.

Many faculty members at the University of Ottawa’s History Department were crucial in helping me throughout this tumultuous journey. I would especially like to thank Drs. Galen Perras, Serge Durflinger, Ryme Seferdjeli, Nicole St-Onge, Micheline Lessard, and Pierre Henri Habib. Above all, I will be forever indebted to my M.A. supervisor and mentor, Dr. Lotfi Ben Rejeb. Together, we spent countless hours in his office discussing contemporary U.S.-Middle East relations and their pasts. On numerous occasions, Lofti shared with me memories of his childhood in Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia, and the various nuanced ways in which his community processed U.S. global power in both past and present. He encouraged me to learn Arabic, work on my
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My greatest debt, however, goes to my family and friends. My journey to this
point has been a challenging one to say the least. Without their support, I could not
have realized such an accomplishment. Suffice to say, they deserve much of the credit.
I would like to extend a special thanks to my in-laws, Steve and Diane Magee. I
consider myself very fortunate to have them both in my life. Ultimately, this
achievement would not have been possible without the support of four extraordinary
women. My grandmother, aunt, and mother—Yvonne, Francine, and Sylvie
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my heart. *Je vous aime beaucoup!* For the last ten years or so, my wife and best friend, Katie Magee Labelle, has made me a better and stronger person. Without her love, I would not be where I am today. This work, Katie, is dedicated to you.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

On the last Sunday of May 1942—the U.S. national holiday of Memorial Day—Americans commemorated those who have fought under the guise of the stars and stripes, in the name of freedom and liberty. Old Glory stood at half-mast from coast to coast. Arlington National Cemetery and its countless gravestones overflowed with red, white, and blue. Shortly before three p.m. local time, a crowd headed by U.S. undersecretary of state Sumner Welles gathered across the Potomac to collectively pay their respects. After the U.S. Marine band delivered the Star-Spangled Banner, Welles took the podium. U.S. independence, he solemnly warned was once again in peril. Americans “faced the gravest danger [they] ha[d] ever confronted since” 1776. As a result of the Japanese attack on Hawai’i, the Nazis occupation of Poland, and the Italian subjugation of Abyssinia, Axis imperialism threatened to turn the clock back on both the United States and the world.

The United States could not stand idly by. In the minds of many Americans present that day, it was the land of the free and embodied the universal cause of decolonization. The country had a long, successful track-record against empire. It was thus the United States’ inherent duty to uphold its imagined anti-imperial tradition and
lead the world into a post-imperial, “American Century.” Over “[f]orty-two years ago,” Welles declared, “the United States went to war to help the gallant people of Cuba free themselves from the imposition by a nation of the Old World of a brutal tyranny which could not be tolerated in a New World dedicated to the cause of liberty.” Just like it had done at home, the United States vowed to guarantee the independence of peoples abroad. In World War I, Americans—many of them interred on the very grounds where the U.S. undersecretary of state stood—played an integral role in defeating Germany. The United States stymied the age of the empire, or so it thought. As U.S. state and society mistakenly “returned to the provincial policies and” so-called isolationist “standards of an early day,” Welles intoned, the Old World reverted back to its imperial ways. Europe could no longer be trusted to manage the world and the lives of peoples.

“And now” the United States was “engaged in the greatest war which mankind ha[d] known.” The United States needed to “utterly and finally crush the evil men and the iniquitous systems which they have devised that are today menacing our existence and that of free men and women throughout the earth… Our liberty,” assured Welles, and “our life as a free people are at stake.” At that moment, U.S. independence was connected to that of the colonized world. World War II was “in very truth a people’s war,” he explained. “It [wa]s a war which c[ould not] be regarded as won until the fundamental rights of the peoples of the earth [we]re secured.” As a symbol of independence and the defender of liberty and freedom, the United States “must assure the sovereign equality of peoples throughout the world.” Its “victory must bring in its
train the liberation of peoples.” U.S. involvement in World War II promised one thing: “The age of imperialism is ended.” ¹

These last words—“the age of imperialism is ended”—resonated throughout the globe, igniting worries in European metropoles and captivating the imaginations of colonized peripheries alike.² Lebanon, thanks in large part to globalization and the U.S. Office of War Information, heard Welles loud and clear.³ Regardless of U.S. strategic intentions behind the speech in Arlington, an energized Lebanese anti-colonial struggle, much like the many others, aligned its national cause with that of the United States’ in World War II and imagined a special relationship with Washington.

Mired in their own prolonged fight against French imperialism, Lebanese peoples sympathized with the United States as they too had been duped by Europe in the wake of World War I. France, with the help of Britain, extinguished Ottoman authority, but replaced it with its own. Lebanese self-determination remained a distant reality. Yet the fight against foreign subjugation continued unabated. The spirit of decolonization permeated Lebanese society. According to many Lebanese peoples, the United States now championed decolonization in mind and body. “America”⁴ meant

¹ Speech, 30 May 1942, Sumner Welles Papers; Box 195; Folder 5; Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library [FDRL].


³ Britt to Mullen, 8 May 1943, RG 208; Box 620; National Archives and Records Administration [NARA].

liberty, freedom, and independence. Better yet, the United States did not have an imperial past in Lebanon, nor did it hold current territorial aspirations there. The rising world power was on their side. And Europe would not stand in its way. An anti-imperial Washington was bound to lead the way in installing a fresh international order policed by a concert of nation-states, rather than European empires. The United States, many Lebanese and Americans felt at this time, was exceptionally different from Europe and served as a model for the world. It was destined to change global affairs for the better. This concurrence would not last much longer, however.

This dissertation traces how the United States became an “imperial” power in Lebanese imaginations after independence. World War II proved to be a major turning point in Lebanese history. By 1946, Lebanon finally obtained the constitutional sovereignty, in its complete form, that eluded it since the disintegration of the Ottoman empire in the final days of World War I. The anti-imperial promise of “America” at this time gave hope to Lebanese peoples and ultimately played a central part in formalizing the nation-state of Lebanon. More specifically, Lebanese discussions concerning the United States and its foreign policy served as a safe anti-colonial medium to resist French rule and ensure political decolonization. World War II set off a string of events that engendered the end of foreign rule in the “land of cedars.” Whereas Free French and British forces occupied the small Mediterranean country for the duration of the war, the United States held European powers accountable to their pledge to make self-determination a reality once the guns fell silent in Europe and Asia. This task was not an easy one, as Free French leader General Charles de Gaulle resisted U.S. pressure and, on numerous occasions, redeployed forces there in an
attempt to re-occupy Lebanon at war’s end. The U.S. government held to its pledge to end French empire in Lebanon for which Lebanese peoples were deeply grateful. The global transition from an age of empire to one of nation-states appeared in motion.

Yet as existing scholarship demonstrates, U.S. support for the global process of decolonization waxed and waned in the immediate aftermath of World War II. The transition between international systems appeared in flux as Western empires resisted change through the Middle East and the colonial world at large. Lebanese peoples insisted that Washington maintain its anti-imperial course and extend the guarantee of independence to their southern neighbors, Palestinian Arabs. U.S. duplicity rapidly came under fire in Lebanon as the United States embraced the Zionist cause in the Holy Land. Zionism, perceived in the Arab world as a product of and conduit for Western imperialism, could not supplant the basic human right of Palestinian independence. Worse yet, Zionist ambitions openly proclaimed southern Lebanon to

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be in its expansionist sight. The installation of a Jewish state in Palestine, therefore, would not only deprive Palestinian Arabs of their land and integrity, but it also threatened Lebanese territorial sovereignty. The imperialist ideology of Zionism, many Lebanese believed, blurred the lines between “empire” and decolonization, not to the mention the United States’ place in a post-1945 world. Lebanese society, as a result, openly interrogated U.S. foreign policy in Palestine and held it up to its World War II pledge that “the era of imperialism is ended.” The United States’ non-imperial character in Lebanon was under heavy scrutiny. By supporting Zionism and contradicting Palestinian statehood, the United States betrayed the Lebanese idea that it was distinct from its European imperial allies, Britain and France, and relinquished its exceptionalism in Lebanese imaginations “as the apotheosis of the nation-form itself and as a model for the rest of the world.” Lebanese “anti-Americanism” subsequently gained unprecedented momentum.

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8 The term “anti-Americanism” is a U.S. construction applied most frequently to cultural contests over national identity and American acts of dehumanizing foreign opposition to U.S. foreign policy. As Ussama Makdisi proclaims, it does not exist in the Arabic lexicon. This said I adopt the term out of convenience. Arab “anti-Americanism,” in this paper, refers to the U.S. perceptions of political opposition toward U.S. involvement in Lebanese affairs. For more discussion on the term “anti-Americanism,” see Giacomo Chiozza, Anti-Americanism and the American World Order (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Max Paul Friedman,
Washington’s decision to formally support the partition of Palestine at the United Nations in late 1947—which set out to divide the British mandate into two states, one Arab and one Jewish—engendered not only a bloody civil war there, but also a deep sense of disillusionment in Lebanon and started a process in which the United States became an “imperial” power in Lebanese imaginations. Many felt that Washington displayed traces of empire for the first time. The anti-imperial promise of “America” apparently had its limits. The immediate U.S. recognition of the state of Israel in mid-May 1948 meant one thing: Washington greatly deceived Lebanese peoples. Decolonization, in other words, lost its champion. The rock on which Lebanese peoples leaned in order to protect themselves from empire was not as stable and solid as they originally thought. The United States stood by and watched as Israel


subjected the Arab world to a humiliating defeat that henceforth would be remembered as the *Nakba*, or catastrophe. Empire consequently remained a reality in post-independent Lebanese imaginations.

For the next two decades or so, Lebanese men, women, and children of all political and sectarian shades engaged in the politics of decolonization and actively debated whether or not the United States was an “imperial” power. Whereas Washington insisted that it upheld its anti-imperial tradition, its actions during key moments in the Middle Eastern affairs led many to conclude otherwise. The United States’ first concrete opportunity to reassure Lebanese skeptics came during the Suez crisis of 1956, also referred to as the second Arab-Israeli War. Washington, at this time, openly denounced the British-French-Israeli aggression against Egypt. Such a position gained popular acknowledgement across Lebanon. But Lebanese optimism quickly faded as Washington enacted the Eisenhower Doctrine shortly after the crisis,

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10 This dissertation is not a comprehensive history of U.S.-Lebanon relations from 1941 to 1967. Rather, it adopts a structure, focusing on key moments or flashpoints over an extended period of time, that has become common recently in the discipline of history. For examples, see Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); and Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

which proclaimed to fill a perceived vacuum in the Middle East following the British and French imperial debacle and vowed to protect the region against Communism.\textsuperscript{12} The Eisenhower Doctrine convinced many that Washington held its own territorial ambitions in the region. Ensuing U.S. support for the unpopular and repressive Lebanese president Camille Chamoun buttressed such beliefs. The United States appeared at odds with a majority of Lebanese when it opted to respond to Chamoun’s appeal for a U.S. military intervention in the Lebanese civil war of 1958. By doing so, many Lebanese concluded that Washington openly disregarded their fundamental human right as a sovereign nation to determine and control their political fate. A significant portion of Lebanese pictured the arrival of U.S. troops as a blatant return of foreign domination and an infringement on their recently obtained right to self-determination. Lebanon’s colonial past overcame the borders of time and became interconnected with the present, as the memory of empire surfaced alongside the arrival of U.S. forces in July 1958. A U.S. Orientalist mentalité and the ensuing drive to integrate the Arab Middle East into its policy of global containment led many Lebanese to associate U.S. cold war strategy with the legacies of French and British imperialism. To many Lebanese, the United States was far from exceptional, as it had embraced the “imperial” way like others before it and interfered in Lebanese affairs without the consent of a majority of its peoples.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{13} For more on the U.S. intervention in the Lebanese civil war of 1958, see Erika G. Alin, \textit{The United States and the 1958 Lebanon Crisis: American Intervention in the Middle East} (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994); Alan Dowty, \textit{Middle East Crisis: U.S. Decision-Making in 1958, 1970 and 1973} (Berkeley: University of
U.S. involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict following Nakba further consolidated the process in which the United States became an “imperial” power in Lebanese imaginations. From the start of the first Arab-Israeli war, Washington openly declared itself as an impartial actor and attempted to publicly distance itself from the state of Israel and Arab perceptions of imperialism in the Middle East. “Impartiality” would serve as construct that reified U.S. exceptionalism. The U.S. government, at this time, openly claimed that it held no territorial ambitions in the Middle East and therefore consisted of the only global power able to facilitate a lasting peace between Arabs and Israelis. Following Washington’s denunciation of British-French-Israeli collusion in the Suez crisis of 1956, many Lebanese believed that the United States was indeed an impartial actor in the Arab-Israeli imbroglio, as it condemned empire’s aggression against the za’im, or leader, of the Arab world, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, and defended decolonization, as well as the Arab sovereign right to the coveted Suez Canal. The idea of “impartiality” thereafter challenged the United States’ embryonic “imperial” identity in Lebanon and produced consent toward direct U.S. involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Yet, in the early 1960s, various issues revolving around the Arab-Israeli conflict jeopardized U.S. prestige in the Arab world and forced Washington privately and publicly to pick sides. “Impartiality,” much like the United States’ self-proclaimed anti-imperial tradition, appeared to have its limits. The U.S. discursive tool, many Lebanese deduced, defended the exercise of empire in the Middle East and prevented decolonization. The United States, in light of its 1962 sale of anti-aircraft Hawk missiles and ensuing public pronouncements in favor of Israel, inherited the role of supreme guarantor of the Jewish state, itself a perceived form of Western imperialism. The increasing threat of Israeli expansionism alongside the perception of an emerging “special relationship” between the White House and the Jewish state against the Arab world and mounting U.S. denials of partiality in the Arab-Israeli conflict persuaded many Lebanese peoples to increasingly label the United States as an “imperial” power in the Middle East.14 Framed within the confines of an ensuing struggle against foreign domination, Lebanese peoples gradually defined the United States as being guilty of empire by association.

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The advent of the third Arab-Israeli war in 1967 solidified the process by which the United States became an “imperial” power in Lebanese imaginations. By war’s end, Lebanon reached a consensus. Throughout the crisis, the United States failed to demonstrate its so-called impartiality, despite multiple public pronouncements, or to prevent Israeli militarism and expansionism. Washington’s refusal to condemn Israel for its blatant attack against Egypt—whether over the Gulf of Aqaba, Tel Aviv’s role in starting the 1967 war, or demand an immediate Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories—led many Lebanese to conclude that the White House gave Israel a “green light” to annihilate the Arab nation, extend its nation-state borders, and establish an Eretz Israel, or Greater Israel. This made Nasser’s “Big Lie,” which accused the United States of fighting alongside the Jewish state against the Arab world, believable long before it hit Arab airwaves and encountered the Lebanese society, as the latter believed it remained a part of an international system policed by empires.

Once more, Lebanese peoples recognized how U.S. words diverged from deeds. Above all, they reckoned, the United States was not interested in protecting Arab sovereignty as it refused to stand by, let alone acknowledge, Arab human rights. Washington was at odds with decolonization. The Jewish state, for this reason, became a base of U.S. “imperial” power, bent on dominating the Arab world and undermining its international right to self-determination and self-governance. Lebanese peoples concluded that U.S. global power exerted itself in an “imperial” way. This shift deeply displeased Lebanon, as it wanted the United States to stand by its so-called anti-imperial tradition. By the end of 1967, U.S. exceptionalism evaporated from Lebanon;
in its place, Lebanese peoples demystified U.S anti-imperialism and replaced it with what William Appleman Williams aptly called, “imperial anticolonialism.”

Washington’s condemnation of empire, they reasoned, operated as a discursive instrument in formalizing U.S. “imperial” power. Lebanese decolonization was not in the United States’ best interest. To Lebanese peoples this “imperial” turn was the tragedy of U.S. diplomacy. By 1967 empire became a U.S. way of life in Lebanese imaginations.

The story of how the United States became an “imperial” power in Lebanese imaginations after Lebanon’s independence calls into question conventional ideas about “decolonization,” in both its national and international forms, and the trajectory of empire during the twentieth century. As Todd Shepard aptly explains, international and Western national histories “still describe ‘decolonization’ primarily as the break point between ‘empire’ and ‘after.’” Frederick Cooper adds, “One of the problems in writing about decolonization is that we know the end of the story.”

The realization of political independence naturally frames traditional, Western narratives of empire and decolonization, as well as non-Western ones concerning the formation of nation-states in ex-colonies. But decolonization should not be constrained as a struggle for national

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16 Williams Appleman Williams, Empire as a Way of Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).


sovereignty in the colonized world or the breakdown of empire in colonial metropoles.

It was also a global imagination that went beyond national borders and connected various parts of the world, the United States included. Studies of decolonization therefore should transcend the conventional binary, relational frame of “colonized” versus “colonizer” that dominates imperial histories. As Prasenjit Duara asserts, “decolonization represented not only the transference of legal sovereignty, but a movement for moral justice and political solidarity against imperialism.” The global struggle for the “first right” of human self-determination “thus refers both to the anti-imperialist political movement and to an emancipatory ideology which sought or claimed to liberate the nation and humanity itself.”


Although Lebanese peoples were constitutionally independent in 1946, their anti-imperial struggles to maintain this status were ongoing. This study, therefore, illustrates the interplay between empire and decolonization. As the case study of post-independent Lebanon demonstrates, empire and decolonization overlapped each other before and after political independence. Suffice to say, as Edward Said does, that many Lebanese believed that “Imperialism did not end, did not suddenly become ‘past,’ once decolonization had set in motion the dismantling of classical empires.”\(^{21}\) In other words, as Christopher Lee puts it, they viewed decolonization as “both a contingent moment of political independence and a long standing process with deep roots.”\(^{22}\)

While decolonization unfolded across the globe, explains Sean Mills, it “acted as a structure of ideas that gave diverse groups and individuals,” both inside and outside formal colonial relationships, “resources to understand their own conditions in new ways and, in turn, to creatively adapt and reshape those very ideas.”\(^{23}\)

Lebanese peoples gratefully appreciated the United States’ support for their national independence during World War II. However, when U.S. support for global decolonization appeared to fade in Lebanese imaginations, popular ideas of “America” began to change. Lebanese desires and rights, many felt, did not seem to hold the same importance within Washington decision-making following the formation of the


Lebanese nation-state. Post-independence Lebanese peoples, as a result, drew connections between contemporary U.S. indifference toward their “postcolonial” present and that of empires in their colonial past.24 As late as 1966, renowned Arab historian Albert Hourani avowed, “[W]hen the new government has become really independent in its acts, there may still remain something very important from its colonial past. If foreign rule has lasted for a long time, it will have sunk deep roots in men’s minds and in society.”25 In other words, “the meaning of the imperial past is not totally contained within it, but has entered the reality of hundreds of millions of people, where its existence as shared memory and as a highly conflictual texture of culture, ideology, and policy still exercises tremendous force.”26 Whereas Lebanese decolonization appeared to be a political reality, it culturally remained elusive in the eyes of many of its citizens. Lebanon’s anti-imperial struggle remained; U.S. anti-imperial intentions appeared to be changing for the worse. Lebanese public opinion therefore grew increasingly disenchanted with Washington. Many Lebanese felt subjugated by U.S. global power, leading them to conclude that the United States began to perceive them through an “imperial” lens. Put differently, Lebanese peoples identified traces of empire in U.S. global power.


26 Said, Culture and Imperialism, 12.
In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said criticizes a Euro-American mindset that justified foreign interference and imperialism in the Middle East. From the age of Enlightenment onward, “Occidentals” constructed a system of knowledge and representation of the “Orient” that enabled the exercise of empire. The culture of Orientalism established a binary outlook that constructed perceptions of the “West” and “East” as being diametrically opposed. Since the former represented and served as agents of progress, this left the “Orient” and its peoples being perceived as “weak,” “backward,” “corrupt,” and “savage.” Orientalism’s imperial discourse in turn encouraged Westerners to disregard Arab-Muslim sentiments and advance their own perceived interests to the detriment of others. Orientalism, in other words, culturally colonizes and marginalizes Middle Eastern peoples in order to manufacture popular, “Western” consent to justify and condition the physical task of intervention and domination. The mere exclusion of “Oriental” perspectives in “Occidental” discussions concerning past and present interventions facilitates empire. “Without significant exception the universalizing discourse of modern Europe and the United States assumes the silence, willing or otherwise, of the non-European world,” Said explains elsewhere. “There is incorporation; there is inclusion; there is direct rule; there is coercion. But there is only infrequently an acknowledgement that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known.” Orientalism, in many instances, was central to U.S.-Middle East relations.

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U.S. diplomatic historians have been drawn toward Said’s work, as Andrew Rotter points out, by “a sense that Said is speaking for people whose voices foreign relations specialists have never fully articulated.” As a result, “The single most important thing Orientalism did for U.S. diplomatic historians, whether they acknowledge it or not, was to demand that they—that all scholars—heed the voices of subalterns when they talked back to power.”

Although much of the scholarship on U.S.-Middle East relations eloquently criticizes past U.S. practices, it unfortunately continues to reflect this cultural tendency through the marginalization of the agency of Middle Eastern peoples. Rashid Khalidi and Ussama Makdisi, in turn, have vowed to overturn the power of Orientalism and take Arab voices seriously by injecting Arab agency and perceptions of the United States into post-1945 narratives of U.S.-Middle East relations. Arab “perceptions and the history behind them,” Khalidi convincingly

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pleads, “are extremely important, for how others perceived [the United States], and how they perceives their own history, rather than how [Americans] perceive [them]selves, will determine how others act.”

This dissertation, therefore, seeks to contribute to this growing body of scholarship by using post-independence Lebanon as a prism to understand the historical relationship between Arab-Muslim peoples and the U.S. government. By the mid-twentieth century, the land of cedars served as a cosmopolitan hotspot and an important center in Middle Eastern intellectual, political, and economic life. Beirut, in particular, attracted unprecedented Western commercial interests, leading former CIA officer Miles Copeland to categorize it as “the business world’s ‘New York’ in the Middle East.”

“Ubranisation and the expansion and intensification of commercial interests,” explains Youssef Chaitani, “were coupled with the poliferation of newspapers, literary salons, private clubs, and coffee houses, through which news disseminated and exchanged.” Lebanese peoples, through various mediums, actively engaged in politics. Technological developments, the increasing flow of information, and a relative freedom of expression in Lebanon produced an environment in which ideas circulated and extensive conversations pertaining to local, national, regional, and global topics were registered and generated at an “advanced” rate by Arab standards,

32 Khalidi, Resurrecting Empire, vii-viii.

let alone those of the colonized world, thus making it a viable and excellent case study in understanding the historical relationship between the the U.S. government and Arab-Muslim peoples.

As far as Arab sources pertinent to the history of U.S.-Middle East relations are concerned, Edward Said complained nearly two decades ago that, “there is still hardly any literature in Arabic that portrays America.” Endless are the grumbles amidst U.S. diplomatic historians concerning the lack of access to Middle Eastern governmental archives. This dissertation overcomes this challenge by using the press as a crucial source and space in the qualification of past Lebanese perception of U.S. global power and ensuing conversations between Washington and Lebanese society. Newspapers, which Khalidi rendered long ago as “perhaps the most basic source for modern political history,” permeated cosmopolitan Lebanon throughout the period under study. News articles and editorials overflowed with Lebanese discussions concerning U.S. diplomacy, society, culture, and identity. Their influence, moreover, “was not limited to the literate. Not only were newspapers exchanged in informal settings like coffee houses, but street-corner vendors shouted out the headlines of the latest editions.”

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35 Said, Culture and Imperialism, 294.


37 Chaitani, Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon, 3.
Western states with a vested interest in Lebanese affairs, like France, Britain, and the United States, were well aware of the press’ significance in gaging public opinion and viability as a source of information. They were also fully cognizant of the problems it posed as a barometer for Lebanese public sentiment and populism. In 1953, the U.S. embassy in Beirut disparaged the Lebanese press as being a product of “personal” journalism and “resembl[ing] the American press of the early 19th century.”  

In spite of this Orientalist assessment, Lebanese peoples actively engaged with media on a quotidian basis. It held a central place in Lebanese society, politics, and culture. And for this reason, French, British, and U.S. diplomatic offices in Beirut monitored its content and produced, in many cases, extensive daily, weekly, and monthly second-hand press reports, for which this dissertation is greatly, but not solely, reliant.

The use of these non-Lebanese sources, much like the Lebanese press itself, presents many challenges to historical research. Yet, given the paucity of resources available in a historian’s toolbox, Lebanese newspapers and non-Lebanese press reports consist of a fundamental and inescapable pool of historical data. They facilitate the challenging task of unearthing Lebanese perspectives and tracking the exchange of ideas, as well as the development of key socio-political events. Lebanese news articles and editorials were frequently commented upon and often integrated into outgoing French, British, U.S. cables relevant to ongoing policy discussions. “In spite of its many drawbacks and” methodological “shortcomings” — and there are many — the

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38 Minor to Secretary of State, 15 July 1953, RG 59; Confidential US State Department Central Files; Lebanon, Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954; Reel 13.
press “is a mirror of events and trends and sometimes their initiator, and thus remains an irreplaceable source.” While it is near impossible to precisely measure the power, accuracy, reliability, circulation, and demographic scope of contemporary ideas and mediums, one can trace the times and places where they are mentioned, repeated, elaborated, and debated. Alongside other sources, such as letters, petitions, speeches, political cartoons, private conversations, and diplomatic reports, the press—when examined critically—provides as an invaluable reservoir for research in U.S. diplomatic history, let alone Middle East studies. And it has yet to be fully tapped.

The Lebanese press, furthermore, played an integral part in the formations of national and transnational public spheres. According to Charles Taylor, “The public sphere is a common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media… to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about these.” Going as far back as the second half of the nineteenth century, public opinion in what would become the nation of Lebanon formed and exerted itself vis-à-vis local, regional, and global issues through the socio-political mediums of newspapers and pamphlets, among others. The apparent absence


and dominant “assumption that Arab and Islamic societies, by their nature, lack any public sphere within which to publicly debate and discuss political issues,” contends Marc Lynch, “seriously misrepresents these societies. The relatively unique transnational dimension of Arab public spheres has long and deep roots.” An ongoing Orientalist mindset thus precludes common Western beliefs that vibrant public spheres existed and were fundamental to Lebanese society and the Arab-Muslim world at large.

Lebanese peoples, contrary to popular Orientalist stereotypes regarding Arab-Muslim societies, historically engaged in profound, sound, and fruitful conversations over U.S. foreign policy. But such prejudices continue to marginalize its relevance toward past and present human affairs. As Terry Regier and Muhammad Ali Khalidi explain, “the Arab street has become the primary expression used to refer to Arab public opinion thereby inviting a sweeping view of the Arab public that highlights this derogatory connotation.” The ongoing “use of the Arab street metaphor regularly invites” people “to discount or dismiss Arab public opinion and to regard it as being unreasonable and extreme.” According to Asef Bayat, “the ‘Arab street’… became” a contemporary “code [sic] that immediately invoke[s] a reified and essentially ‘abnormal’ mind set, as well as stange place filled with angry people who, whether

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they ‘hate us’ or just ‘don’t understand us,’ must shout imprecations ‘against us.’ Arab
or other Muslim actions’,” he explains, “were described almost exclusively in terms of
‘mobs, riots, revolts,’ leading to the logical conclusion that ‘Western standards for
measuring public opinion simply don’t apply’ in the Arab world.”

Contrary to popular perceptions, the street does not only serve as a space of
violent protest. The street, whether it be in the Arab world or the West, serves as both
a public space and metaphysical place where peoples vibrantly engage in myriad
societal dialogues and create both close and distant relationships that are not always
mirred in violence. “Streets, as spaces of flow and movement, are not only where
people express grievances, but also where they forge identities, solidarities, and extend
their protest beyond their immediate circles to include the unknown, the strangers,”
contends Bayat. “Here streets serve as a medium through which strangers or casual
passersby are able to establish latent communication with one another by recognizing
their mutual interests and shared sentiments.” The body of public opinion exceeds
artificial boundaries and is continuously negotiated. This arena, which Bayat refers to
as the “political street,” represents “the collectives sentiments, shared feelings, and
public opinions of ordinary people in their day-to-day utterances and practices that are
expressed broadly in public spaces—in taxis, buses, and shops, on street sidewalks, or
in mass demonstrations.”

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46 Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*

By abandoning Orientalist depictions of Arab-Muslim public opinion and taking its contents seriously, this dissertation also exceeds the geographical and cultural borders surrounding the debate concerning U.S. empire after 1945 through the incorporation of Lebanese perspectives. Much ink has been spilled over whether or not, after World War II, the United States was—and continues to be—an “imperial” power. Even today, as Richard Immerman contends, “Little about the history of the United States is more contested than the question of whether it warrants the label empire.”\textsuperscript{48} “Even as an increasing number of scholars treat American empire as worthy of examination,” avows Julian Go, “skeptics remain.”\textsuperscript{49} American presidents and constituents alike continue to insistently discard the existence of U.S. empire following 1945. “Empire,” in such cases, is projected as a static, pre-1945 phenomenon or operates within a discourse of exceptionalism, “so that” the United States’


\textsuperscript{49} Julian Go, Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present (New York; Cambridge University Press, 2011), 242.

“peculiarities appear to stand out against the tendencies of the world.” The breakdown of European empires after World War II reportedly signaled the end of the “age of empire.” Through such blinders, it becomes anachronistic to invoke the charge of “empire” against the United States during the cold war. Besides, as Sumner Welles declaimed, the United States had fought its war against empire and won. This said, many believe that the concept of “hegemony” serves as a more salient way to describe U.S. global power in a so-called post-imperial period. “To equate ‘hegemony’ with ‘empire’ or use the term interchangeably is to obscure the significance of this recent unprecedented, pervasive U.S. role all around the world,” argues Michael Hunt. To define the United States as an empire during the cold war, Robert Keohane asserts, “is to obscure crucial differences in forms of rule.”

Others, like Geir Lunderstad and John Gaddis, prefer to qualify the United States as a benevolent “empire by invitation.” During the postwar period, Lunderstad proclaims, Western Europe eagerly encouraged the United States to involve itself in European affairs and embraced Washington’s presence on its continent. U.S. imperial power thus was unlike others before it, as “The American influence often went deeper


than the Soviet exactly because Washington’s forms of control were more in
accordance with the will of the local populations than were Moscow’s.” What is more,
U.S. imperialism was predominantly positive since “many of the countries that
welcomed American influence were also able to do considerably better, at least in
longterm material terms, than was the United States itself.” 54 “In the end,” Gaddis
adds, “it was again external circumstances—the manner in which Stalin managed his
own empire and the ways in which he pushed Europeans into preferring its American
alternative—that brought the self-confidence necessary to administer imperial
responsibilities into line with Washington’s awareness of their existence.” 55 U.S.
empire, in this instance, was not its own fault.

Knowledge of U.S. “imperial” power after 1945, therefore, continues to be
highly problematic and “controversial.” Most importantly, it remains a predominantly
“American story,” as well as the product of an Orientalist mindset that lends little
credence to the views of “Third World” societies, let alone Middle Eastern ones. 56 This
“national condition” of U.S. imperial denial dehumanizes not only local peoples, but
also the global process of decolonization, in order to manufacture popular consent and
repress dissent at home, as well as justify the increasing exercise of U.S. power

54 Geir Lundestad, “Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe,

55 John Lewis Gaddis, We Know Now: Rethinking Cold War History (New York:

56 Aijaz Ahmad argues against the idea of a universal “Third World” concept. See his
article, “Three Worlds Theory: End of a Debate,” in Aijaz Ahmad, In Theory: Classes,
for Liberty, 14; Said, Culture and Imperialism, 5.
abroad. A culture of U.S. imperial denial, which marginalizes discussions of U.S. empire during the cold war, excludes decolonization and the decolonized from the U.S. nation-state narrative by concluding, “That simply because Americans say they do not ‘do’ empire, there cannot be such a thing as American imperialism.”

Put differently, Thomas Bender writes, “Americans are always anxious to deny any relevance of empire to their history.” The United States’ imperial past and present in Lebanon, alongside Lebanese peoples, consequently become silent.

Yet U.S. history “is not freestanding or self-contained, like other forms of human solidarity, it is connected and partially shaped by what is beyond it.” While U.S. global power in Lebanon may have been different from that of its European predecessors, to many Lebanese peoples, they also shared similarities. Seeing that “empires did change over time and space,” the contours in which we define “empire” must continuously be reformed. But the tendency to find a singular definition for “empire” prevents us from fully understanding the limits of U.S. global power. In other words, we need to abandon the idea of “empire” as a static concept; rather “empire” is fluid and means different things to different peoples and regions at


60 Ibid., 3.

different times. It is crucial that we take all perceptions seriously and globalize U.S. imperial history, as social constructions of “empire” are shaped by various cultures and experiences. After all, as Paul Kramer convincingly argues, “Far more is to be gained by exploring the imperial as a way of seeing.”

The same, this dissertation contends, can be said about the imperial as a way of being seen. From roughly 1947 to 1967, Lebanese peoples equated the U.S. way of seeing them and its subsequent conduct and foreign policies to those of former imperial powers, Britain and France, and their perceived Middle Eastern surrogate, Israel. This led them to identify traces of empire in U.S. global power and project Washington in an “imperial” light after Lebanese independence. The idea of empire in Lebanese imaginations therefore transcended statehood. Postcolonial Lebanese made U.S. “imperial” power a reality during the post-1945 eras of decolonization and the cold war. And this perception from below was an integral part of the United States’ relationship with Lebanese society, whether Washington agreed with it or not.

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The day was 4 July 1943. As U.S. soldiers left their loved ones behind to fight overseas, many families and friends in the United States celebrated the national holiday of U.S. independence with a picnic full of hamburgers, hotdogs, and lemonade. Americans were not the only ones annually to commemorate this momentous and hard-fought event in world history, however. Half way across the globe, Lebanese peoples and U.S. officers gathered in the capital city of Beirut to celebrate “the Arsenal of Democracy” and feast on warak aynab, hommous, fatoush, and kibbeh. But perhaps more importantly, they came together to exult the idea of independence and the coming era of decolonization. In the midst of World War II, U.S.-Lebanon relations were at their apogee.

Lebanese perceptions of and experiences with World War II held different meanings from those of Americans. Whereas the short-term adversary was officially the Axis, many Lebanese directed energies toward the greater battle against colonialism, and in its situation, the French mandate. They fought, first and foremost, for their basic human right to self-determination. And the United States played an important role in their struggle. They “ha[d] high hopes in [an] American and Allied
victory,” commented Al-Bashir, and entrusted their faith and ambitions for their own independence primarily on the United States. “We Arabs,” editorialized Beirut, “stand up now[,] from around the African Atlantic Shores to the Persian Gulf, to greet and bless heartily the United States of America and its good president who proclaimed the four freedoms:” freedom of speech and expression, of worship, from want, and from fear. “Every nation on earth understands the glorious meaning of 4th July not to America alone but to the world at large,” declared Al-Massa. “This essentially democratic country, the United States of America, has already held high, twice in this century, the banner of liberty… May [the] American banner always be the symbol of liberty and humanity.”

This chapter, therefore, tries to make sense of the complex story that is Lebanese decolonization and the place it reserved for the United States. In other words, it explores Lebanese aspirations of self-determination and the ways in which the Lebanese imagined, depended on, and utilized the United States within their ongoing struggle for complete independence, free of foreign controls.

The Ottomans set the foundations of Lebanon in the early years of the early modern period. Following the conquest of the Arab lands of Syria, Egypt, and western Arabia in 1516-1517, the Ottoman dynasty enlarged its empire, forming “one of the largest political structures that the western part of the world had known since the Roman Empire disintegrated.” The capture of Arab lands gave the sultan global religious legitimacy, as he became the protector of the two holiest sites in Islam,

1 OWI Report, 10 July 1943, RG 208; Box 622; NARA.

Mecca and Medina. But perhaps more importantly for the recently conquered Arabs, “The Ottoman conquest also meant that for the first time since the rise of Islam, the Arab world was ruled from a non-Arab capital.” As Eugene Rogan explains, “From 1517 onward, the Arabs would negotiate their place in the world through rules set in foreign capitals, a political reality that would prove one of the defining features of modern Arab history.”

Upon conquering Arab lands, the Ottoman empire—centered in modern-day Turkey—established itself in the area by installing a fresh imperial edifice. To sustain their latest expansion, Ottoman administrators re-organized territorial boundaries in order to maximize their fiscal, commercial, and military uses. Formerly divided between local tribal leaders, the land that would become modern Lebanon was re-constituted as a semi-autonomous polity of a decentralized system, becoming the Emirate of “Mount Lebanon” within the region of greater Ottoman Syria. This rather small and new “periphery”—roughly eighty-eight miles long and 15 miles wide, and located between the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Mount Lebanon itself to the east, the ‘Akkar plain to the north, and the Chouf mountains (Jabal al-Shuf) to the

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4 Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007), 3. According to Ussama Makdisi, “Historically, the term Mount Lebanon (Jabal Lubnan) referred to the mountain range on the western fringes of the area the Mamelukes had called Billad al-Sham and that the Ottomans simply called Suriye, or Syria, in the nineteenth century… Indeed, only in the beginning of the nineteenth century, under the rule of Bashir Shihab, did the term Mount Lebanon become widespread (especially among European travelers), and it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that it was finally adopted by the Ottoman authorities (as Cebel-i Lubnan) to signify a coherent and separate entity.” Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 30.
south\textsuperscript{5}—resisted the sudden change in its order of things and as a result played an integral part in shaping the geographical and socio-political contours of imperial life. Following myriad local and imperial power struggles, Mount Lebanon emerged in 1660 as a somewhat defined region comprised of three Ottoman vilayets, or provinces: Tripoli to the north, Damascus to the east, and Saida to the south, whose governor oversaw Mount Lebanon’s affairs. From this point until the early nineteenth century, generally speaking, “Ottoman rule was a normal and accepted fact of life” even if “the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon were consigned to benign neglect on the fringes of an imperial Ottoman imagination.”\textsuperscript{6} Two major currents emerged to disrupt this climate of status quo, however: increasing European interest in the “Orient” and Ottoman modernization.

As European imperial powers expanded worldwide and climbed the ranks of global predominance, their governments, societies, and peoples constructed a cultural space and body of knowledge about the Ottoman empire that would facilitate the physical invasion and occupation of its territories. The lead-up to and impact of Napoleonic’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 illustrates the power of this Orientalist imperial


project. France, inspired by the fruits of revolutions and an enlightened colonial mentalité, set out on a republican mission to a distant land in order to spread the revolutionary benefits of “modernity,” “civilization,” and “liberty.” Yet this significant encounter in world history, Edward Said explains, “could only have been prepared before a military expedition, perhaps by someone who had no prior experience of the Orient except what books and scholars told him.” In other words, the objectification of the “Orient” and its peoples predated, and played an integral role in, the setting up of European colonial rule in the area that became known as the Middle East. Based in part on misrepresentations of Ottoman nasihatnames, or advice literature, produced in early modern times and concerned with internal discussions over reform, an image of Ottoman weakness and corruption made imperial decline inevitable in European imaginations.

Despite Napoleon’s defeat at the hands of Ottoman forces and retreat from the Egyptian province in 1801, Western Orientalist projections of the Ottoman empire

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7 For more, see Juan Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

8 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 83. See Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). The nasihatname writings did not represent blueprints for Ottoman imperial policy; rather, they reveal the polemical opinion of one, disenchanted Ottoman citizen. Nasihatnames, after all, consisted of advice literature that would be presented to an Ottoman prince. These writings served as a means to lobby Ottoman imperial policy. When they emerged, the Ottoman Empire was undertaking serious bureaucratic reforms, following the acquisitions of vast quantities of land. Nasihatnames, after all, consisted of advice literature that would be presented to an Ottoman prince. These writings served as a means to lobby Ottoman imperial policy. When they emerged, the Ottoman Empire was undertaking serious bureaucratic reforms, following the acquisitions of vast quantities of land. This led to a reorganization of the Ottoman system, which favored judges, in particular, and engendered a changing of the guard in political affairs.
flourished. Europeans, as a result, aggressively continued to set their sights on all corners of the Ottoman empire, Mount Lebanon included. Aware of this, an Ottoman imperial culture of reform and ensuing efforts to disprove European ideas of its “backwardness” engendered empire-wide campaigns of political and administrative reform and centralization. Mehmed Ali, who gained prominence as an Ottoman military leader during and immediately following the French invasion and eventually became governor of the province of Egypt in 1805, was at the forefront of efforts to modernize the Ottoman empire from within rather than break away from it. Under his command, Ottoman Egyptian forces ventured to various corners of the empire to make themselves and their reform seen, felt, and heard. In 1831, Mehmed Ali and his army conquered the provinces of Syria and Mount Lebanon.⁹

Istanbul, subjected to intense pressures both from within the empire and the European international system, responded to Mehmed Ali’s military campaigns by inaugurating the Tanzimat reforms, which legally enforced equality between Muslim and non-Muslims subjects. Yet “even as Ottoman officials described obviously new laws and rights as arising out of (as opposed to contradicting) an Islamic Ottoman tradition, European powers viewed the Tanzimat as a mandate for intervention on behalf of the empire’s non-Muslim subjects—and what better place to begin what they perceived to be the beleaguered tribal refuge of Mount Lebanon.” A place that frequently encountered European travelers, due to its integral part in a Mediterranean economy and the silk trade, Mount Lebanon rapidly became a global site of physical

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and metaphysical contestations. “On its terrain,” Ussama Makdisi adds, “Europeans, Ottomans, and locals were locked in a war over the meaning and direction of the Tanzimat, which itself contained several overlapping discourses of religious equality, Islamic traditions, political legitimacy, past glory, and present sovereignty, all framed implicitly by a Europe-dominated modernity.”

Whereas a joint Druze—a doctrinal offshoot of Shi’ism—and Maronite Christian revolt brought Ali’s tenure in Mount Lebanon to an end in 1840, Ottoman reform continued as Sultan Abdülmecid instituted Tanzimat. These ambiguous efforts and their apparent multiple meanings created much confusion. Local leaders, in an attempt to gain positions of power, proclaimed loyalty to the Sublime Porte, while simultaneously petitioning European states, mainly England and France, for protection. “The fluid political situation of 1840,” Makdisi contends, “allowed the indigenous elites to make new political claims that invoked mythologized sectarian pasts… The conflicting appeals of the elites reflected a developing sectarian consciousness that was torn between old and new and oriented both to Europe and to the Ottoman Empire.” This nascent, transnational sectarian mindset quickly led to bloodshed between Druze and Maronites, as the former revolted against the recently sworn Maronite ruler in 1841. Formerly entrusted with electing the governor of Mount Lebanon, the Druze rebelled against Tanzimat and their diminution to minority status. The newly-minted Maronite majority, in turn, fought back, thus spreading the cultural seeds of sectarianism in Mount Lebanon. In order to bring fighting to a halt,

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10 Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 57.

negotiations between locals, Ottomans, and Europeans engendered more reforms in late 1842, this time politically and culturally dividing Mount Lebanon into different administrative spaces based on communal differences.

Henceforth, European involvement became entrenched in the political affairs of Mount Lebanon as sectarianism fed Orientalism, thus generating further violence and conflict. In the case of France, it rapidly perceived itself as the protectors of the Christian community there and insisted, alongside England and other European powers, that “What was at stake in Mount Lebanon was not simply the resolution of an age-old tribal conflict but the course of modernity[,]” that is local acculturation to a so-called superior, European way of life, “which now stood at a crossroads.”\(^1\) The area’s existing political parameters were once again reset in 1860 following a new wave of sectarian fighting. This time, France deployed its armed forces to Mount Lebanon. They would remain until the Ottoman proclamation of the *Règlement organique* of 9 June 1861, which provided a short-term solution to the conflict. This announcement, guaranteed by the major European imperial powers, allocated greater sovereignty to Mount Lebanon within the Ottoman imperial framework and enlarged its territorial scope by incorporating former Syrian provincial area of Zahle and eastern parts of the Bekaa valley.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 71. For an excellent discussion regarding the malleable concept of “modernity,” see “AHR Roundtable: Historians and the Question of ‘Modernity’,” *American Historical Review* 116, 3 (June 2011); 631-751.

Notwithstanding the cessation of this latest sectarian struggle, European quests for power continued as perceptions of ongoing struggles over modernity in Mount Lebanon and the Ottoman empire as a whole eventually inspired and justified the establishment of the imperial mandate system in the Middle East. Ultimately, World War I brought the collapse of the Ottoman dynasty, leaving France and Britain to divide the spoils of what was once of most powerful empires in world history. France’s mission civilisatrice, an Orientalist mindset based “upon certain fundamental assumptions about the superiority of French culture and the perfectibility of humankind,” set its sights on the supposedly backward lands of Mount Lebanon and most of the Syrian province. Anticipating the end of the Ottoman empire, Paris claimed these territories in writing through the well-known Sykes-Picot Accords of 1916. As the war came to a close, French troops were dispersed throughout Ottoman Syria to safeguard French imperial ambitions and French president Georges Clémenceau strove to make Sykes-Picot a reality at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.14

Meanwhile, in Mount Lebanon and Syria, local Arabs contemplated the prospect of French rule. Inspired by the words of U.S. president Woodrow Wilson, most notably his famous Fourteen Points, and the McMahon-Hussein correspondence

of 1915-1916, which proclaimed British support for Arab nationalist ambitions, many objected to French claims and invoked their fundamental human right to self-determination. Pinning their hopes behind Amir Faysal and his nationalist quest to erect an Arab empire in the Middle East, Lebanese peoples in many cases launched resistance vis-à-vis the French military presence.\textsuperscript{15} Others, skeptical of the formation of a Muslim-run Arab empire, sought full independence backed by “traditional” French oversight. In presenting this case to the Paris Peace Conference, leading Maronite politician and head of the Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon (AC), Dawud ‘Ammun declared: “We want a Lebanon removed from all servitude, a Lebanon free to pursue its national destiny and reestablished in its natural frontiers—all indispensable conditions for it to live in its own freedom and prosper in place.” As such words reveal, “The Lebanese delegation was not seeking French colonialism in Lebanon but French assistance toward their ultimate goal of independence. However,” according to Eugene Rogan, “the French seemed only to hear what they wanted to hear, and they were glad to use the Lebanese delegation to legitimate their own claims over Lebanon.”\textsuperscript{16} French Orientalism disregarded Lebanese public opinion.


\textsuperscript{16} Cited in Rogan, \textit{The Arabs}, 213.
As Lebanese and Arab nationalist aspirations fell on European deaf ears, the peoples of Mount Lebanon increasingly mobilized against France’s “Lebanese project,” which became internationally sanctioned once the San Remo conference granted France a “mandate” over Mount Lebanon and Syria in late April 1920. Maintaining claims to the basic human right of self-determination, a skeptical AC set out to Damascus to sign a joint-declaration with Emir Faysal, denouncing French imperial claims and sanctioning the independence of Mount Lebanon. French forces along the Damascus road, however, intercepted the delegation, resulting in the eventual disbanding of the AC. Following this incident, French forces went on to suppress Arab nationalist forces in Syria. These turn-of-events permitted France to instill its “mandate” over Mount Lebanon and Syria. On 3 August 1920, in decree No. 299, French authorities re-configured and expanded the administrative borders of Mount Lebanon by transferring four former provinces of Ottoman Syria—Hasbaya, Rashaya, Baalbeck and the Bekaa—to the French mandate in Lebanon. On the last day of August 1920, France created the mandatory polity of “Greater Lebanon” following the proclamation of decree No. 318. As Fawwaz Traboulsi aptly puts it, “Lebanon, in the frontiers defined” by the French decree No. 318, “had never existed before in history… Lebanon’s borders were imposed against the will of the majority of its population.”

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Many Lebanese peoples relentlessly resisted French imperial rule from its point of origin. In the face of much resistance, France embraced its Orientalist mission civilisatrice and crowned Lebanon “the jewel in its new Middle Eastern empire.” The mandatory regime rigged Lebanese elections and celebrated its fruits, thus validating “France’s intention to rule Lebanon as a colony rather than assist it in achieving independence.” Anti-colonial unrest rapidly permeated Lebanese society. Following multiple revolts across both Lebanon and Syria, France introduced constitutional reform as a means to mollify anti-colonialism while further consolidating its politico-cultural authority. The Lebanese Constitution of 1926, which served as the basis of all governmental authority thereafter, allocated greater local participation in Lebanese political affairs. Yet it also buttressed a culture of sectarianism, reaffirming French rule and its cultural project of preparing Lebanese society for eventual republican democracy.20

To the great dismay of French authorities, Lebanese peoples were quick to embrace and demand further involvement in their own affairs. From 1926 to 1936, ongoing negotiations between mandatory France and mandated Lebanon generated more tensions, resulting in the suspension of the Lebanese constitution on multiple occasions.21 These political struggles culminated with the Lebanon crisis in 1936. Following yet another French-manipulated election that barely prevented a nationalist


victory, a group of Lebanese delegates formally protested to mandate authorities for
greater sovereignty, similar to that practiced by their Syrian neighbors who were
already deeply involved in such negotiations over constitutional reform. Amongst
other things, Lebanese nationalists demanded that France sponsor Lebanese
membership in the League of Nations. France refused, consequently generating “a new
alignment of forces and the crystallization of a multi-sectarian current aspiring to
independence from France.”

But rather than obtaining a promise of independence like that extended to
Syrians, Lebanese peoples were merely offered an “alliance of friendship” and
“internal independence.” Franco-Lebanese talks in late 1936 engendered the signing of
a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. This agreement, above formally creating a
binding alliance, codified the French recognition that Lebanon was an independent
state in exchange for a Lebanese commitment to aid in the preservation of French
interests there. Notwithstanding popular disapproval toward this Lebanese concession,
the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies immediately sanctioned the treaty of 1936.

Ratification in the French government, however, stalled and eventually collapsed.
French discussions over Lebanese independence were delayed until 1939, at which
point Paris rejected the ratification of the Franco-Lebanese Treaty of Alliance and
Friendship. Aggressive Nazi campaigns across Europe moreover shook the French
imperial métropole, reverberating into the Lebanese “periphery.” In its preparation for
war, French mandate officials suspended the Lebanese Constitution and dissolved the
Chamber of Deputies, thus turning the clock back on Lebanese independence.

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22 Traboulsi, A History of Modern Lebanon, 97-98.
Nationalist efforts and Lebanon’s political status, as a result, were rendered constitutionally mute. But when Nazi forces invaded and occupied France in May 1940, Lebanese nationalists rejoiced at the apparent abolition of the French mandate once and for all.  

On 8 June 1941, the Allied forces of Britain and Free France initiated Operation Exporter and sought to regain control of Lebanon, which was now under the control of the Vichy government—a Nazi puppet regime. Immediately following initial military successes, the Allies dangled a carrot before Lebanese peoples in exchange for their loyalty: complete independence. In a British-supported declaration that reverberated across Lebanon, General Georges Catroux declared “an end to the regime of the mandate.” Lebanese peoples “will therefore be from henceforth sovereign and independent peoples” and able to determine Lebanon’s political form. Lebanese independence, Catroux explained, would be guaranteed through the signing of an international treaty whose negotiations would commence as soon as time and events permitted. Now, more than ever, he added, the Allied cause required Lebanese cooperation. “We cannot allow, we who are fighting for the liberty of peoples, that the enemy should submerge your country step by step, obtain control of your persons and your belongings, and turn you into slaves.”

This last part—the Allied commitment to decolonization—struck cords with many Lebanese. The Allied cause, “the liberty of peoples,” was a noble one. Despite

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24 Kirk to Secretary of State, 8 June 1941, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], 1941, Vol. 3: 726-727.*
strong distrust toward Free France and the ruthlessness of Allied bombing, most notably in places like Beirut, Lebanese peoples opted not to resist Operation Exporter. Nearly one month later, the Allies defeated Vichy forces. Left with the challenge of sustaining this important victory in the Middle East, Britain and Free France remained in Lebanon and re-instituted French rule accompanied by public British oversight. The confines of Allied involvement in Lebanon were immediately made official through an exchange of letters between British minister of state in the Middle East, Oliver Lyttleton, and General Charles de Gaulle, leader of Free France. The Lyttleton-de Gaulle exchange, which was released to the Lebanese public sphere on 14 August, had three main components: a British recognition of France’s preeminent position in Lebanon and Syria as long as British forces remained responsible for general law and order; a British guarantee that it did not seek colonial control in the aforementioned states; and a French re-assurance that it remained committed to the facilitation of Lebanese and Syrian independence.

Lebanese independence, many locals reluctantly concluded at this time, was in the hands of Britain. France proved on myriad occasions that it could not be trusted. Right after the publication of the Lyttleton-de Gaulle exchange in Lebanon, Winston Churchill, alongside the newest leader of the Allied cause, U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt, co-issued a proclamation that not only heightened nationalist spirits in Lebanon, but also those of the anti-colonial world at large. Released on 14 August

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25 Engert to Secretary of State, 1 July 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. 3: 756.

1941, the Atlantic Charter “marked a defining, inaugural moment for what we now know as the modern doctrine of human rights.” Above all, it outlined an important binary logic that projected the Allied cause as a justified, moral, and humanitarian one and Axis power as inexcusable, immoral, and uncivilized. For the sake of “world civilization,” the days of “military domination by conquest” needed to come to an end. Britain and the United States, therefore, extended three particular promises that appealed to the anti-colonial world: “First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other; Second, they desire to see no territorial change that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned; [and] Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see the sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.”

The U.S.-sponsored global discourse of human rights and anti-colonialism embodied in the Atlantic Charter brought hope to Lebanese peoples. A universal institution appeared to be emerging that would check French imperial efforts in Lebanon. Many, as a result, warily began to place their allegiance and trust in the hands of the Allies. For the first few months, they were given the impression that it was paying off. On 24 November 1941, in another published statement, General Catroux re-iterated Lebanese independence and, the following day, assigned Lebanese

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27 Ibid., 30-31; Elizabeth Borgwardt, A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 4; and Press Release, 14 August 1941, Sumner Welles Papers; Box 151. Folder 8; Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library [FDRL].
politician Alfred Naccache to the position of Lebanese presidency. His proclamation rendered that Lebanese “aspirations were fulfilled.” It was now the duty of both governments to institutionalize self-government. The first necessary step was to formalize French-Lebanese “collaboration” through a Treaty of Alliance and Friendship and codify France’s “privileged position.” “In recognizing your independence,” Catroux exclaimed, “France is simply actuated by her traditional friendship for the Lebanon, by her centuries-old mission of guardianship in this country, and by the privileged position she has thus acquired.” The current global war, however, required that “In order to safeguard the independence and the sovereignty of the Lebanon and to carry on successfully the common struggle[,] the Allies” needed to undertake “for the duration of the war, the defence of the country.” Far from a sign of disregard for Lebanese sovereignty, the Allied presence there was “inspired by the thought of winning the war and of ensuring for the Lebanon by this means the future of a free people.” Once the guns fell silent and an Allied victory solidified itself, “a final settlement in the form of a Franco-Lebanese Treaty,” granting “a definite form the independence of the country,” would signal an end to the French and British presence in the land of cedars.

Catroux’s guarantee of independence was poorly received by Lebanese society, due in large part to his insistence that France be granted a “privileged position” in a post-mandate Lebanon. According to U.S. and British reports, the statement, mired

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28 “Steps Toward the Independence of the Levant States,” 4 September 1944, FO 226/253; United Kingdom National Archives [UKNA].

29 Cairo to Foreign Office, 26 November 1941, FO 371/27369; UKNA.
with Orientalism, French imperial arrogance, and Allied inconsistencies, generated “first impressions” that were “at best with cynical apathy and at the worst with active disapproval.” Lebanese nationalist leaders refused to be cajoled and many felt the need to raise “their voice in protest before the Free French… obliged the present Government to sign away important rights.” Given existing political circumstances, the signing of a Franco-Lebanese treaty was out of the question and should be delayed “until after the war when elections can be held and the true wishes of the people can be ascertained.”30 The “Average Lebanese,” for their part, “unconnected with politics” perceived the proclamation “only [a] perpetuity of [an] inefficient and corrupt French controlled regime.” Lebanese public opinion thus had to somehow be reassured that Allied priorities were not based on the perpetuation of foreign domination. “As has been frequently pointed out,” the British report continued, a “majority of the population who are pro-Axis are so, only because they wish to be rid of the French and have been restrained from turning against us because they hope for [the] continuance of inclusion.” French “[d]eclarations tending to annihilate this hope” could only produce further antagonism and resentment, which was highly likely since they “show[ed] no signs of loosening their hold on administration.”31

In an attempt to legitimize the hope of inclusion and reinforce the morality of the Allied cause against the Axis in Lebanon, the United States unilaterally issued its own press release concerning the status of Lebanese independence. The U.S. government, invoking its so-called anti-imperial tradition, publicly extended its

30 Engert to Secretary of State, 27 November 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. 3: 806.

31 Cairo to Foreign Office, 30 November 1941, FO 371/27369; UKNA.
sympathy “with the natural and legitimate aspirations of the” Lebanese “peoples.” While not directly involved in its Lebanese affairs, as a key member of the Allied nations, Washington would do its best to assure that the promise of the Atlantic Charter would be fulfilled in Lebanon by war’s end.32 This short and direct statement succeeded in nuancing—and, as a result, uplifting—Lebanese perceptions of the Allies and encouraged local peoples to turn to the United States for support. Whereas France and Britain, with their imperial pasts and presents, could not be entirely trusted, the United States was more than able to defend and ensure the promises of decolonization and human rights. In a letter written to Roosevelt a few days after the press release, signed by “twenty-seven prominent Lebanese citizens, including three archbishops, six former cabinet officers, and fifteen deputies,” Lebanese leaders lauded the United States and pleaded for it to act as the guarantor of the Atlantic Charter and justly defend “the liberty of peoples to choose their own fate.” It was the United States’ duty, in other words, to safeguard Allied promises and make Lebanese independence a postwar reality.33

Upon its release, as Elizabeth Borgwardt explains, “the Atlantic Charter became a cultural as well as a political icon.”34 Lebanese peoples, in particular, seized it as a political pledge extended at a time when their national status appeared fragile and the “age of empire” in limbo. The Atlantic Charter catapulted the United States to


33 Hull to President, 23 January 1943; Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt; Office File; Box 1; Folder: OF 3611 LEBANON 1939-45; FRDL.

34 Borgwardt, A New Deal for the World, 45.
the top of global affairs. The advent of an “American Century” coincided with and solidified the promise of independence and the era of decolonization. The U.S. reluctance to openly throw its weight behind the idea of a French “privileged position” in Lebanon and also to hold back its recognition of full Lebanese independence demonstrated that the Roosevelt administration was equally skeptical of European intentions and stood by its self-proclaimed anti-imperial principles. A sympathetic U.S. outlook, moreover, understood the importance of cultivating Lebanese loyalty at a time of increasing global peril. For the sake of the Allied cause, it was thus crucial for the United States to maintain, if not amplify, its image of “high esteem” in Lebanese imaginations. Americans had a reservoir of goodwill there and in the entire Middle East. Whether it was the long-lasting impact of U.S. missionary work and philanthropy, the memory of U.S. president Woodrow Wilson and his Fourteen Points, or its place as an “entrepreneurial Eden” and second homeland for the growing Lebanese diaspora, the idea of a benevolent United States carried a powerful standing in Lebanon.

U.S. officials, as a result, augmented their propaganda activities in Lebanon and geared them toward this end. By providing a constant flow of information regarding its activities and the overall cause of the newly-formed United Nations, it could quietly project the perception of U.S. exceptionalism. In other words, Lebanese

35 Welles to Engert, 20 February 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. 4: 644.

peoples needed to picture the United States “as the apotheosis of the nation-form itself and as a model for the rest of the world.” For this to happen, Washington had to maintain its distinctiveness from European imperial ambitions and refrain “from promises, or suggestions of promises of any kind” that realistically could and would not “be fulfilled.” According to U.S. officials, “The confusion of promises following the last War seriously affected the faith of the Arabs in Great Britain.” Many Lebanese, as a result, “remain[ed] doubtful of Britain’s word,” let alone its desires and abilities to keep Free France in check. Lebanese peoples equated Britain, and Free France for that matter, with unjust and immoral foreign domination and “ha[d] lost faith in the Old Empire.” As a result, a fundamental U.S. war aim was that Lebanese society perceive that the United States as a political and cultural leader in the world, as well as the principal guardian of the post-World War II era in which Lebanon would stand alongside it free and fully independent.37

The concept of a non-imperial world after World War II dominated U.S. thinking at this time. Roosevelt, in particular, grew increasingly convinced that the era of imperialism was destined to end. Henceforth, whether it implied British rule in India or French rule in Indochina and Lebanon, the U.S. president publicly voiced his objection to colonialism and support for the universal human right of self-determination. In Lebanon, his administration quickly deduced that French officials “continue[d] to act precisely as they did [under] the mandate.” Free France’s refusal to

37 Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 16; “Propaganda and the Near East,” 26 June 1941, RG 208; Box 418; NARA; “Necessary Precaution in Broadcasting to the Arab World,” 6 October 1941, RG 208; Box 418; NARA; Memorandum, 7 November 1941, RG 208; Box 418; NARA; and Sakell to Barnes, 6 March 1942, RG 208; Box 418; NARA.
relent on its mandate powers was “at the bottom of much of the political unrest” in Lebanon, leading nationalists to turn to the United States “for the fulfillment of their hopes for real independence.” It was obvious, after all, that “The United States ha[d] no ulterior motives” for the reason that “Annexation and colonization” were reportedly “abhorrent” to U.S. state, society, and national identity.\(^3\)

As the first year of Allied authority in Lebanon came to a close, local frustrations amplified daily as French authorities restricted public expressions of discontent and imposed strict censorship on Lebanon’s influential media outlets. General Charles de Gaulle’s statement in late May 1942, moreover, that the French mandate in Lebanon remained intact had “a profoundly disturbing effect” on Lebanese society. British authorities chafed over such comments, as they “appear[ed] to confirm our worst enemy’s allegations that our promises are worth nothing.” It thus became evident that such French declarations, “if allowed to pass unchallenged,” would jeopardize the Allied war effort and “give colour to the belief that [Britain] intend[ed] to abandon Syria completely to the French after the war,” thus producing a unwanted repeat of World War I. Lebanese peoples increasingly mobilized as French authorities undertook an indiscrete campaign of public intimidation and interference in Lebanese political affairs. If anything, concluded a British official, there remained no “doubt about what the Free French really think of the independence of Lebanon… which virtually, and in fact, seem[ed] to be nothing short of a myth to them.” Their presence

in Lebanon, it appeared, was “in virtue of a mandate, a mandate which ha[d] never been to them but a camouflaged colonization.”

Devoid of an apparent imperial drive in the Middle East, the U.S. government also opposed Free France’s conduct in Lebanon. Renewed declarations concerning the ongoing existence of its mandate went against the very foundations of the United Nations and contradicted the Atlantic Charter. This sentiment was conveyed directly to de Gaulle, who in the late summer of 1942 began an extensive tour of Lebanon. In his response, the leader of Free France insisted that the very act of preparing Lebanese society for and officially proclaiming independence was the inherent duty of French mandatory power. The end of the French mandate could only be engendered once the current war ended and a Franco-Lebanese treaty, guaranteeing Free France’s so-called privileged position, was signed. Besides, reifying the Orientalist argument of sectarian violence, de Gaulle warned his U.S. colleague, “There would be great danger in granting independence prematurely, as grave internal troubles due to religious, ethnographic and regional differences would result,” further compromising the war effort. The persistence of the French mandate in Lebanon, therefore, was essential.

Unable to alter Free France’s demeanor and thwart local suspicions toward Britain, the United States believed the only way to safeguard the Allied cause and

39 Memorandum, Date? May 1942, RG 208; Box 418; NARA; Gwynn to Secretary of State, 12 August 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. 4: 608-610; Cairo to Beirut, 24 July 1942, FO 226/235; UKNA; and Memorandum, 14 August 1942, FO 226/235; UKNA. For more on the development of the Lebanese press, see Ami Ayalon, The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

40 Gwynn to Secretary of State, 12 August 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. 4: 608-610; and Gwynn to Secretary of State, 16 August 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. 4: 613-616.
mollify Lebanese protests was to trumpet U.S. anti-colonialism. Henceforth, the U.S.
presence in Lebanon increased drastically as it setup its Middle East branch of the
Office of War Information (OWI) in Beirut. U.S. officials, upon immersing themselves
in the Lebanese capital, immediately felt that “Only America, on our side, can appeal
effectively to the Middle East.” Its allies, France, Britain, and the Soviet Union, could
not be trusted. “The only great power now trusted is America, and we still have
prestige, great prestige, in the eyes” of Lebanese peoples. Such prestige, one U.S.
official contended, was based predominantly “on the fact that the people believe that
America really is disinterested and not moved by any selfish motive concerning them,”
such as empire. If anything, it was imperative that United States appear as distant as
possible to French and British activities. Its “propaganda must be proudly and
distinctly American and must emphasize American strength, ideas and leadership and
the hope for a future which American victory offers.” The diffusion of the idea of U.S.
exceptionalism, a vital weapon in public diplomacy, “among the Arabs,” he added,
was “a job that urgently need[ed] doing, to make every Arab aware of what [we had]
to say, that events may verify us in their eyes.” U.S. OWI officier E. William Toth
echoed this sentiment: “Summing it all up here we are not fighting the war any longer”
since many Lebanese believe that with “America,” they could not lose. The U.S.
“fight” was now over “internal strife on what is to be after the war.” Lebanese peoples
“want Americans here as long as they promise them their freedom according to the
‘Four Freedoms’ of the world.”

41 “Background Memorandum for Arab Attitude toward Britain,” 15 September 1942,
RG 208; Box 421; NARA; Britt to Brown, 17 August 1942, RG 208; Box 620; NARA;
Indeed, the United States’ “anti-imperial” track record and contemporary ideas regarding post-war global affairs were at the heart of Lebanese affinity toward Washington. At no other time during World War II was this perception more apparent than during former U.S. presidential candidate and fervent anti-imperialist Wendell Willkie’s brief, one-day stop in Beirut. Willkie’s world tour—sponsored by his former adversary, the incumbent U.S. president—traveled to various corners of the globe in order to obtain its pulse. The fate of global empires, plight of colonized peoples, and U.S. role in establishing a noble post-war world were especially on his mind. Upon setting foot in Lebanon, French authorities immediately tried their best to prevent him “from getting any real insight into native feeling and aspirations at first hand.” At a brief and heavily-monitored press conference with Lebanese journalists, Willkie was quick to seize the moment and showcase his “confidence in” Lebanon and Syria “and in their love for democracy.” After “gracefully” and “energetically” greeting every single Lebanese individual present, he “confidently” and bluntly impressed “that it was the duty of the Levant peoples not merely to accept, but actively help Allied authorities.”

Following a private conversation with de Gaulle, as well as other Free French and British officials, Willkie was finally able to interact with a few pre-determined Lebanese politicians, including Naccache, at “an awkwardly arranged meeting, during

and Letter by E. William Toth, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 776; Ministère des affaires étrangères [MAE], Nantes.

42 “Projection of America,” No Date, RG 208; Box 215; NARA.

43 Weekly Political Summary, 24 Septembre 1942, FO 892/141; UKNA.
a reception at the American Consul’s house.” Recognizing the small window of opportunity, he “asked a number of highly controversial questions, such as whether they preferred the British or the French and what were the reasons for the present Anglo-French tension.” Whereas Naccache, Free France’s hand-picked leader, followed a francophile line, others appeared distraught and were left to follow their colleague’s lead. Yet according to Willkie’s personal account, one Lebanese politician did not hold back and frankly replied: “A plague on both their houses.” These brief words, alongside the apparent intense climate in Beirut, gave the U.S. envoy the impression that “The intellectual leaven in the Middle East ha[d] little faith in a system of mandates and colonies, whatever power controls.”

Lebanon’s encounter with Willkie, while short-lived, generated much excitement about the United States, the Allied cause, and potential ramifications on both local and global decolonization. In spite of Free French efforts, the press immediately capitalized on the U.S. presence by bringing interconnections between Americans and Lebanese to the forefront of the Lebanese public sphere. The front-page of Hadiss supported this sentiment by showcasing a picture of the “great U.S. representative” Willkie and Naccache, side by side, and declaring that the United States occupied first place in the hearts of Lebanese peoples. According to Saout al-Ahrar, Willkie’s visit unleashed Lebanon’s profound appreciation and sincere amity for the United States as the defender of humanity. The editor of Liwa, for his part,

44 “Revue de a presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 11 September 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes; and Weekly Political Summary, 24 Septembre 1942, FO 892/141; UKNA.

addressed a lengthy open-letter to the U.S. envoy. He quickly elaborated on the Lebanese perception of deep connections between the two societies, mentioning the considerable presence of roughly 200,000 peoples of Lebanese heritage on the United States’ “generous soil.” “Visit any Lebanese village,” he passionately wrote, “regardless of its size, and you will find a father, a mother, a son, a wife or a daughter who are anxiously awaiting news from their kin in the United States.” This country was continuously on Lebanese minds. Its faith in it was unconditional. This connection, he insisted in his letter to Willkie, must be relayed to the U.S. president. “Upon entering the White House, President Roosevelt must be made aware that you discovered, in a distant land, a small America… In spite of geographical separation, our two nations formed a single country.” Rakib al-Ahwal equally reiterated this point, insisting that the United States and Lebanon “mutually complemented each other” and consisted of “an indivisible entity.”

Muhieddine Nsouli, the editor of the aforementioned Arabic-language Lebanese newspaper Beirut, also wrote a letter to Willkie, but this one was reportedly “killed by the censor” and eventually handed over to U.S. officials. “Over here,” the letter read, “you do not only represent President Roosevelt but you represent a democratic country on which the young nation build great hopes, in spite of everything.” Bitter memories of World War I and its outcome in Lebanon remained present. The United States, in the current circumstance, could not let history repeat

46 “Revue de a presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 11 September 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de a presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 12 September 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes.
itself. It must participate in Lebanon’s quest finally to obtain “its plundered liberties and its stolen independence.” Decolonization and the basic human right of self-determination drove Lebanese anti-colonial and nationalist struggles. Lebanese peoples “ask to enjoy the benefits that abound in your institutions and which circulate in our veins like blood because we inherited from our ancestors these sentiments, parliamentary organization and freedom of belief and we do not refuse, by our request, the aid of democratic countries and their guidance if circumstances oblige.” Lebanon needed the United States, as the guarantor of the Atlantic Charter and the Allied cause, to stand by its principles and act upon them. “Be sure,” Nsouli concluded, “that the Arabs are worthy of life, deserving complete independence.”

Words like these, U.S. officials deduced, rendered Willkie’s visit “a sensational success.” “He went over big,” one report added. “His vitality and personal force and democratic manner delighted them, and his words were what they wanted to hear. He did a great deal of good… the name of Willkie will be one to unlock doors around here… for a long time.” Building off of the long-standing local goodwill toward U.S. missionaries and institutions, most notably the American University of Beirut (AUB), the positive Lebanese attitude toward the United States was way beyond expectations. Expectations were at an all-time high, and U.S. officials insisted, “they won’t feel let down.” The OWI branch in Beirut was up to the task and its officers rapidly established an excellent rapport with local leaders and opinion-makers. The staff of the *Journaliste Errant*, for instance, were mightily impressed by U.S. efforts on the

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47 Youssef Chaitani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon: The Decline of Arab Nationalism and the Triumph of the State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 3; and Letter, No Date, RG 208; Box 620; NARA.
ground and were unable to resist temptations to relay a recent encounter that they had with a Lebanese elder from the mountains. Upon telling him that the United States recently opened a propaganda office in Beirut, the elder replied: “Tell them to close it since America does not need propaganda here.”

The renewed U.S. presence delivered hope and joy to Lebanese society; but it also granted them a fresh cultural and political, trans-sectarian space to resist foreign domination and empower nationalist struggles. The adoption and proliferation of U.S. exceptionalism, at this time, allowed Lebanese peoples a new and safe medium to protest Free France’s claim to the mandate. Public discussions of the United States became a non-aggressive and indirect, anti-colonial weapon. Positive stories about the United States were more likely to escape French and British censorship. The European imperialist presence in Lebanon was therefore resisted via conversations about U.S. national identity. The Lebanese public sphere’s promotion of the United States as a beacon of democracy, and the inherent connections with their own situation established and elaborated thereafter, was a powerful force. “The United States,” reminded Hadiss, “was a second Lebanese homeland.”

A special relationship between the United States and Lebanon, at this time, exerted itself in Lebanese imaginations. According to the Journaliste Errant, “The name of the United States was on the lips of all Lebanese peoples.” “The power of the United States,” explained Saout al-Ahrar, “was not solely manifested by its immense prosperity or military potential, but most importantly by the nobility of its principles of

48 Digest of Information, 28 October 1942, RG 208; Box 620; NARA; and “Revue de la presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 24 Octobre 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes.
humanity and liberty.” And liberty naturally attracted Lebanese allegiance to the Allies. “Roughly 500,000 Men of Lebanese and Arab descent,” reminded An-Nahar, “answered the call of their second homeland” and joined U.S. military ranks “to fight against tyranny and take part in the defense of Democracy and its victory.” Elsewhere, Saout al-Ahrar relayed the story of a ceremony held in the village of Zghorta to commemorate the life of a recently deceased U.S. pilot, whose plane crashed near by. At the ceremony, many local speakers vociferously exclaimed the United States’ wholesomeness on the world at large and its irrefutable dedication to liberty and democracy. “This ceremony,” it concluded, “symbolized the love, respect, and high esteem that the United States occupied in Lebanon.”

Lebanese reports and discussions of the official inauguration of the OWI’s branch in Beirut in the early days of November 1942 served a similar purpose. This office, Lissan ul-Hal believed, would deliver information about “a great nation and a noble people.” Perhaps more importantly, it would relay ideas from a “great country full of liberty, humanity, and wisdom.” The ceremony, noted Al-Assia, just happened to occur in the same place where Emir Faysal, upon his return from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, consulted with local leaders about the prospect of independence. This space, which was now partly associated with the United States, was integral to Lebanese nationalist efforts at the time and “who knew if it would once again play an important part” in its “national life.”

49 “Revue de a presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 4 Novembre 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes.

50 “Revue de a presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 5 Novembre 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de a presse
endorsed Lebanese ambitions and expectations, as well as its connections with U.S. global power.

As the United States imprinted itself on Lebanese anti-colonial sentiments, local support for the Allied cause turned the corner and gained unprecedented momentum. Military successes in North Africa reportedly generated “great excitement” in Lebanese circles. “The liberty of peoples,” furthermore, appeared closer at hand as U.S. anti-colonial declarations multiplied and the Roosevelt administration deployed a formal diplomatic representative, George Wadsworth, to Lebanon. Wadsworth, in his ceremonial presentation of credentials, enthralled his audience by presenting himself in Arabic. He reassured the crowd that “this should come as no surprise” since the Lebanese American “genius” Philippe Hitti translated the text for him. This appointment, Naccache told Wadsworth at his reception ceremony, was interpreted throughout Lebanon as “a further pledge of his country’s better future, of the safeguard of its traditions and its independence.”

This diplomatic gesture, above all, conveyed the message that the United States perceived Lebanon as being on an equal international footing with itself. The event, alongside the publication of Roosevelt’s letter of support, U.S. OWI officers reported, “answer[ed] a note of hope and longing in the hearts of the people here.”

51 11 November 1942, FO 892/141; UKNA; Weekly Political Summary, 23 November 1942, FO 892/141; UKNA; “Revue de a presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 18 November 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de a presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 19 Novembre 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes; and Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 20 November 1942, FRUS, 1942, Vol. 4: 667-668.
following day, *Al-Liwa* echoed Naccache’s impression, remarking that Wadsworth’s arrival “equated to a U.S. recognition of Lebanese independence.” “So it is fully justified,” wrote Ibrahim Salim Najjar, “from now on, in saying, ‘I trust in the pledge of the Great President; the pledge of the Master of the victorious Star-Spangled banner; the pledge of President Roosevelt… Long live the U.S.A.; long live the Allied forces; vive independent Lebanon!’” The ceremony, the *Journaliste Errant* contended, was a momentous one in Lebanon’s history. Through yet another symbolic act, Washington proved to Lebanese society that it would indeed protect Lebanese independence and sovereignty. Lebanon, alongside its Syrian neighbor, stated *Hadiss*, was the first to benefit from the Atlantic Charter. According to *Beirut*, the U.S. diplomatic presence in Lebanon guaranteed the application of the principles outlined in the Atlantic Charter and renewed Lebanese “faith in Democracy.”

Lebanon’s political situation appeared on the mend. The Allied victory at El-Alamein, British officials contended, “removed the immediate threat to the Middle East” and enabled the safe holding of elections there. In January 1943, Free French authorities revealed intentions to stand by their commitment to Lebanese independence and re-install a constitutional government in Lebanon, which had been suspended since 1939. General Catroux officially did so on 18 March 1943 and three months later, after much negotiation, parliamentary elections were scheduled for late August.

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52 Britt to Guinzburg, 28 November 1942, RG 208; Box 620; NARA; “Revue de la presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 20 Novembre 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 21 Novembre 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise de langue arabe,” 23 Novembre 1942, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes.
Despite the so-called gesture of Free French goodwill, many Lebanese feared that the latter was secretly plotting the disruption of elections in order to insure the establishment of a pro-French regime and set the stage for the signing of a bilateral treaty that certified its “privileged position.” Their suspicions were well founded. “Shameless” and “flagrant” Free French interference in electoral campaigns took place throughout Lebanon. Notwithstanding numerous Lebanese, British, and American protests, cases of mandate abuse continued. But, if anything, they served as a rallying point for Lebanese peoples to use decolonization, championed by the Allies, as a peaceful means to rid themselves of foreign domination. On 29 August 1943, the electoral results granted nationalists a majority presence in the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies. It was now the turn of recently-elected deputies to choose a new president. On 21 September 1943, the “First seeds of post war sovereignty… were sown” and “Can[n]ons boomed throughout Beirut,” as a large majority elected nationalist candidate Bechara el-Khoury. According to a U.S. report, “A dozen doves fluttered symbolically into the [Lebanese] [C]hamber [of Deputies] and perched on the President’s platform” while crowds rejoiced.\(^5\)

Shortly after devising a National Pact, which sketched out Lebanon’s political landscape, peacefully redistributed power between various sectarian groups, and

\(^5\)“Steps Toward the Independence of the Levant States,” 4 September 1944, FO 226/253; UKNA; 19 March 1943, FO 660/35; UKNA; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 24 May 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. 4: 971-972; Spears to Algiers, 23 August 1943, FO 660/36; UKNA; Spears to Foreign Office, 17 September 1943, FO 660/36; UKNA; Beirut to Foreign Office, 17 September 1943, FO 660/36; UKNA; and OWI Beirut to State Department, 21 September 1943, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-44; Reel 4. For a detailed breakdown the election results, see Zisser, The Challenge of Independence, 44-50.
proclaimed Lebanese neutrality in external affairs for the sake of national unity, el-Khoury and his newly-appointed Prime Minister, Riad el-Solh, immediately undertook an ambitious nationalist program. Above all, it sought to unify the country and “implement… the complete independence of Lebanon by a series of constitutional changes.” First on their list was a proposal to adopt Arabic as the sole official language of Lebanon. Perceived as a flagrant disrespect toward its mandatory powers, Free France instantly contested by claiming “that the Mandate still continued to exist and that the proposed constitutional changes… were prejudicial to France’s Mandatory position.” Lebanese political affairs, many feared, were at an impasse. The recently formed Lebanese government contemplated its next move. Should it acquiesce to mandatory diktat or “confront” Free France “with the choice between accepting yet another public defeat and reacting in some violent way with quite unpredictable consequence”? By instigating this provocative standoff, “The French… brought to a head the whole question of mandate.” British officials, moreover, reasoned that, “To suggest that a Parliament brought into being in such circumstances by the Allies cannot adopt Arabic—the mother tongue of upwards of 95% of the population as the

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54 The National Pact of 1943 devised the contours of the Lebanese governmental system in the following ways: the Maronite Christians received the positions of President of the Republic and Army Commander; Sunni Muslims obtained the post of Prime Minister; Shi’ite Muslims were accorded the position of President of Parliament; and Greek Orthodox that of Vice President. Additionally, other important posts were reserved for specific contingencies. For more information on the formation of the National Pact of 1943, see Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Inter-Communal Nation Building in Lebanon* (New York: C. Hurst & Co., 2006).
sole official language is an affront on the common decencies for which the United Nations profess to be fighting.”

A crisis seemed on the brink, as powerful rumors of French military intervention circulated throughout Lebanon. On 5 November 1943, Free France issued a public warning to Lebanese state and society. “The [French] National Committee [of Liberation],” it read, “has examined the question of whether the Lebanese Constitution could be modified in a valid manner by unilateral action on the part of the Lebanese Government and Parliament.” It affirmed the Free French belief that, according to mandate provisions, such actions could not be recognized and that, “Respect of contracts [wa]s the foundation of the independence and liberty of nations.” The National Committee, therefore, trusted that this would be clearly understood by everyone. The decision, it insisted, did “not run counter to the determination of France to accord the Lebanon complete independence by means of negotiations conducted between two parties in that spirit of loyal and friendly collaboration which must continue as in the past to inspire special… relations uniting the Lebanon and France.”

A furious and frustrated Lebanese government refused to stand down to such a “public challenge.” While considering constitutional reform as one of its inherent legal and moral responsibilities, it hastily presented its bill to the Chamber of Deputies. On 8 November 1943, the Lebanese chamber “passed unanimously a number of constitutional amendments, the effect of which was to remove the limitations imposed

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55 “Steps Toward the Independence of the Levant States,” 4 September 1944, FO 226/253; UKNA; Beirut to Foreign Office, 25 October 1943, FO 226/246; UKNA; and Beirut to Algiers, 26 October 1943, FO 660/36; UKNA.

56 Beirut to Foreign Office, 1 November 1943, FO 226/246; UKNA.
by the Mandate upon the freedom of the Lebanese government.” At this time, Lebanese deputy Sami Solh proclaimed that the Atlantic Charter protected this action. Saadi Mulla supported this point, adding “that if the Lebanon was not altering its Constitution, it was basing itself on the promises made to it and… the Atlantic Charter which protect[ed] the rights of the weak.” In an ensuing statement to U.S. officials, which somehow slipped through censorship, el-Solh qualified the current “crisis” as an undoubted “test of the sincerity of the Atlantic Charter in the eyes of smaller nations that do not relay upon force but upon the principles of democracy and justice to enjoy their rights and freedoms and look to the Atlantic Charter as a raft of safety.”

Yet the Atlantic Charter could not physically protect Lebanese peoples from military intervention. Free France, which publicly appeared defeated, turned to its last resort. Around 4 a.m. on the morning of 11 November 1943, Free French marines and colonial Senegalese tirailleurs stormed into the homes of Lebanese cabinet members, most notably those of el-Khoury and el-Solh, and arrested them. Literally confronted within the private confines of their bedroom, these men were brutally insulted in front of their wives and children. According to the testimony of el-Khoury’s son, his hysterical mother woke him shouting, “They want to arrest your father.” Despite a locked bedroom door, Free French, Senegalese, and Lebanese mandate forces broke through with their rifles. The boy, who attempted to rush out of his home to alert the British embassy, was intercepted and told “with riffsle and bayonets” to stay put.

57 “Steps Toward the Independence of the Levant States,” 4 September 1944, FO 226/253; UKNA; Cairo to Beirut, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA; and Hudson to Bernand, 15 December 1943, RG 208; Box 623; NARA.

58 Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
Troops rushed upstairs and locked the son in the basement. Repeatedly smacked with rifles, he was taunted: “Son of a bitch, Son of an Englishmen.” Roughly thirty minutes later, the boy testified, “I saw my father being brought downstairs under guard. One of the soldiers said, ‘Let him see his father!’, obviously intending to humiliate me.” Meanwhile, his sick mother, who reportedly suffered from “heart troubles,” was in the hall upstairs, crying for a doctor. “They savagely refused, though the doctor was a near neighbour, saying that their instructions were to forbid anyone to enter the house.” After taking all of the Lebanese president’s papers, the troops departed and left the presidential home in shambles.59

Free French disrespect for Lebanese state and society did not end there. El-Solh and his family, around the same time, were also humiliated. Troops and mandate officials stormed into his devout Sunni Muslim home and reportedly dragged him “out of bed where he had been sleeping with his wife. This alone,” commented British officials, was “enough to rouse [the] whole Muslim population to a frenzy.”60 But the arrogant offences did not end there. Disrespectful of Islamic culture, Free French authorities ordered Solh’s wife, “a strictly orthodox Muslim woman who never shows herself without a veil… to walk about in bare feet and in her nightdress.”61

Despite receiving Free France’s “word of honor that nothing would be done which would be liable to disturb public order” that very night, British and U.S.

59 “Statement made to Counsellor by President’s son,” Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.

60 Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.

61 Beirut to Foreign Office, 14 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
officials in Lebanon were awakened by the urgency of the recent turn-of-events. A “[t]rembling” French officer of Lebanese origin called upon Wadsworth at 5 a.m. and announced: “They have arrested the President and all the Ministers.” Shortly thereafter, “a strongly nationalist Lebanese journalist” stormed in, claiming that he was running from the mandate police and elaborated on the crackdown. In his “escape,” he purportedly “ran to [the] home of [the] Interior Minister where he found [a] cordon of Senegalese troops under [a] French officer; servants” told him that the “Minister had resisted and been brutally beaten.” Upon hearing stories like this one, Wadsworth immediately rushed to the residence of First British Minister, Sir Edward Spears, where both men briefly met with Lebanese deputy Emir Majjid Arslan, among others. Arslan, who thus far escaped Free French reprimands, feared outright bedlam and warned his counterparts that he could not “control his following in the mountains and they will act.”

At 8 a.m. local time, General Catroux explained the reasoning behind the Free French military intervention over the speakers of Radio Beirut. The “Hour has struck to end insensate maneuvers aimed only at depriving Lebanon of [the] secular support of France, to subject it to dictatorship at whose hands it would have foundered,” he opened. “[Y]ou would have despised France had she let things drift.” The recently elected Lebanese government, through its independence reform agenda, wrongfully enacted “a conspiracy against France” and promoted “a tyranny on the street.” Local

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62 Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 11 November 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. 4: 1013-1020; and “Events of 11th November, 1943,” Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
protests against France were unwarranted. In an attempt to preserve the integrity of the Lebanese constitution, mandate officials arrested Cabinet members in the early hours of the morning. As a result, Catroux decreed the annulment of recently passed parliamentary amendments, suspended the Chamber of Deputies, called for new elections, and retained executive power in Lebanon for the foreseeable future. This concentrated effort was a necessary one, he asserted. It remained in tune with Free France’s commitment to deliver full independence to Lebanon.⁶³

Lebanon was on the brink of revolution. Lebanese leaders immediately called for a nation-wide general strike. Catroux’s broadcast, coupled with the arrests, unleashed an incessant wave of Lebanese resentment. Witnessing the Free French occupation of their parliament, Lebanese peoples in Beirut resisted the coup d’état. Many rallied in protest, burning French lorries, throwing stones at mandate officials, and closing their shops. In a symbolic gesture, a “large effigy of Charles de Gaulle” at the corner of rue Allenby, a main street in Beirut, “burned down.” Those Lebanese deputies who had yet fallen prey to Free France’s provocative imperial grasp openly and aggressively complained against its intervention in Lebanese affairs and demanded the resumption of constitutional life. A handful of deputies protested by locking themselves in the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies, refusing to “leave save by force of arms.” Local leaders and notables, ranging from doctors, lawyers, and merchants, rapidly visited Allied officials and pleaded for their help to restore their government and public order. The Maronite Archbishop of Beirut, on behalf of the entire Lebanese

⁶³ Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 11 November 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. 4: 1013-1020.; and “Events of 11th November, 1943,” Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
Christian community, “formally demanded British military intervention in the name of Lebanese independence which [the] Allies had guaranteed.” The Free French crackdown was nothing short of a “coup de folie.” Force had to be met with force. The Mufti of Lebanon, who joined ranks with his Maronite colleague in a sign of Lebanese unity, sternly stated: “Are we slaves?… This cannot be done.” The coup d’état left “Youth organizatons[,] both Muslim and Christian,” no other choice but to take matters in their own hands and gather “for action.”

In response to the power of local resistance, mandatory officials imposed a stern 6:30 p.m. curfew throughout Lebanon. Deputies were obliged to flee from the halls of Lebanese parliament and go underground. Whereas Beirut became “quiet as [a] tomb,” Allied officers feared the worse was on its way as “French aircraft[s]” dominated Lebanese skies. Rumors percolated that, during the day, “Senegalese fired on children going to school.” “The criminally foolish thing that the French ha[d] now done,” the British embassy concluded, “shocked opinion in the Middle East. People [we]re asking if this [wa]s the Middle Ages or the World Powers[’] Atlantic Charter.”

Upon visiting General Catroux that night, Wadsworth—who “had had a day of report and rumor, protest and worry”—was told that the French National Committee of Liberation “had given the Lebanese government every chance to act reasonably.” Its

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64 Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA; Memorandum, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA; Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 11 November 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. 4: 1013-1020; and Beirut to Foreign Office, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
As the sun rose in Lebanon and the day took shape, it became apparent that “the situation” was “becoming worse and worse and French action more and more outrageous. The whole Middle East,” the British Foreign Office reasoned, was “now in a state of growing excitement.” Many Lebanese peoples took to the streets and demanded the release of their democratically-elected government and Free French withdrawal, while others formally waited their turns to present their case to U.S. and British diplomatic representatives. “[A] large deputation of Moslem and Christian women,” while waiting outside the legation to see Wadsworth, were confronted and threatened by Senegalese tirailleurs. According to a British report, while these Lebanese women silently passed the time, “two lorry loads of Senegalese commanded by [the] French… got out and trained machine guns, pistols, and bayonets on the women.” The U.S. diplomatic representative, who witnessed the situation unfold from his office window, hastily rushed out and demanded to speak with their commanding officer. Keeping their weapons pointed at Wadsworth, the Senegalese men responded that they did not have one and that “their orders were to disperse any crowd they saw.” Utterly floored, the U.S. representative immediately insisted that the “women [take]

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65 Beirut to Foreign Office, 12 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA; MIDEAST to Beirut, 11 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA; and Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 11 November 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. 4: 1013-1020.

66 Foreign Office to Beirut, 12 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
refuge in Legation grounds” and assured them that “the doors of which would be
locked.”

Lebanon now perceived itself in a state of national revolution. Incidents like
these raised Lebanese spirits to a boiling point and encouraged local leaders to issue
myriad calls for a new era, gratis of foreign meddling. Lebanon could no longer
“acknowledge the French government nor anyone who supports it,” proclaimed Majjid
Arslan. “How long will you sleep, O deputies of the nation, the hearts-blood of the
country,” added the Maronite Archbishop of Beirut. It was time to “throw out the
traitors—the robbers who violated the sanctuary of the homes of your leaders. How
long will you sleep, when the treacherous robbers whom we have lodged in our midst
for 25 years are taking the house for their own. They must know that the hour of
Lebanon is near.” Whereas Free France ignored such words, the United States did
not. Mandate officials, it believed, had to be checked and held accountable for their
actions.

During the day of 12 November 1943, the Roosevelt administration officially
issued its own strident protest to the French National Committee of Liberation.
According to a U.S. State Department official back in Washington, “The Free French
authorities… have followed a course of unbridled and unjustified imperialism ever
since they entered” Lebanon “on British heels in 1941, bearing [the] promise of
independence. Their present brutally repressive action in Lebanon [wa]s worthy of

67 Beirut to Foreign Office, 12 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
68 Beirut to Foreign Office, 13 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
69 Secretary of State to Wiley, 12 November 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. 4: 1022.
Hitler, but certainly not of ‘la France civilisatrice’.” Beyond such hypocrisy, he found it “astounding” that the United States and Britain were kept out of the loop. “It was incredible that the French whose country was over-run by a foreign invader should show such little understanding for the aspirations of another people to enjoy independence from alien domination.” French imperial ambitions harmed the Allied cause. U.S. ambivalence would not be tolerated “in the eyes of the whole world.”

Notwithstanding local and global pleas, Free French authorities refused to relent on their atrocious campaign of intimidation and terrorism. Beirut’s chaos quickly spread to all corners of Lebanon. On the morning of 13 November, Lebanese protesters were met with brute force and indiscriminate aggression. In the “main street” of Saida, mandate troops reportedly “opened fire on [an] unarmed crowd” for about “ten minutes,” wounding sixty to seventy people and killing some others. The northern port town of Tripoli witnessed a similar confrontation. Following a series of demonstrations, Free French forces “charged an orderly unarmed crowd and fired point blank at them,” resulting in “at least 11 casualties of whom 7 were children under eight” years of age. It was later reported, “Three died on their way to the hospital.” Back in Beirut, roughly fifty students assembled by the grounds of the AUB and were met by “a detachment of French Marines of all colours from white to black” who “advanced down the street with fixed bayonets and opened fire at five yards range on the crowd who had, once seeing them, begun to sing the Lebanese National Anthem… Not less than forty rounds of ball ammunition were fired.”

70 12 November 1943, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-44; Reel 3.

71 Beirut to Foreign Office, 13 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA.
As the day progressed, the queue of Lebanese peoples waiting for an audience with the U.S. diplomatic representative grew longer and longer. The “Legation’s 50 by 25 foot entry hall was crowded” and “[d]ozens overflowed into the gardens.” Notwithstanding, “no crowd could have been more order orderly,” Wadsworth stated. Prior to the lunch hour, a reported two hundred Lebanese women of both Christian and Muslim faiths, “many of [the] latter unveiled for the first time in public,” relayed their outrage over the “brutal treatment and barbarous shooting of their men.” The Free French military intervention, they declared, served as an “insult to [them] and” the “freedom” that the United States was “fighting for.” That same afternoon, some “two hundred Arab professors” from the AUB filed a petition with the U.S. representative. “Lebanon,” they contended, “had freely elected [a] Parliament truly representative of all sections of [the] country—unless freedom can be restored [the] already shaken Arab inception of Western power, will, we fear, be irrevocably shattered.” Another petition, this time signed by two thousand AUB students, crossed Wadsworth’s desk shortly thereafter. In a covering note, AUB President and well-respected public figure David Dodge concurred with his faculty and supported the general opinion expressed by his student body.\footnote{72 Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 13 November 1943, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-44; Reel 3; Beirut to Foreign Office, 14 November 1943, FO 226/245; UKNA; and Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 13 November 1943, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-44; Reel 3.}

The Lebanese situation was “deteriorating rapidly.” Free French authorities refused to re-install Lebanon’s constitutional government and Lebanese peoples refused to back down. Petitions continued to pour into the U.S. legation, most notably...
from “the entire student body of [the] American Junior College for Women” and a group of U.S. citizens residing in Beirut. Others sent letters directly to Roosevelt. Rushdi Edel Shawa, for example, asked the U.S. president to step in immediately and mediate the crisis. The President of American-Lebanese Lodge of Cleveland and Akron, M. Shaar, also shared his personal objection toward events in Lebanon, conveying to Roosevelt that “the people of Lebanon [should] be allowed to erect a democracy similar to our own.”

A week into the crisis, Lebanese public opinion emerged “indivisible” and the longest general strike in Lebanese history continued. The British embassy in Beirut estimated a resounding 85 per cent of the population solidly stood by its government. British and U.S. officials were left no other choice but to ramp up their pressures on Free France. A British official in Beirut conveyed his frustration to the Foreign Office. Free France, he explained, “appear[ed] to have no conception of [the] principles of democratic Government.” The Lebanese government was the “product of genuine elections and unanimously chosen by Parliament.” Under no circumstances would Lebanese society accept anything else. The Roosevelt administration wholeheartedly supported this assessment. In conversations with London, the U.S. government insisted

73 Beirut to Foreign Office, 15 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 15 November 1943, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-44; Reel 3; Beirut to Foreign Office, 16 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; McIntyre to Secretary of State, 15 November 1943, Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt; Office File; Box 1; Folder: OF 3611 LEBANON 1939-45; FDRL; and McIntyre to Secretary of State, 19 November 1943, Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt; Office File; Box 1; Folder: OF 3611 LEBANON 1939-45; FDRL.
that “The only possible way of preventing a general revolution was to assure the people that the Government would be reinstated in the shortest time.”

On 21 November 1943, the French National Committee of Liberation finally succumbed to pressures and protests. In yet another public statement, Catroux reinstated the Lebanese constitution and released all political prisoners. Lebanese peoples celebrated their victory the following morning. Thousands peacefully paraded the streets. “Carrying a certain number of deputies shoulder high,” “very large crowds” proceeded to the headquarters of the Lebanese prime minister, known as the Grand Sérail. Once there, “The crowd tore down the old Lebanese flag”, displaying the French tricolor with a Lebanese cedar at its center, “and hoisted a new flag which consisted of red, white and red horizontal stripes with a green cedar on the white.” France’s blue was present no more. The new Lebanese national flag was also hoisted at important public posts across Beirut, such as the police station and the Petit Sérail, the Lebanese government building. Similar displays simultaneously took place across Lebanon. Meanwhile, others patiently waited at the President’s house to witness and celebrate his reinstatement. Arriving that afternoon, el-Khoury “was carried up the steps by [a] vast cheering crowd.”

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74 “Etat d’esprit,” 16 Novembre 1943, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 9; Carton 1271; MAE, Nantes; Beirut to Foreign Office, 18 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; Beirut to Foreign Office, 20 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; Algiers to Beirut, 21 November 1943, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-44; Reel 3; and Beirut to Foreign Office, 21 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA.

75 Algiers to Beirut, 21 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; Beirut to Foreign Office, 22 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; and Beirut to Foreign Office, 23 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA.
General Catroux later in the day visited the Lebanese president in his home, “which was so packed with visitors that he had to be received in [the] bedroom from which [the] President had been dragged on the 11th of November.” El-Khoury’s reception of Catroux was understandably “very chilly,” and as talks ensued, Catroux’s Orientalist demeanor did not help his cause. From the onset, Catroux tried to convince el-Khoury to dissolve his government “as a gesture of reconciliation and regard for France.” The Lebanese president instantly refused. First and foremost, this was unacceptable to Lebanese public opinion. And besides, he asserted, “no gesture was due to the Lebanese to the French at a moment such as this.” Above all, it was imperative that Free France reinstall the Lebanese government to its pre-crisis form. A frustrated Catroux departed the presidential residence with much to think about.

“Psychologically,” the Lebanese “situation” became “very different.” It was “abundantly clear” to all in Lebanon “that the Government w[ould] not accept any French interference with their complete independence.”

The United States unconditionally supported the Lebanese stance. Its policy “was unmistakingly clear and unequivocal.” “In our opinion,” U.S. secretary of state Cordell Hull wrote Wadsworth, “anything less than a restoration of the constitutional situation would not[,] repeat not[,] be consistent with the French promises of independence and the French action in arranging for the hold[ing] of elections and reestablishing constitutional government in Lebanon.” Whereas the Allies held a conference in Cairo of all places—“the heart of the Muslim world”—now was not the

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76 Algiers to Beirut, 22 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; and Beirut to Foreign Office, 23 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA.
time to start straying from the path. At the Cairo Conference, U.S. officials conveyed
their reservations toward Free French actions in Lebanon to their Soviet colleagues.
Above all, the United States refused to allow the French National Committee of
Liberation “to destroy the confidence of the world in the sincerity of American
principles on freedom and democracy.”

Amidst much anticipation, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies reopened its
doors on the morning of 23 November. Whereas dense “crowds” occupied it and many
of its surroundings, Lebanese cabinet members regained control of government “and
officially resumed their functions.” The general strike was thus called off and Beirut
“reopened” the following day. Lebanese newspapers resumed printing. Many, such as
Saat al-Chaab proudly proclaimed victory. “The last thirteen days will be immortal
ones in the history of Lebanon,” it editorialized. “For the first time in Lebanese
history,” the entirety of its population rallied together in order to safeguard national
pride and transcend sectarianism. This indeed was a “resounding victory” in the name
of “national renaissance.” Lebanon’s order of things had finally been restored. Thanks
in large part to Allied support, commented An-Nahar, a new phase in its national life
commenced. According to Hoda, “all small states across the world perceived the
Lebanese affair was proof that the Allies intended to stand by their promises and
engagements” in favor of human rights.

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77 Weekly Regional Summary, 4 December 1943, RG 208; Box 215; NARA; Secretary
of State to Wadsworth, 23 November 1943, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-
44; Reel 3; Weekly Regional Summary, 4 December 1943, RG 208; Box 215; NARA;
and Memorandum, 23 November 1943, FRUS, 1943, Vol. 11: 309.

78 Beirut to Foreign Office, 23 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; “Revue de la
presse libanaise,” 25 Novembre 1943, Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2040; MAE,
In order to “bolster [its] position throughout the world,” U.S. officials back in Washington deemed it necessary that the United States officially weigh in on Lebanese independence. The State Department, on the last day of the Cairo Conference, 26 November 1943, approved the releasing and restoring to office the President and Ministers of the Lebanese Republic and in abrogating the decree issued on November 11, 1943, suspending [the] Lebanese Constitution” and “dissolving [the] Lebanese Government.” The United States, once again, extended its sympathy toward national desires “for the full enjoyment of sovereign independence.” The American message was clearly heard and celebrated in Lebanon. Endless declarations of appreciation for the Atlantic Charter and its guarantors, most notably the United States, flooded the Lebanese press. Lebanese independence, proclaimed An-Nahar, served as an astonishing victory for the United Nations. The Lebanese crisis “was the Atlantic Charter’s first test.” Lebanese peoples, added Al-Ahd, “would never forget UN support and its conviction in their abilities to live free and independent.”

As Lebanon’s constitutional life resumed, so did its government’s reform agenda. To the grave consternation of Free France, the el-Khoury administration reiterated its total refusal to grant it a “privileged position” in Lebanon. A Franco-Lebanese treaty outlining the latter was out of the question. While recognizing an Allied military presence for the remainder of the war as a fait accompli, it forcefully

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79 Memorandum, 26 November 1943, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-44; Reel 3; Statement Issued to the Press by Department of State, 26 November 1943, *FRUS*, 1943, Vol. 4: 1049-1050; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 27 Novembre 1943, Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2040; MAE, Nantes.
insisted that the mandate was no more. Once World War II came to close, Free France would not “have the slightest right to dictate to [it] what [its] future international relations shall be.” Within Lebanese imaginations, insisted Al-Ahd, the word “mandate” was utterly “offensive and humiliating.” It was analogous to empire. Lebanese society demanded that Free French authorities transfer all administrative responsibilities to its government. The Lebanese crisis was far from over, explained Beirut. Full, concrete independence “would only be achieved once Lebanese peoples gained a firm impression that they were the masters of their own affairs.”

Backed by the United States and Britain, Lebanese reform demands could no longer be ignored by mandate officials. Franco-Lebanese negotiations, as a result, were established concerning the transfer of “common interests” (intérêts communs) to the Lebanese government and conditions finally agreed upon in late December 1943. These transfers, for the most part, occurred smoothly and without serious confrontations. The biggest point of contention was the hand-over of Lebanese “special forces,” local units who committed themselves to military duty under Free French command. These units symbolically served as a constant reminder to Lebanese society that their independence had yet to be fully attained. Until war’s end, mandate officials maintained, these troops would predominantly remain subjects to their authority. As Free French authorities refused to relent their physical, military presence

80 Beirut to Foreign Office, 30 November 1943, FO 226/245, UKNA; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 30 Novembre 1943, Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2040; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 1 Décembre 1943, Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2040; MAE, Nantes.
in Lebanon, local peoples feared the formation of a mandatory plot to regain control of their affairs.\textsuperscript{81}

The Allied liberation of Paris in late August 1944 exacerbated these worries. The Lebanese government, at this time, informed British officials that it received word that Free French forces in Beirut were organizing public celebrations. Such public displays of affinity toward the mandatory power, whether purposefully contrived or not, would surely provoke local antagonism and likely result in violent clashes. And, a few weeks later, they did, leading el-Solh to accuse the Free French of attempting “to incite Christians against Moslems, with the object of splitting the country.” Sectarian conflict, he feared, would open the door to a fresh wave of Free French interference in Lebanese affairs. “Things could not go on like this,” el-Solh insisted to the British ambassador.\textsuperscript{82}

The Lebanese government, at this time, sought other means to solidify its efforts of liquidating the Free French presence from its country’s affairs. It turned, once again, to the United States for help. Despite clarifying on numerous occasions its support toward the transfer of “common interests” and its definitive objections to the Lyttleton-de Gaulle exchange, in which Britain recognized Free France’s “privileged position” in Lebanon, the U.S. government had yet to fully recognize Lebanese independence. After much local insistence, it finally did so on 19 September 1944. In a public statement that engendered extensive jubilation across Lebanon, Hull officially

\textsuperscript{81} Zisser, \textit{The Challenge of Independence}, 88; and Beirut to Foreign Office, 30 April 1944, FO 371/40351; UKNA.

\textsuperscript{82} Beirut to Foreign Office, 23 August 1944, FO 371/40112; UKNA; and Beirut to Foreign Office, 2 September 1944, FO 371/40112; UKNA.
recognized the independence of Lebanon. Roosevelt, shortly thereafter, issued his own statement to the Lebanese peoples. The U.S. recognition, he declared, was “a step in which I, like every American, [took] wholehearted pleasure [in].” Lebanese peoples gave “ample evidence of their adherence to the principles of democracy and international collaboration.” He, therefore, happily welcomed “them into the society of free sovereign nations.”

Upon its release to the Lebanese public sphere on 25 September 1944, the United States’ full and unconditional recognition was headline news for days thereafter. The above declarations were reproduced in full. According to an OWI report, thirty-five newspapers covered the event, with coverage totaling “1,207 column inches, or nearly 61 columns in standard-sized American newspapers.” A majority of the most popular Lebanese newspapers, moreover, published editorials on the subject, all of which were “favorable.” Its timing, many nationalist and pro-government papers contended, was ideal “because some doubt ha[d] begun to enter the minds of their editors regarding the reliance which c[ould be] place[d] on British ‘protection’ of their independence.” The U.S. decision, above all, gave the impression that Lebanese independence was now “guaranteed.” “To the United States Government” read an An-Nahar editorial, “we present our loyal gratitude for this clear recognition which proves the Atlantic Charter is being coordinated to apply to the affairs of small weak nations.” Another editorial in the same newspaper added that the U.S. recognition dealt a final blow to the French mandate in Lebanon. “America acts as well as speaks,” it opined,

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83 Statement Issued to the Press by the Secretary of State, 19 September 1944, FRUS, 1944, Vol. 5: 782-783; and Statement of President Roosevelt, 20 September 1944, RG 59; Lot 54D403; Box 10; NARA.
“and fulfills its promises and proves that the Atlantic Charter guarantees the rights of small nations.” Al-Assia delivered even greater praise: “We have in the country of Wilson and Roosevelt a fortress of freedom and a sincere and unselfish people for they harbor no imperialism or territorial aggression in their hearts. The Americans have destroyed despotism and slavery.”

The reification of U.S. exceptionalism in Lebanon invigorated nationalist struggles against Free France’s ongoing military presence in their country. Whereas Franco-Lebanese negotiations “reached a state of deadlock” a few months later, Lebanese peoples once again turned to conversations about the United States to further their cause. Upon receiving the news that Wadsworth would once again formally present his letters of credentials to the Lebanese government, Al-Ahd hurried the following headline: “A new stone will be placed in the edifice of our independence.” This public ceremony accorded Lebanese imaginations further evidence of lasting Free French schemes there and their inherent right as a constitutionally sovereign nation to resist them. As a democratic entity, argued an editorial in Saout al-Chaab, Lebanon “naturally refuses to conclude a treaty that gives any Great Power imperialist rights incompatible with its own national and sovereign rights. Lebanon rejects the idea of granting a privileged position to anyone.” Besides, in its protection of the right of

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84 Beirut to Foreign Office, 26 September 1944, FO 371/40351; UKNA; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 22 September 1944, Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2054; MAE, Nantes; Special Report, 7 November 1944, RG 208; Box 624; NARA; and Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 30 September 1944, RG 59; Internal Affairs of Lebanon, 1940-44; Reel 4.
“small states”, wrote Al-Assia, the Atlantic Charter rendered international treaties insignificant.85

While presenting his letters of credentials to Lebanese officials, Wadsworth aptly reinforced U.S. prestige. U.S. and Lebanese aspirations, he insisted in his reception speech, were one and the same. In response, the Lebanese president elaborated on the idea of a strong connection between his own country and the United States. “The unconditional recognition by the great American republic of the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon has long since been made by your country in proclamations of which my country will always keep a touching memory.” The friendship between the United States and Lebanon, “which finds its deep roots in the generous hospitality extended by America to all those of our original brothers who serve her, in their great numbers” was unyielding. “My country, in expecting a future dominated by liberty and peace, meets your country which fights valiantly for a better world.” Finally, as the Lebanese host celebrated Wadsworth’s presence with a cake, the U.S. representative proclaimed: “Independence does not present itself on a platter like cookies; you have your independence because you deserved it.”86

85 Zisser, The Challenge of Independence, 92; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 18 Novembre 1944, Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2054; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 16 Novembre 1944, Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2054; MAE, Nantes.

86 Beynet à Bidault, 24 Novembre 1944, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 776; MAE, Nantes; “Translation of Remarks of the Lebanese President,” 24 Novembre 1944, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 7; Carton 776; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 2 Décembre 1944, Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2054; MAE, Nantes.
In a report sent to Washington, the OWI branch in Beirut relayed, “If anything,” Wadsworth’s “impact was even greater than the recognition releases.” The public display of U.S. support was crucial at this time. Lebanon’s sovereign fate was soon to be finalized, as the final days of World War II were around the corner and Franco-British talks over their withdrawal from Lebanon commenced. Much like Franco-Lebanese ones over the final transfer of “common interests,” these negotiations appeared to Lebanese to be going nowhere fast. Besides, the Lebanese government’s absence in such important discussions led many to question both French and British motives. An-Nahar’s Gibran Tueni deplored the idea that Lebanon served as an object of haggling between European powers. “Lebanon,” he wrote, “was not the property of France, nor was it an asset of Britain; rather it was the exclusive property of Lebanese peoples. Simple convenience consequently necessitated that both Paris and London take the time to consult with the Lebanese.” Invoking the memory of World War I and the Paris Peace Conference, he intimated that the old days of high imperialism were gone. Lebanon refused to be reduced to a mere colony and object of European machinations. In a call to all Allied powers, Tueni insisted that Lebanese independence signaled a new era in global affairs. The opinions and interests of local peoples must, therefore, be respected.87

87 Downward to Underhill, 5 December 1944, RG 208; Box 624; NARA; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 1 Février 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes. For more information on the Franco-British rivalry in Lebanon, see Martin Thomas, “Divisive Decolonization: The Anglo-French Withdrawal from Syria and Lebanon,” in Kent Fedorowich and Martin Thomas, eds. International Diplomacy and Colonial Retreat (London: Frank Cass, 2001): 71-93.
Unsettled issues kept Franco-Lebanese relations in a state of ongoing tension. On this matter, U.S. officials frequently asked the Lebanese government to maintain patience and “show moderation.” Meanwhile, de Gaulle’s French Provisional Government (FPG) refused to abandon its powers in Lebanon. Lebanese independence, it insisted, would only come following the signing of a Franco-Lebanese treaty, sanctioning France’s so-called privileged position. Left with no other alternative, Lebanon continued efforts to assert its sovereignty on the international stage. On 28 February 1945, the Lebanese government officially declared war on Nazi Germany and Japan, and became a member of the United Nations. This move supposedly granted Lebanon a seat at the much-anticipated San Francisco Conference, at which point the United Nations would craft the framework of a new international organization. By representing itself at a world gathering of epic proportion, Lebanon demonstrated that it, not France, was in charge of its political and diplomatic affairs. As the host of the San Francisco conference, moreover, the United States would guarantee Lebanese independence.  

Lebanese state and society, thereafter, anxiously awaited its invitation to the UN conference, while privately being concerned with a renewal of 1919. Following reports that both France and Britain rejected the prospect of Lebanese participation, the el-Khoury administration filed protests to Washington and London. In the pages of Belagh, Tueni issued yet another plea to UN powers. Lebanese peoples, he contended,  

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88 Grew to Caffrey, 16 February 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. 8: 1044-1046; No Author, 27 Février 1945, Syrie-Liban, 276; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 4; MAE, La Courneuve; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 1 Mars 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes.
“do not want to grant anyone else the right to manage its affairs. We are not ponds or merchandise that others buy or sell. We believe that the age where brute force dominated all peoples was over.” Lebanon, Tueni plead, “was a member of the world that will liberate all peoples from famine, fear, and tyranny, thanks in large part to the Atlantic Charter, the Dumbarton Oaks conference and the pending San Francisco conference.” Lebanese peoples accordingly had an inherent human right to be represented and participate at the latter. It met all the required democratic criteria. “Why then was it deprived of this right? Does this indicate that others consider its independence as incomplete and that Lebanon had yet reached a legal status that would solidify its seat amid other independent states?” Was Lebanon yet again the victim of Western high imperialism? Questions like these weighed heavily on the minds of many Lebanese peoples.

Behind the scenes, the Lebanese government continued lobbying efforts to obtain its rightful place at the San Francisco Conference. In its opinion, a U.S. stamp of approval was all that was required. The United States, which publicly maintained its sympathy with Lebanese aspirations, negotiated European approval before issuing an invitation. It finally succeeded in doing so in late March 1945. Lebanon rejoiced at finally receiving an invitation. The FPG’s open support, furthermore, created an atmosphere of détente in Franco-Lebanese relations. “Before Easter,” wrote Bayard Dodge in a personal letter to his sister-in-law, “there was a lot of agitation, but as soon as people heard about the San Francisco Conference, they stopped their agitation and

89 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 3 Mars 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 7 Mars 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes.
decided to await the results.” In a *Bayrak* editorial, Fadel Akl noted that “the Allies had just repaired an ‘error’ of theirs” in excluding Lebanon from the halls of San Francisco. France’s volte-face, furthermore, generated further hope for complete Lebanese independence in the foreseeable future.\(^9\)

British officials, however, were not ready to reach such conclusions. Notwithstanding a perceived climate of détente in Lebanon, “French desiderata, in so far as they have been divulged, and French activities here,” read a report issued at the same time as the start of the San Francisco conference, “go to show that they are determined to preserve as much of their presence as they can.” U.S. officials equally grew concerned about the Lebanese situation and French intentions there. A boost in French forces would surely provoke another crisis and deflate the “spirit of extraordinary euphoria” and “sense of responsibility” prevailing at San Francisco and across the globe. As it turned out, such suspicions were well founded. On 1 May 1945, de Gaulle informed British officials of intentions not only to replace, but augment French forces in Lebanon. The British immediately objected, leading the French president to voice his belief that British policy was “to weaken [the] position of France in Syria and finally take over responsibility.” De Gaulle “went on to say that if [it] were prepared to withdraw all [its] troops from Syria he would withdraw all his even though he would not consider it wise to do so, but as long as [Britain] retained [its]

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\(^9\) No Author, 26 March 1945, RG 208, Box 111; NARA; Bayard Dodge to Mrs. Cleveland H. Dodge, 12 April 1945, Bayard Dodge Collection, AA:2.3.4.8.7; Personal Letters, 1941-1946; Jafet Library Archives, American University of Beirut [AUB]; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 30 Mars 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 3 Avril 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes.
forces there [it] could not ask him to reduce his which he would be doing if he handed over the special troops.”

The arrival of more French troops also worried the Lebanese population and led it to wonder whether such a move was being done with British consent. Only British forces on site could physically prevent a fresh round of French deployment. Henri Pharaon, Lebanon’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, relayed to the British embassy his ill feelings toward an influx of a rumored eight hundred men and “spoke of demonstrations as possible (towns closed, etc.) especially as troops were Senegalese (whose behavior in) [the] French coup of 1943 ha[d] left bitter memories here.” In a meeting with Wadsworth, the Lebanese president also conveyed his utter objection toward the politics of French intimidation. The continuing French presence humiliated Lebanese peoples and disparaged their constitutional sovereignty. Unable to resist involving herself in the conversation, Madame el-Khoury walked the U.S. ambassador over to the presidential garden and showed him the “Senegalese barracks” that were in the center of” their “tranquil residential district.” They symbolically overshadowed the household of a sovereign nation’s president. The barracks, she told him, were “‘a continuing public nuisance’ which [the] French had repeatedly promised to remove; today people regard it as ‘little less than a national humiliation’.”

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92 Beirut to Foreign Office, 3 May 1945; FO 226/298; UKNA; Beirut to Foreign Office, 4 May 1945; FO 226/298; UKNA; and Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 4
As the seeds of Lebanese resentment continued to germinate, the el-Khoury government could no longer sit idly by and wait for a French declaration of withdrawal. Alongside Syria, it issued a note to the FPG, demanding an agreement outlining UN military withdrawal as soon as possible. Allied troops were no longer needed. France, invoking the Lyttleton-de Gaulle accords of 1941, rejected outright the Lebanese demand. An “extremely serious crisis,” French officials knew full well, was on the brink in Lebanon as military reinforcements were soon scheduled to arrive in Beirut. The following day, a French cruiser docked and reportedly “discharged 900 troops without incident… [T]his arrival,” British officials feared, “coupled with rumors that reinforcements may be coming at a time when there [wa]s no serious threat to internal security except in so far as French themselves are now creating or may create in the future by making [u]nacceptable demands… have destroyed all faith,” if “any left, in good intentions of [the] French.” More likely than not, the Lebanese government, which conducted itself with exemplary composure and patience since taking office, could no longer keep its populace in check. Lebanese peoples “now firmly believed that [the] French [we]re seeking to spin matters out until they c[ould] build enough forces to cow them into accepting a settlement of outstanding questions on the French lines, if not indeed the re-establishment of French hegemony here.” Circumstances necessitated not only the transfer of “special forces,” but total

May 1945, Papers of Harry S. Truman; Office Files, 1945-1953; Part 3: Subject File, Reel 38.
French military withdrawal irrespective of previously agreed upon mandate and wartime conditions.93

Unable to count on Britain, Lebanon took matters in its own hands. All future UN military deployment, Pharaon proclaimed in the Chamber of Deputies, henceforth required official Lebanese consent. France continued to ignore the Lebanese government, however. In a press conference at San Francisco, French foreign affairs minister Georges Bidault publicly insisted that Paris’s position vis-à-vis Lebanon remained unchanged. Only a Franco-Lebanese treaty could engender a French evacuation. Bidault’s statement led many Lebanese to think that French troops would remain indefinitely. “Has France not yet recognized our independence and had it not, up to this point, ended the detestable mandate, a fruit of the last world war, a mandate that jeopardized its longstanding moral position?” asked Beirut. The days of colonial hierarchies were gone. As evidenced by their mutual participation in San Francisco, France and Lebanon were now legally equals.94

On 10 May 1945, as the Allies declared victory in Europe, Lebanese frustrations toward France reached new heights. Overwhelmed by a “new imperial optimism” and the urge to “preserve the empire,” French authorities organized fresh public celebrations in Lebanese towns and distributed French flags. According to one report, young Lebanese were paid twenty-five piastres to join in. Mixed crowds

93 Beirut to Foreign Office, 5 May 1945; FO 226/298; UKNA; Beynet à Bidault, 5 Mai 1945, Syrie-Liban, 277; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 7; MAE, La Courneuve; and Beirut to Foreign Office, 7 May 1945; FO 226/298; UKNA.

94 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 9 Mai 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes.
reportedly paraded the streets in “wild enthusiasm,” leaving behind a profound public and private sense of anxiety. While some local peoples responded with their own nationalist merriment, several others felt seriously provoked. Physical incidents ensued. These altercations, many concluded, were the product of French scheming and set the stage for another military intervention. Washington, for instance, relayed to Wadsworth its sense “that the French are landing the troops for political rather than for strategic reasons connected with the war and we do not desire that the impression be created that we are defending or condoning the French action.” France, the State Department informed the U.S. ambassador, had “no technical right to land these troops.” 95

Many Lebanese peoples rejected outright French explanations that VE Day demonstrations were done in a spirit of “amity.” An editorial in *Saout al-Ansar* epitomized this popular perspective. Lebanon, it wrote, was now convinced that its future was full of “perils and dangers.” It would forever be at odds with France over the terms and definition of “traditional friendship.” Whereas Paris perceived the latter as a gracious and peaceful one, Lebanese peoples pictured it differently. Lebanon’s “traditional friendship” with France equated to memories of the Crusades, French interference in the conflict of 1860, the creation of the mandate, colonial exploitation of Lebanese resources, French missionary activity designed to foment sectarianism, enslavement to strangers, and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of humiliation. The

current French talk of “traditional friendship,” therefore, did more harm that good to Lebanon, let alone French interests there. In the interim, a new friendship needed to be based on “mutual respect, confidence, equality, and common interests.” This new friendship, the editorial read, “was much preferable” for both France and Lebanon “than the memories of the so-called traditional friendship.”

In spite of so many Lebanese public pleas for a French new beginning, the FPG refused to change its course. On 12 May, its delegation at the San Francisco Conference informed U.S. secretary of state Edward Stettinius, Jr. “that a French cruiser was arriving in Beirut with 800 Senegalese soldiers on board destined to disembark there for the purpose of relieving other troops.” Meanwhile, as rumors of a military redeployment in Lebanon permeated the UN conference, Bidault refused to admit so to Lebanese officials and “continued to profess complete ignorance of the dispatch of troops.” Upon receiving word that a new round of French forces landed in Beirut on 16 May, U.S. officials could not hold back their frustrations. Should “popular uprisings” take place, “they might spread to other Near Eastern countries to [the] detriment of [the] war effort.” Worst yet, “as Great Powers including France [we]re now engaged in creating [an] international organization in which trust and confidence of small countries [wa]s vital, it would make things difficult for us all if suspicion should arise from [an] occurrence of this sort.”

96 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 12 Mai 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes.

97 Lebanese Minister to Secretary of State, 12 May 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. 8: 1073-1074; No Author, 15 May 1945, FO 226/287; UKNA; and Grew to Caffrey, 16 May 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. 8: 1074-1075.
This was inevitably the case in Lebanon. As French forces stepped off the Jeanne d’Arc and onto Lebanese soil, they were greeted by escalating local protests. That afternoon, the Chamber of Deputies convened to discuss the turn-of-events. Lebanese deputies unanimously cried foul and qualified the French move as nothing short of an “act of intimidation and a blow [to] the independence of Lebanon.” The Speaker of Parliament, after listening to his peers, vociferously commented: “Even if (the French) bring an entire army, do they honestly believe that they can take away the independence for which we fought for?” Lebanon would not fall prey to coercion. Its government, alongside the resolve of its people, would relentlessly sustain its policy of and basic human rights to independence. “The Lebanese Government,” he concluded, “would never sign a treaty with any superpower that sought to dictate its will” to Lebanese peoples. Inspired by words like these, Lebanese society rallied together and called another nation-wide general strike.98

Protests ensued the following day. After listening to another series of objections in regards to the presence of foreign troops in his country, the Lebanese prime minister took the floor. “The Government has more than once defined its attitude towards any possible attempt on our independence. That attitude,” el-Solh assured his colleagues, “will not change. Today the Government is readier than ever to face the hardest knocks.” The Ligue d’action nationale, a powerful Lebanese political group, released a political pamphlet and distributed it all over the country. “The French,” it read, “were deliberately trying to reduce our independence.” Lebanon had a

98 Pas d’auteur, 17 Mai 1945, Syrie-Liban, 276; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 4; MAE, La Courneuve; and Petition, 18 May 1945, FO 226/298; UKNA.
“natural right” to self-determination and its peoples were ready to sacrifice their blood if need be. “Foreign propaganda,” manifested the Congrès national libanais, whether issued in the name of the mandate or a so-called traditional friendship, would not divide Lebanese society. It warned: “Do not succumb to colonialist deviousness!”

Amidst all this momentum, the Lebanese government publicly broke off negotiations with France on 19 May 1945. In his defense of the decision, the Speaker of Parliament declared: “The treaty proposed to us equated to colonialism… We will not allow others to place a noose around our necks.”

Lebanese calls, and ensuing acts, of resistance and national unity did not stop there, nor did they go unnoticed. Understanding full well the severity of the situation, U.S. and British officials met to contemplate a common course of action. Time was of the essence as the situation was “rapidly deteriorating and may lead to violence.”

Lebanese public opinion overwhelmingly stood by its government. An-Nahar’s Tueni, for example, wholly supported the Lebanese decision to end negotiations with France. Referencing a recent speech given by the U.S. secretary of state, Tueni insisted that “humanity’s conscience” which was currently convening in San Francisco, “pronounced itself entirely in favor of Lebanon.” In the pages of Beirut, Nsouli opined that “now that France has unmasked its imperialist demands and resorted to threats, Lebanon must rupture all relations with her.” French imperialism ridiculed the Atlantic Charter and everything that it stood for. Elsewhere, AUB students wrote petitions and...

99 Beirut to Foreign Office, 18 May 1945, FO 226/287; UKNA; Beynet à Bidault, 28 Mai 1945, Syrie-Liban, 277; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 7; MAE, La Courneuve; Philip Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 616; and Beynet à Bidault, 23 Mai 1945, Syrie-Liban, 277; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 7; MAE, La Courneuve.
organized multiple demonstrations. Students from the Junior College for Women sent a delegation to inform Lebanese deputies of their willingness to enlist in the military, if called upon.³⁰⁰

Lebanese contentions were irreproachable. According to the State Department’s head of Near Eastern Affairs, Loy Henderson, “It [wa]s clear France [wa]s at present using force, or the threat of force, in order to extract from two members of the United Nations, which both France and we recognize[d] as independent countries, concessions of a political, cultural, and military nature. While we in San Francisco are talking about world security and are devising methods for combating aggression,” a frustrated Henderson added, “France is openly pursuing tactics which are similar to those used by the Japanese in Manchuko and by the Italians in Ethiopia.” If the United States carelessly stood by as Paris imposed its will upon Lebanon, local peoples there and across the colonial world were “almost certain… to judge all the Western powers in the light of policies pursued by one of them. Western prestige in the Near and Middle East rises or falls to the extent to which the great Western powers live up to the principles which they themselves maintain they are defending.” No wonder Middle Eastern states and societies were “rapidly losing confidence in us and are beginning to question our good faith,” insisted Henderson. The Lebanese situation, alongside that of its Syrian neighbor, served as “the first great

³⁰⁰ Foreign Office to Beirut, 23 May 1945, FO 226/287; File 92; UKNA; Foreign Office to Beirut, 21 May 1945, FO 226/287; UKNA; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 23 Mai 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; Beynet à Bidault, 25 Juin 1945, Syrie-Liban, 277; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 8; MAE, La Courneuve; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 25 Mai 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes.
test of the sincerity of our statements that we are determined to bring about a world
system in which small nations may have a sense of security.” This said, the United
States could no longer remain on the sidelines.\textsuperscript{101}

In the interim, demonstrations in bordering Syria quickly got out of hand,
leading to serious confrontations with French forces there. Many observers, at this
time, projected a high likelihood that tensions would trickle over to Lebanon. “[I]f
Syria exploded,” a distraught Pharaon told a British official, “Lebanon would go up
too.” The inauguration of French military withdrawal, now more than ever, was
imperative. Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew briefed newly-inaugurated U.S.
president Harry S. Truman concerning “the serious situation developing in the entire
Near East as a result of the sending of French troops to Syria and Lebanon.” Given that
the region occupied much importance within the United States’ postwar grand
strategy, Grew insisted that the U.S. government “address a note to” the FPG, “which
while polite in tone[,] would register our unequivocal opposition to France’s policy
and action in those states.” If Paris chose to ignore a U.S. protest and go against “the
whole spirit and purpose of the San Francisco conference,” he then suggested that they
consider “publishing [the] note in order to make [their] position clear to the entire Near
East.” This move could perhaps bring a more “favorable effect” on Paris, whose
intentions in Lebanon were crystal clear. Truman immediately approved.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{101} Loy Henderson to Acting Secretary of State, 23 May 1945, \textit{FRUS}, 1945, Vol. 8: 1093-1095.

\textsuperscript{102} Beirut to Foreign Office, 26 May 1945, FO 226/287; File 92; UKNA; and Memorandum of Conversation, 26 May 1945, \textit{FRUS}, 1945, Vol. 8: 1103.
Bloody clashes in the Syrian town of Aleppo engendered an aggressive French crackdown, which rapidly found its way into Lebanon. The British embassy in Beirut reported, “Senegalese and other troops have adopted a threatening position in the Levant states, cut communications between large towns and stations themselves at outlets of these towns.” Terrorism and the politics of intimidation ruled as “Planes ha[d] flown at a low level in manoeuvres aimed at frightening people. Armored car[s] ha[d] been grouped at places where they were in prominent view of people and machine guns ha[d] been placed on house roofs.” Such intentional public displays of force exacerbated Lebanese frustrations; it appeared “that a devastating storm [wa]s about to break.” Utter astonishment over French conduct in Lebanon led British officials to deduce that their European ally “must not think Arabs [we]re victims of illusions.” Clearly, a popular “State of thinking point[ed] to [the] fact that Arabs could not accept from any other country what they cannot accept from the French. Freedom [wa]s in their opinion an indivisible whole, dear to every country.” This said, “Why does France want to appear before Arabs as a champion of Imperialism?”

Reportedly “overtaken” by recent events and the sense that “He could not be responsible for internal security any longer,” Pharaon relayed to Britain his “hope… that the British and Americans would… put out the fire which was now blazing” in Lebanon and across the Arab world. Shortly thereafter, a Lebanese plea, which bore his signature and was read aloud at the San Francisco conference, drew the attention of UN delegates and catapulted the Lebanese situation onto the global stage. “During the last five years,” it explained, “the democracies at war have proclaimed that they were

103 Cairo to Beirut, 27 May 1945, FO 226/287; File 92; UKNA.
fighting for the independence of nations and the liberty of the world.” Lebanon, thanks in large part to UN support, finally “benefited from the triumph of rights” and became independent. These “sacred rights” were currently in grave danger, however. Invoking the Atlantic Charter, the Lebanese delegation called for “the justice of peoples, large and small.” Tiny Lebanon became a major battleground for global negotiations over decolonization, the basic human right of self-determination, and their universalities.

The United States urgently responded by publicly reiterating its longstanding policy toward Lebanese decolonization. Some time later, it privately issued yet another communiqué to the FPG, outlining its reservations vis-à-vis its politics of intimidation. “Syria and Lebanon,” it contended, “are recognized by France and the United States as independent countries” and “were members of the United Nations whose representatives… are now discussing in San Francisco means for guaranteeing world security and for combating aggression.” If France truly believed in and committed itself to a new world order, it needed “to refrain from any act which might stride to a suspicion—however unjustified—that a member of the future organization may be pursuing a policy not in uniformity with the spirit and principles which” the United Nations “is being established to defend.” The French presence in Lebanon, the United States resolutely asserted, required careful reconsideration.104

The Lebanese government’s public strategy seemed to be working. The United States, and most members of the United Nations, supported the Lebanese quest for full independence. Yet France’s perceived reluctance to change its approach led the

104 Washington à Bidault, 28 Mai 1945, Syrie-Liban, 277; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 7; MAE, La Courneuve.
Lebanese delegation in San Francisco to, once again, formally protest; this time, against Paris in name. A joint Syrian-Lebanese statement denounced France for its attempts to impose a “privileged position” against the will of a majority of local peoples. The FPG, it declared, “seems still to rely upon outworn methods, heedless of the change of world temper, especially at a time when the greatest world conference in history is convening to safeguard the League of Nations, to put an end to aggression and to establish the reign of law instead of the arbitrament of brute force.”

U.S. policy toward Lebanese decolonization, Stettinius privately assured Arab delegates in San Francisco, thereafter, “remain[ed] and w[ould] continue to remain unchanged.” Unfortunately, to the detriment of local peoples, so did that of de Gaulle’s FPG. That very night, Wadsworth received word that the “French [we]re shelling Damascus… French airplanes had just dropped bombs on and machine-gunned [the] city.” According to a letter to Washington delivered the following day, France believed it its inherent duty and right to “defend its secular interests in the Levant.” Despite what many may believe, its “legitimate” position there was not incompatible with the independence of Lebanon and Syria. The current state-of-affairs, if anything, clearly demonstrated that certain local elements, through violent means that harmed everyone involved, sought to throw the area into a tailspin. France’s position sought first and foremost to safeguard the Lebanese right to self-determination. That said, it owed it to itself to generate a “reasonable solution.”

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105 Syrian and Lebanese Statements to San Francisco, 29 May 1945, FO 226/287; File 92; UKNA.

106 Memorandum of Conversation, 29 May 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. 8: 1110-1111; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 29 May 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. 8: 1114-1115; and
French military campaigns in Syria deeply agonized Lebanese peoples.

France’s visible hypocrisy and intimidation tactics, concluded *Al-Hadaf*, “served as colonialism last recourse to preserve mandate rights and the mandate itself.” Whereas Lebanese peoples protested by calling for another general strike, British forces intervened in Syria in an attempt to stop fighting. Washington, for its part, publicly threw its support behind Britain and released its previous note to the FPG, which conveyed U.S. support toward Lebanese and Syrian independence. “The events in Lebanon,” noted the U.S. secretary of state, were also “seriously disturbing the atmosphere of the [San Francisco] Conference.” Stettinius, at this time, stressed his government’s “position that France should withdrawal its troops from the Levantine states,” a necessary first step to restoring order in Lebanon and Syria. “The situation was so serious,” he relayed to Washington from San Francisco, “that some of the Arabs were coming to the point where they were considering rejecting the [Atlantic] Charter” and the very foundation of the United Nations. Lebanon’s political decolonization appeared to be intertwined with the rise of U.S. global power.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese public sphere continued its relentless critique of French policy and rendered it guilty of war crimes. France’s indiscriminate military campaigns in Syria were almost unanimously equated to those of its recent occupier,

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107 Beynet à Bidault, 18 Juin 1945, Syrie-Liban, 278; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 8; MAE, La Courneuve; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 31 Mai 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; Washington to Beirut, 31 May 1945, FO 226/287; File 92; UKNA; and Secretary of State to Acting Secretary of State, 30 May 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. 8: 1115; and Minutes, 31 May 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. 1: 989-1011.
Nazi Germany. In its 1 June edition, *Nida-Watzi* openly asked: “Do the French consider themselves in Damascus or Berlin?” Salah el-Assir’s editorial column flatly claimed: “Civilization was threatened… it was threatened by France.” As the arrival of British troops brought the conflict in Syria to a halt, Lebanese society widely denounced fresh French proposals for a bilateral Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. In a petition published in *Al-Hadar*, an impressive ensemble of diverse political parties and national groups called for the total withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon. This measure, the British embassy in Beirut concluded, was the only viable way to avoid further bloodshed and protect strategic interests in the area. Besides, “It is now really a question of saving what we can for France from the wreckage.”

A Franco-Lebanese accord, once again, rapidly became a distant reality. This time, within the confines of the French National Assembly, de Gaulle rendered his administration’s reluctance to leave Lebanon as the fault of Britain. Paris, irrespective of British support highlighted above, refused to initiate military withdrawal before London, purporting that the latter, as evidenced by its recent intervention in Syria, eagerly waited to take-over those areas left behind. Upon hearing this argument, *Ad-Diar* dedicated its entire front-page to a picture of de Gaulle. Its subtext read: “*Ta Gueule!*” or “Shut Up!,” a play on words on the French president’s name, with very clear connotations. Lebanon, many locals concluded, was not a pawn in a high stakes,
imperialist rivalry between France and Britain and claimed to see through de Gaulle’s latest discursive scheme. The unending crisis, argued a Sodal Ansar editorial, was not a struggle between European spheres of influences, but between life and death for Lebanese peoples. “It started the moment the French set foot in Lebanon. We want to rid ourselves of the yoke of French imperialism.” Lebanese peoples, added Al-Assia and Saout al-Chaab, respectively had no intention of backing down in its resistance against imperialism.¹⁰⁹

As recently evacuated French forces from Syria moved into Lebanon, many peoples demanded that they be treated on an equal footing as Syrians. The chant “No negotiations before evacuation” gained power in the streets of Lebanon. France, fully aware of the deterioration of its position, finally agreed to and concluded the transfer of the “special troops” to the Lebanese government. French forces remained, however. The FPG, Lebanese peoples felt, purposely prolonged the Lebanese crisis and the inevitability of decolonization. Drawn to reflection following Lebanon’s second Independence Day celebration, Ad-Diar remarked that Lebanese peoples must not gain the wrong impression that full independence had been achieved. The mere presence of foreign troops on Lebanese soil prevented its fulfillment. “We fought for independence,” argued Al-Bayrak. “Now all that is left was to guarantee the material life of this independence.” El-Khoury met with U.S. officials a week or so later and

¹⁰⁹ “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 20 Juin 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 22 Juin 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 23 Juin 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 25 Juin 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes.
“expressed deep concern over the question of foreign troops in [the] Levant.” Whereas French and British forces remained entrenched in Lebanon and Syria respectively, the Lebanese president requested that the United States “remind” its European allies “that the war was now over and that it was high time that these troops were withdrawn from [the] Levant.” Following the conversation, a U.S. official observed “that there was an undercurrent of fear in [Lebanon] that the French and British [were] making a ‘deal’ whereby the French will retain a predominant position in Lebanon and the British a similar one in Syria.” “The political… situation,” commented AUB president Bayard Dodge, was “just as uncertain as ever.”

The publication of an agreement over evacuation between France and Britain on 13 December 1945 further amplified Lebanese apprehensions. Far from branding the joint declaration a success, Lebanese state and society immediately condemned it for its ambiguity. Lebanese minister of foreign affairs Hamid Frangieh, before the Chamber of Deputies, avowed that “the Lebanese would not be bound by the terms of an agreement not submitted to their approval.” A sense of skepticism dominated the Lebanese public sphere. *Ad-Diar*, for instance, rhetorically asked: “Will French forces be called upon to camp in Lebanon? What is this bilateral accord hiding?” The British-French agreement, *Sodal Ansar* claimed, was not binding for Lebanon. “In no way will

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110 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 6 Juillet 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 28; MAE, Nantes; Note, 29 Juillet 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 54; MAE, Nantes; Beynet à Bidault, 7 Août 1945, Syrie-Liban, 280; Série L; Carton 6; Dossier 9A; MAE, La Courneuve; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 23 Novembre 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 28; MAE, Nantes; Mattison to Secretary of State, 4 December 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. 8: 1177; and Bayard Dodge to Mrs. Cleveland H. Dodge, 5 December 1945, Bayard Dodge Collection, AA:2.3.4.8.7; Personal Letters, 1941-1946; Jafet Library Archives, AUB.
we accept the vestiges of foreign imperialism under the cloak of ‘traditional friendship.’ In the vocabulary of colonialism, this term signifies subjugation and slavery.” The British government, in the interim, “was reproached with seeking French friendship at the expense of the Arabs who had supported her cause during both world wars.” According to Al-Chark, Britain revealed its true colors by conveying solidarity with other European states, France and Holland, in their respective imperial campaigns in Lebanon and Indonesia. “France,” added Ad-Diar, “will stay in our country over our dead body.” As-Sayad published a political cartoon of a John Bull dressed as Santa Claus with a bag over his shoulder, overflowing with French soldiers. The caption below read: “Did you not find a better present for this Christmas than that the one you already gave me in 1918 and 1941?” Another general strike in Lebanon was called for 2 January 1946.111

Lebanon had enough. As Al-Hadaf editorialized, “The volcano [wa]s on the point of eruption. We see in the agreement a return to the old colonial policy. We are tired of trying to please others. It is a question of life and death to us.” Following the arrival of another fresh round of French military replacements upon its shores, the Lebanese government issued a note to the British government, declaring “themselves alone responsible for the maintenance of security and for the protection of legitimate

111 Weekly Political Summary, 8 January 1946, FO 371/52857; UKNA; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 14 Décembre 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes; Beynet à Bidault, 18 Décembre 1945, Syrie-Liban, 281; Série L; Carton 6F; Dossier 9; MAE, La Courneuve; Weekly Political Summary, 15 December 1945, FO 371/52857; UKNA; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 25 Décembre 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire 14; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes; “Revue hebdomadaire de la presse libanaise,” 29 Décembre 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Inventaire 14; Carton 2105; MAE, Nantes; and Weekly Political Summary, 1 January 1946, FO 371/52857; UKNA.
foreign interests” and demanding evacuations immediately. Subsequently, it turned to
Washington and informed it of plans to present a formal complaint before the newly-
created United Nations General Assembly. The French-British accord, above all,
violated Lebanese sovereignty and went against the principles of the United Nations
charter signed a few months prior at San Francisco.\textsuperscript{112}

On 4 February 1946, Lebanon and Syria registered a joint note with the UN
Secretary General, requesting that the Security Council undertake discussions
regarding the “total and simultaneous evacuation of Foreign Troops from” their
“territories.” “Such action,” remarked Stettinuis, “appeared to them as their only
hope.” This presented a difficult predicament for the Truman administration. As a cold
war solidified itself in European and U.S. imaginations, it prompted the United States
to pick sides and prioritize between perceived principles and security interests.
Lebanon hoped and expected it to stand by the former. France, in light of recent U.S.
policy toward the Iranian crisis, thought it a “serious inconvenience” and a foregone
conclusion. The United States, after much deliberation, opted to support the Lebanese
initiative.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{112} Beirut to Foreign Office, 4 January 1946; FO 371/52842; UKNA; Weekly Political
Summary, 24 January 1946, FO 371/52857; UKNA; and Secretary of State to Acting

\textsuperscript{113} Weekly Political Summary, 25 February 1946, FO 371/52857; UKNA; Secretary of
State to Acting Secretary of State, 7 February 1946, \textit{FRUS}, 1946, Vol. 7: 761-764;
Beynet à Bidault, 5 Février 1946, Syrie-Liban, 281; Série L; Carton 6F; Dossier 9;
MAE, La Courneuve; and Acting Secretary of State to Secretary of State, 9 February
1946, \textit{FRUS}, 1946, Vol. 7: 765-766. For more, see Bruce Kuniholm, \textit{The Origins of
the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey,
On 15 February, Lebanon and Syria presented their cases before the UN Security Council. As the debate ensued, it rapidly became apparent that no proposal would be agreed upon. Notwithstanding, the United States tabled its own resolution, expressing “its confidence that the foreign troops in Syria and Lebanon will be withdrawn as soon as practicable and that negotiations to that end will be undertaken by the parties without delay.” The motion, unlike concurring resolutions and a Soviet request for amendment, survived the UN debate. In the end, despite receiving a total of seven votes, the U.S. resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union, the first in the United Nations’ short existence. France and Britain, who abstained, subsequently stated their approvals of the U.S. proposal and intentions “to act as if it had been passed.”

Much of Lebanon rejoiced upon hearing the news. While some notable Lebanese newspapers expressed dissatisfaction toward the Security Council’s stalemate, the Lebanese government proclaimed “a moral victory.” Over the next month or so, British, French, and Lebanese representatives undertook a series of extensive negotiations to hammer out the conditions of withdrawal. On 23 March 1946, Lebanon and France reached an agreement. Lebanese public opinion reportedly expressed “satisfaction,” and amid a certain cloud of public skepticism, France kept its promise. By the end of 1946, the French and British military presence in Lebanon was no more. Independence finally became a complete reality, as el-Khoury

114 Secretary of State to Caffrey, 1 March 1946, FRUS, 1946, Vol. 7: 775-776.

115 Beynet à Bidault, 25 Février 1946, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Inventaire, 9; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes; Beynet à Bidault, 21 Février 1946, Syrie-Liban, 281; Série L; Carton 6F; Dossier 9; MAE, La Courneuve; Weekly Political Summary, 18 April 1946, FO 371/52857; UKNA; Weekly Political Summary, 25 April 1946, FO
commemorated the total evacuation of foreign forces by placing a plaque at the historic mouth of the *Nahr el-Kalb*, or Dog River, the natural northern border of the capital city of Beirut and a national heritage site. The plaque, which remains today, reads: “On 31 December 1946, the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon was completed in the era of his Excellency President Bishara al-Khoury.” The arduous and long process of Lebanese decolonization finally appeared to come to an official close.

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371/52857; UKNA; Weekly Political Summary, 23 July 1946, FO 371/52858; UKNA; and Weekly Political Summary, 17 September 1946, FO 371/52858; UKNA.

On a sunny Sunday morning in late September 1945, southern Lebanon was in a festive spirit. The special occasion: the U.S. diplomatic representative, George Wadsworth, was passing through and attending a celebration held in his honor. His reception, simply put, was one reserved for kings. As his vehicle departed Beirut and headed south to the village of Taybe, seven hundred or so Lebanese cavalier joined its ranks. Fully garbed and carrying recently-minted Lebanese flags alongside the star-spangled banner, Wadsworth’s motorcade passed through myriad communities as local vehicles joined the national celebration. To many Lebanese, this was a momentous event; Wadsworth represented modernity. His country, the United States, was the vanguard of human rights and a postwar world order that vowed to end the age of empire, once and for all. The United States, they believed, played an integral role in Lebanese independence and they jumped at the opportunity to physically encounter Amreeka—many for the first time—and showcase their profound appreciations and support.

In Taybe, an estimated three thousand peoples anxiously awaited Wadsworth’s arrival. Upon stepping out of his car and onto southern Lebanon’s soil, the U.S.
diplomatic representative was immediately greeted by a long ovation. After this warm reception, his host, local leader Ahmed el-Assad, cordially welcomed him into his village and praised the United States and its cherished friendship. Lebanon, el-Assad avowed, was jealous of the United States’ independence, but assured that its own day of reckoning was on the horizon. Everyone, thereafter, indulged in a communal feast. While enjoying the fruits of the el-Assad family’s generosity and hospitality, local notables, one by one, expressed their gratitude and extended high praise to the United States and its citizens. Showered with gifts and bouquets, Wadsworth graciously displayed his appreciation by distributing some of his flowers amongst the crowd. This gesture, in the eyes of many, mirrored the symbolism of contemporary U.S. leadership in the world, as well as its support toward Lebanese self-determination and the global process of decolonization more broadly.

Local leader Selim Abou Jamra, who proclaimed himself the interpreter of public opinion in southern Lebanon, seized this powerful moment to bring a pressing issue to the U.S. diplomatic representative’s attention. Whereas Lebanese independence was in full blossom, its neighbor to the south appeared in dire flux. “If we have the benefit of enjoying these beautiful flowers and living in an atmosphere of well-being,” declared Abou Jamra, “not far from us, some of our brothers are in deep suffering.” Wadsworth and the United States were central to making Lebanese independence a global reality. Palestinian Arabs needed and deserved the same. Palestine’s mere physical proximity to the village of Taybe, located a few kilometers from the Lebanon-Palestine border, seemed to render the extension of U.S. support toward the Palestinian Arab human right to self-determination as a natural one. “The
Arabs will never renounce their rights to Palestine… We ask that you be the same representative for Palestine as you have been for us upon your illustrated country.”

The host agreed. To a toast of champagne, Ahmed el-Assad asked that everyone drink to the health of the United States and that it continue to safeguard Arab rights in Palestine.¹

As the arduous process of Lebanese political decolonization and constitutional independence reached an end, the question of Palestine acquired primary importance to Lebanese peoples and rapidly became a cause célèbre for a decolonizing Arab world.² The official entity of Palestine, as contemporaries knew it, was a European imperial invention. Roughly thirty years prior, in the wake of World War I, Britain established an internationally-sanctioned mandate over the former Ottoman region as part of the spoils of war. London, in a bargain with France, redrew the physical map of the Middle East. An official border, as a result, was instilled between the British mandate in Palestine and the French one in Lebanon. This physical divide between Lebanese and Palestinian peoples failed to rupture local ideas of interconnection. Local mental maps, in other words, went beyond the global power of international relations and European imperial edifices, maintaining relations with the pre-World War I Ottoman past in the Middle East. The Lebanon-Palestine border, while serving as physical separation, failed to extinguish perceived historical links between

¹ No Author, 26 Septembre 1945, Beyrouth, Consulat; Fonds B; Carton 4; MAE, Nantes.

² Information, 26 September 1945, Beyrouth, Consulat; Fonds B; Carton 32; MAE, Nantes.
communities, which had been facilitated by long-lasting customs such as trade and marriage.

Whereas Lebanese and Palestinian national identities separately consolidated themselves in the interwar years, in part as a result of and a resistance to the artificial border installed by European imperialism in the Middle East, a powerful supranational Arab identity, itself a product of the late Ottoman era, remained and upheld an imagined community among Arabic-speaking peoples. Following World War I and the birth of the European mandate system, national communities in the Arab world respectively resisted the imposition of foreign rule on local levels, while strengthening a pre-existing regional front against empire. Various national struggles for self-determination, assisted by a growing network of information, reinforced an Arab sense of interconnectivity. Arabism, at this time, “moved from the intellectual periphery to the cultural and political center.” The Lebanese media, particularly the press—which grew by leaps and bounds in the interwar period—was both a driver and a product of

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regional anti-colonial struggles and the spirit of decolonization. Its emergence as a central tenet of Arab political life in the Middle East, as Ami Ayalon aptly puts it, “reflected public sentiment most closely when it regarded itself, and was viewed, as leading the community’s struggle against foreign domination and against local rulers who seemed to be serving foreign interests.” The power of decolonization and local “aversion to foreign domination, a highly emotional issue, was a dominant theme in intellectual and popular discourse.”

News of crises in neighboring Palestine, which mirrored political developments throughout the region, rapidly attracted Lebanese peoples to the Arab cause there. Local disorder emerged soon after the establishment of the British mandate in Palestine. Prior to even formally setting foot in and physically occupying the Holy Land, British authorities made contradictory promises that would haunt them for decades thereafter. First, as a result of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence of 1915-1916, London promised freedom and self-determination in the event of victory to Arab peoples, including those residing in what would become British Palestine, in exchange for their wartime loyalty and aid in defeating the Ottoman adversary. Little under two years later, the British government consciously guaranteed a Jewish national home in Palestine to European Zionists. The Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917 officially laid the foundations for Zionism’s fundamental aspiration to settle the so-

called Jewish problem in Europe and grant Jews a national home in their ancestral homeland, Palestine. As Israeli historian Tom Segev eloquently writes, “The Promised Land had, by the stroke of a pen, become twice-promised.”

Once World War I ended in Europe, Arabs and Zionists sought to cash in on Britain’s pledges and realize their independence. Yet London had other plans. During the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and the San Remo Conference of 1920, Britain solidified its administrative rights to Palestine through the newly-created and European-run League of Nations mandate system. This neo-imperial structure qualified Palestinian Arabs and Jews as the subjects of British tutelage, rather than beholders of the basic right to self-determination. Arabs and Zionists—both in Palestine and abroad—rapidly resisted Britain’s contradictory motives. Whereas Arab and Jewish communities lived side by side in peace under Ottoman rule, Zionist ideology and British support toward the prospect of Jewish statehood perturbed the Arab majority in Palestine. The implementation of the British mandatory regime resulted in a notable influx of European Jewish immigrants, bent on making their Zionist dream a reality, and local Arab-Jewish rivalries over the right to self-governance, as well as the right to formalize Palestine’s nation-state identity.

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Palestinian Arab protests vis-à-vis Zionism ensued as a constant flow of Jewish immigrants poured into Palestine and the Yishuv, or Jewish community, gained greater prominence. Such political power was predominantly displayed through the purchase of large tracts of land, financed primarily by non-Palestinian Jews and private Zionist organizations. These transactions rendered many Palestinian Arabs unemployed, with little or no compensation, as the land was re-designated for Jewish colonization.\(^7\)

Palestine’s physical and demographic makeup appeared to be drastically changing. A perceived socio-political degradation in status led many Palestinian Arabs down the path of open resistance against the forces of foreign domination: British rule and immigrant Zionist ambitions. Matters climaxed in 1936, when a unified Palestinian Arab community launched an Arab Revolt against British authorities, Zionists, and Jewish settlements. In order to quell hostilities, British officials called for a formal inquiry into the reasoning behind the Palestinian Arab uprising. Upon publishing its report in 1937, the Peel commission attracted much regional and global attention to Palestine. Rendering the British mandate unviable, it deemed partition as the only viable solution and proposed to once again redraw the Middle Eastern map.

The partitioning of Palestine into two states—one Arab and one Jewish—instantly faced local and regional Arab opposition. Lebanon, in particular, based its objection on two issues. First, it invoked the Palestinian Arab right to self-governance, mirroring its own claim toward the French mandate. The Peel Commission’s plan for partition suggested that Arab Palestine be amalgamated with the British mandate in neighboring Transjordan and subjected to the rule of the

\(^7\) Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 105-130.
Hashemite royal family and its leader, Emir ‘Abdullah. But Lebanese peoples also rallied behind the Palestinian Arab effort in response to their own fears of Zionist expansionism. In its recommendations, the Peel Commission envisioned that a Jewish state be established in northern Palestine, alongside the Lebanese border. Popular Lebanese apprehensions over Zionist expansion into southern Lebanon dated back to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, when Zionist officials lobbied the British government to incorporate the area into designs for a Jewish state. According to Adeed Dawisha, “the pressure of continuous immigration would eventually push the Jewish state to expand into Arab lands, depriving more Arab people of their homes and their livelihood.”

The Palestinian Arab cause, as a result, became intertwined with Lebanon’s own anti-colonial struggles and efforts to obtain its basic rule to self-governance and complete constitutional independence. Henceforth, the Lebanese public sphere would keep a close watch on the development of Palestinian affairs.

As Lebanon joined forces with many of its Arab neighbors against empire and partition in Palestine, the British government discarded the Peel Commission’s proposal and sought a different solution. With the prospect of another world war looming in Europe, Britain sought to appease the Arab world and did so by publishing the White Paper of 1939, which recommended an eventual independent Palestine under an Arab majority and set strict limitations of Jewish immigration and land transactions. A Jewish national home would be incorporated into an independent

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Palestinian bi-national state. While Arabs and Jews both rejected the White Paper’s illusive conditions on different grounds, the latter successfully brought the Arab Revolt to an end. Hostilities in Palestine continued, however.

With Britain committed to the framework of the White Paper of 1939 and deeply entrenched in World War II, Zionism’s leadership shifted the brunt of its initiatives toward U.S. state and society. The United States, it deemed, was its best hope in facilitating the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Up to this point, Washington remained aloof on all matters pertaining to Palestine and relegated it as strictly a British responsibility. In May 1942, a conference held at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City mobilized the Zionist cause in the United States and catapulted an aggressive public campaign for political and financial support. Zionist efforts thereafter rapidly appeared to gain sympathy in the U.S. public sphere, especially as news of Nazi extermination campaigns against European Jews proliferated in the later half of 1942. With public support on its side, Zionists openly demanded that the White House officially reject the White Paper of 1939 and facilitate Jewish immigration to Palestine.9

Faced with mounting public pressure, U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration began reconsidering their position vis-à-vis Palestine. In order to formulate a just and balanced policy, Washington ordered Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Hoskins to conduct its own fact-finding mission. Following a lengthy and extensive

sojourn in various corners of the Arab-Muslim world, Hoskins submitted a preliminary report from the U.S. embassy in Egypt in early January 1943. If Palestine was “allowed to drift,” he reasoned, “a very bloody conflict [was] in the making, that in addition to its domestic repercussions in Britain and the United States will inflame not simply Palestine but in varying degrees all of the Moslem world from Casablanca to Calcutta.” In his opinion, “unless positive steps [were] taken to prevent” conflict, “there may be a renewed outbreak in fighting between Zionists and Arabs in Palestine before” the current global war came to a close. Arab public opinion in the Middle East, thanks in large part to Nazi propaganda, were well aware of Zionism’s shift to the United States and subsequently feared that the latter abandon its current stance in favor of the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine.¹⁰

The impact of Palestine on U.S. standing in the Middle East became increasingly clear following another fact-finding report, this time undertaken by the U.S. president’s special envoy to the region, General Patrick Hurley. Hurley’s views on the Palestinian situation supported Hoskins, whose own final report reached Roosevelt’s desk shortly after that of Hurley’s.¹¹ After conferring “with political, military, and religious leaders and with many individual citizens” across the Arab world, including Lebanon, Hurley found that “in the Middle East, American prestige


¹¹ Harold Hoskins’ report was officially handed over to the President on 7 May 1943. Secretary of State to President 7 May 1943, FRUS, 1943, vol. 4, 781-785.
[wa]s higher than that of any other nation… due primarily to the fact that America [wa]s believed to have no imperialistic designs” there. Many Arab peoples framed such perceptions on the exceptionalist notion “that the United States government [wa]s based on the principle that governments must derive their power from the consent of the governed.” According to Roosevelt’s special envoy, “They [we]re familiar with our expressed conviction that no man [wa]s good enough to rule another man without the other’s consent.” But the question of Palestine threatened to jeopardize the United States’ image in the Arab world. In the overwhelming opinion of Middle Eastern peoples, the Arab majority in Palestine was solely entitled to democratically determine its own political fate. Much hostility arose from “the Jewish claim that they are the ‘chosen people’ and hence entitled, even though they are a minority, to special privileges,” such as statehood. In other words, “The basic fear of the Arab leaders seem[ed] to be that a Jewish Political State in the Middle East, due to the influence of world Jewry on the great powers, would become the means by which imperialism would continue to dominate the Middle East.” And by constantly insisting on Jewish rights and aiding Zionism in erecting a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine, the United States would be actively participating in the exercise of empire and contradicting its anti-imperial tradition in the Arab world. Most importantly perhaps, “Speakers opposing the Zionist position emphasized to” Hurley “that the handing over of the Government of Palestine to the Jewish minority would”, in their opinions and those of the Arab world at large, “violate the fundamental principles of Americanism, the Atlantic Charter and the four freedoms.” In popular Arab eyes, Palestine was now a U.S. responsibility, whether the latter liked it or not. It was time that the United States
officially align itself and the nascent spirit of the United Nations with Palestinian Arabs, much like it was doing in Lebanon and other parts of the colonial world. Decolonization and the end of empire in Palestine, above all, meant the birth of a Palestinian Arab-led democracy. Hurley insisted, therefore, that it not stand idly by while the Palestinian situation worsened. Regardless of its view, a decision needed to be ascertained and communicated to Arab leaders as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{12}

The Roosevelt administration immediately concurred with both Hurley and Hoskins’ reports, and concluded that it should “assure the Arabs that no final decision on the Palestine question would be taken until the conclusion of the war and that any postwar decision would be taken only after full consultation with both Arab and Jewish leaders.” Whereas such utterances may have slightly reassured Arab leaders, Arab-Jewish hostilities in Palestine and popular Arab apprehensions toward U.S. Zionism lingered. By the end of 1943, Zionism’s appeal in the United States appeared to be at an all-time high. U.S. political sympathy materialized in late January 1944 with the introduction of similar resolutions in both houses of the U.S. government, the Senate and House of Representatives, calling for unrestricted Jewish immigration into Palestine. The Arab world and its leaders, unaware of the dynamics of U.S. congressional politics, immediately sought explanations from the Roosevelt administration. The resolutions, above all, appeared to signify a reversal in the United States’ official position on Palestine. In the case of Lebanese peoples, this turn-of-events appeared to initially slip under the public radar, falling prey to occupying

\textsuperscript{12} Emphasis added. Hurley to President, 5 May 1943, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Papers; President’s Secretary File, Box 138; Subject File: Hurley, Patrick J.; FDRL.
French and British censorship and postal control. Yet the perceived change in U.S. policy eventually trickled into the Lebanese public sphere through neighboring Arab protests and the Palestinian press, to which many Lebanese subscribed.¹³

The recently reinstated Lebanese government, at this time, formally sent a letter to the Roosevelt administration in opposition to the pro-Zionist congressional resolutions. “Palestine,” it read, “is an Arab country whose fate vitally concerns Lebanon.” A change in U.S. policy toward it “would have serious consequences” on Middle Eastern affairs, not to mention U.S. prestige. Using a legally structured, human rights argument based on the intellectual and humanitarian underpinnings of the United Nations, the Lebanese protest argued that “such measures would be directly opposed to democratic ideals” by “disheartening a whole people and reducing it to [a] state of servitude.” These “measures” fundamentally went against “the principles of justice and would undermine the Atlantic Charter.” Beirut’s effort did not stop there.

Aside from the above-mentioned communication, Lebanese officials also sent a telegram to the U.S. Congress, reiterating their disapproval and “urging withholding approval of [the] resolutions before [the] American public [wa]s apprised of [the] rights of Arabs.” While handing these over to Wadsworth, Lebanese Foreign Minister Selim Tacla explained that, contrary to perceived U.S. public impressions, Lebanese Arabs were “not fanatical” and their sectarian communities, whether Muslim,
Christian, or Jewish, co-existed in peace. Zionism’s political ambitions, not its affirmed cultural Jewish identity, alarmed them. Tacla explicated, “we all fear Zionism as a problem of colonization because of its supporter’s money, [its] organization[’s] influence and numbers.” To many Lebanese, Zionism was Western imperialism anew. “To us it is a matter of self-defense” and decolonization. “We beg America, while aiding persecuted Jews, to refrain from support of political Zionism.”14

While the Lebanese government did what it could via official diplomatic circles and coordinated its effort with neighboring Arab states, Lebanese peoples also contemplated the U.S. role in Palestinian and regional Arab affairs. Whereas many continued to hold the United States in high regard, especially in light of overt U.S. support for Lebanese independence, Washington’s apparent support for Zionism started to complicate their imaginations of benevolent U.S. global power. AUB president Bayard Dodge, for his part, relayed to U.S. officials that “Some of [his] Arab friends ha[d] asked [him] to help people in America to understand how dangerous it [wa]s for members of Congress to mix in Near Eastern politics.” Congressional resolutions, while well intended for persecuted European Jews, appeared as official U.S. policy and “stir[ed] up much bad feeling.” Lebanese peoples believed that the Palestinian Arab cause was legally sound and just. Palestine was a major issue in the Lebanese public sphere. And it was powerful enough to eventually undermine U.S. prestige. Anyone in the United States who believed otherwise was “hopelessly ignorant… Even when persons of secondary importance in America or England make

14 Emphasis added. Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 18 February 1944, FRUS, 1944, vol. 5, 578-579.
speeches advocating Zionism, the Arabs close their shops, keep their children away from school, demonstrate, and menace the consulates.” There was no doubt in Dodge’s mind that “If England and America permit ignorant persons in public places to present bills and make speeches, the peasants may rise against their present leaders, re-instate the pro-German sympathizers, and create such violent agitation that large armies will be needed to keep order.”

Dodge’s political forecast indeed appeared on the horizon, as Lebanese popular opposition to Zionist activities increased in light of the latter’s perceived growing pressures on U.S. society and ensuing congressional debates. In fact, his own student body took a leading position in Lebanese protests against U.S. support for Zionism. A few weeks after his own objection to the U.S. legation in Beirut, Dodge forwarded to U.S. officers a protest letter that he received on behalf of AUB students. They, above all, resisted the pro-Zionist resolution’s moral and legal reasoning. Zionism went against the very foundations of the Atlantic Charter and would fail “to right an age-old historical injustice” against Jewish peoples. “We, the Arab Students of the American University in Beirut,” the petition read, “were greatly shocked to hear the responsible Americans propose to right an alleged historic injustice by committing a pronounced injustice of the first order.” Two wrongs did not make a right. “The Atlantic Charter as a principle of international action cannot be applied to one people and denied to another.” The charter did outline, after all, the “desire” of its signatories—the United States was no exception—“to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the

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15 Dodge to Hoskins, 24 February 1944, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 10; NARA.
freely expressed wishes of the Peoples concerned.” The objections of the Arab majority in Palestine, they felt, were crystal clear. “Besides,” it added, “Palestine does not solve the Jewish Problem. Other ways in other lands ought to be found. And Palestine has had its share of the world burden by admitting more Jewish immigrants than her economic capacity can absorb.” As the leader of a decolonization era and an emerging universalist, human rights-based postwar world regime, the United States could not ignore the Palestinian Arab cause and continue its overwhelming support of Zionism.

As protests like these from all corners of the Arab world bombarded the State Department, they were transmitted to the U.S. president and Roosevelt appeared to take note. Well aware of the Palestine question’s explosiveness in Middle Eastern circles, the White House opted to steer a middle course. Arab protests re-emerged in the summer of 1944, however, after the Democratic Party officially incorporated a call for “the opening of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration and colonization, and such a policy as to result in the establishment there of a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth” in its platform for the upcoming presidential election. This stand, taken by the incumbent U.S. president’s own political party, once again pushed many Lebanese to question the United States’ commitment to democratic principles. Less than one week after the Democratic Party officially unveiled its platform, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies reacted by congregating to discuss the Palestinian situation. A resolution in support of the Palestinian Arab cause passed unanimously, claiming:

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16 Letter to Dodge, 8 March 1944, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 10; NARA.
The Lebanese Chamber of Deputies opposes any move which aims at the establishment of a Zionist National Home in the long-established Arab land of Palestine, for Lebanon considers itself directly threatened by the Zionist menace… The Chamber considers that the principles of the Atlantic Charter are contrary to the idea of turning any part of the Arab lands into a National Home for Zionism. The Chamber of Deputies hopes that the Allied Powers will take the side of the Arabs in their just cause, and that they will take note of the feelings of the allied Arab countries.

As resolutions such as the Lebanese one were passed throughout the Arab world, U.S. secretary of state Cordell Hull encouraged Roosevelt and his Republican counterpart, New York Governor Thomas Dewey, who also officially endorsed Zionism, “to refrain from making statements on Palestine during the campaign that might tend to arouse the Arabs or upset the precarious balance of forces in Palestine itself.”

At the heart of popular Lebanese disillusionment, at this time, was a basic frustration that the United States appeared to be turning its back on its anti-imperial principles embodied in the Four Freedoms and Atlantic Charter. For quite some time, Lebanese state society relayed to Washington the popular perception that Zionism was a physical threat to its own independence. Thus, by relentlessly condoning public statements in favor of Jewish immigration and settler-colonialism in neighboring Palestine, U.S. leaders were openly discounting Lebanon’s own right to full constitutional sovereignty. According to An-Nahar’s Gibran Tueni, the inclusion of the Zionist project in the platforms of both major U.S. political parties “surprised” Lebanese peoples. Notwithstanding, “Nothing will change Palestine’s Arab character:

not the will of U.S. Zionists, nor U.S. electoral promises.” Palestine was a sacred Arab
cause, rendering its defense against foreign obstruction a “strict obligation” and a
source of “deep sacrifice.” As a result, Tueni deemed that “it was not in the interest of
any superpower,” especially the United States, “irregardless of it political inclinations,
to sacrifice the friendship of all Arab peoples across the globe in order to satisfy those
Zionists whose dream of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine defies the opposition
manifested by reasoned Jewish elements.” Elsewhere, an Al-Hayat editorial explained
that U.S. officers in Beirut, who were trying to foment a greater relationship between
the United States and the Arab world, purposefully minimized recent U.S. events
related to Palestine. They maintained that official pro-Zionist attitudes were adopted
solely to obtain the so-called Jewish vote. U.S. politicians, most notably Roosevelt, the
editorial reasoned, were not entitled to extend electoral promises at the expense of
foreign peoples. Middle Eastern Arabs were not U.S. constituents and the United
States had no legal authority over their lands. The United States, therefore, should
return to its map of the world and “find an arid desert or a glacial country, where
nobody lives, to relocate their friends.” If anything, added Al-Hoda, recent
developments in the United States further encouraged Arabs to rid themselves of “the
yoke of Zionism.”

Lebanese peoples increasingly imagined Zionism as an imperial ideology and
foreign threat whose primary support came from a far away place and from distant
peoples who wished to dictate matters in Palestine and the greater Arab world. Many

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18 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 29 Juillet 1944, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth,
Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2054; MAE, Nantes.
in Lebanon, in the name of Palestinian Arab rights, mobilized specifically against Zionism as an offshoot of empire. Such mobilization naturally stemmed and grew from Lebanon’s own ongoing anti-colonial struggles against the French mandate and the latter’s unwillingness to relinquish full constitutional authority there. Various political parties and organizations, as a result, joined ranks and formed a national Committee Against Zionism in order to present a united front and defend their cause in Lebanon.

In *Saout al-Chaab*, Farajallah Helou rendered Zionism as “criminal.” Far from strictly being a solution to Nazi and fascist prosecutions, Zionism was an imperialist movement whose economic objective was to exploit Palestinian and greater Arab capital. This imperial movement, he added, contradicted Arab decolonization since “its political goal was to setup a stalwart base for foreign empire in Palestine and neighboring Arab states. Zionist peril… endangered Lebanese as well as Arab national rights.” Lebanon, Helou assured, “was the object of Zionist and imperial ambitions.” Increasing Zionist land purchases and economic influence in Lebanon, much like what happened in Palestine, could only lead to greater political clout, colonization, and the return of empire. “Zionism’s infiltration in Lebanon will, first and foremost, facilitate the consolidation of fresh foreign influence in our country and that was what all Lebanese feared and resisted the most.”

According to many Lebanese peoples, the United States could not simultaneously support Lebanese decolonization and Zionism. They believed that the

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19 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 15 Août 1944, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2054; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 17 Août 1944, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2054; MAE, Nantes.
imperial latter jeopardized the decolonizing former. The two currents were interconnected. U.S. officers quickly recognized that a heightened sense of disillusionment toward the United States became intertwined with Lebanese opposition to Zionism as local petitions and communications flooded the U.S. legation in Beirut. Among these was a telegram addressed to Congress from the Union of Arab Women in Beirut, which Wadsworth deemed as “a forward-looking organization with growing influence in enlightened circles.” Equally noteworthy were “identical letters addressed to the President and Members of the Democratic and Republican Parties” from the highly-influential “Moslem Bloc, which contain[ed] within its ranks representatives of most of this country’s most influential Moslem families and organization and which [wa]s, consequently, able to speak with a voice of considerable authority.” These letters conveyed the Lebanese Muslim community’s profound shock regarding U.S. support for “the Zionist enterprise in Palestine.” Zionism’s self-proclaimed principles, read the letter penned by the Secretary General of Lebanon’s Muslim Bloc, Abdul-Rahman Adra, contradicted “the civilized world’s” call for an end to imperialism. A Jewish state could only be installed by force and the likely use of such force would go against Arab rights. The days of empire were over. “A new era,” it declared, was “upon us. The human right to social and political life, the right of peoples to govern themselves within the framework of an international community whose members [we]re equals, was the new standard.” This fresh global reality was due to Allied efforts, particularly the United States. “For this reason, we are honored to energetically protest against U.S. decision to support a Zionist national home in Palestine.”

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20 Beirut to Secretary of State, 4 September 1944, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General
Whereas some Lebanese maintained hope in the United States’ declared quest to liberate the colonized world, many started to challenge the pillars of U.S. exceptionalism in Lebanon. By explicitly supporting Zionism, the United States was now rescinding its long-held anti-imperial tradition and appearing to turn its back to its time-honored friendship with the Arab world. A noticeably disillusioned Al-Kalam Us-Sareeh aptly put Lebanese public opinion in this way: “We appreciate the great contributions to victory and peace by America, but we cannot understand America’s exceptional behavior in this regard.” An-Nahar wondered if the United States was purposely misleading Arab peoples. If not, “Any effort made toward drawing America and the Arabs together [wa]s futile unless the former desist[ed] from sponsoring the Jewish Home in Palestine.” In the latter case, “The Arabs construe[d] the United States’ policy as meaning aggression upon their rights, and an insult directed at their honor, because the said policy underlie[d] the opening of the doors of Palestine in the face of Jews who [we]re intent upon establishing a Jewish kingdom in Palestine. And this kingdom,” An-Nahar stated, “cannot be established except by first expelling the Arabs from their own lands. Therefore, all efforts, however great, made for the purpose of drawing the Arabs and the Americans together, [we]re doomed to failure, as long as they [we]re paralleled by an insistent attempt by America to establish a Jewish state in the Arabs’ midst.”

As November arrived and Election Day approached in the United States, Lebanese apprehensions toward Zionism intensified. Many Arabs marked Balfour

Records, 1936-1961; Box 10; NARA.

21 Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 10 November 1944, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 10; NARA.
Day, 2 November—the anniversary of the issuance of the Balfour Declaration—with massive public protests. The previously clear distinction between empire and U.S. anti-imperialism in Lebanon appeared to be blurring quickly. Lebanese popular imaginations connected their colonized past with their perceived decolonizing present. The active participation of Lebanese shabab, or youth, stood out at this time. A U.S. report claimed that “some two thousand persons” met in Beirut to display their ardent opposition to Zionism. Others issued personal messages of discontent to the U.S. legation. AUB students, once again, petitioned the United States to reconsider statements in favor of Zionism. “The second of November,” an AUB letter read, “reminds us of the unfortunate Balfour Declaration, and of recent resolutions and statements made by responsible American Statesmen, and official or semi-official associations, all giving full support to the aspirations of the Jewish People to found a Jewish state in Palestine.” Such support went against “eternal principles of justice” and “recognized rights of prescription.” Lebanese peoples, in light of their traditional affinity toward the United States, did not want to associate current U.S. policy with past and present imperial currents in the Middle East. It was thus paramount that Washington change its course. AUB students “so regret[ted] the change of [its] people’s attitude toward the great and generous American peoples.” U.S. Zionism was “prejudicial not only to the future of the Arabs, but also to American interests, and to the cause of world peace and justice.” Another protest letter, this time addressed to the U.S. president by the student body of the American Junior College for Women in Beirut, went directly to the bottom of the matter. Lebanese imaginations increasingly juxtaposed the Balfour Declaration, a British imperial maneuver, and existing U.S.
support for Zionism. “We regret to see that while in the throes of an electoral campaign, great leaders of your country have adopted an attitude favoring [the] enforcement of the Balfour Declaration in a manner prejudicial to Arab interests,” the protest read, “without even providing that such interests have full hearing before the bar of world opinion and by the Organization of the United Nations which we hope earnestly will bring enduring peace to the postwar world.”

Lebanese activism reached new heights. Relentless calls for Arab justice in Palestine multiplied throughout Lebanese society. Rumors of Zionist land purchases in southern Lebanon, in particular, made Zionism a concrete Lebanese concern. According to a French diplomatic report, “Lebanon was being transformed into another Palestine.” Local newspapers revealed that numerous Zionist organizations recently completed land transactions near the port town of Saida, both under the cover of Arab names and facilitated by corrupt local businessmen. Southern Lebanon, many lamented, was in the early stages of Zionist colonization. French officers, for the most part, concurred, warning that “there was no doubt that the Zionists had already purchased or had tried to purchase parcels of land. If the Lebanese government failed to pay attention to these maneuvers, it will one day suffer a similar as that of Palestine.”

22 Letter to Dodge, 3 November 1944, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 10; NARA; and Letter to Wadsworth, 2 November 1944, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 10; NARA.

23 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 30 Mars 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 3 Avril 1945, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; Note, 6 Avril 1945, Beyrouth, Consulat; Fonds B; Carton 4; MAE, Nantes; Information, 6 Avril 1945, Beyrouth, Consulat; Fonds B; Carton 4; MAE, Nantes.
Harry S. Truman’s sudden arrival to the presidency of the United States, following Roosevelt’s death on 12 April 1945, did not to disrupt U.S. policy on Palestine. Truman, openly committed to maintaining his predecessor’s policies, refrained for the first few months from engaging in U.S. public discussions concerning the fate of Palestine. On 16 August 1945, however, the U.S. president broke his silence and unexpectedly supported Zionism. At a news conference dedicated to his recent sojourn with Allied leaders in Potsdam, Germany, he responded to a question pertaining to the prospect of a Jewish state in Palestine with the following: “The American view of Palestine is, we want to let as many of the Jews into Palestine as it is possible to let into that country.” Only after this influx of immigration would “the matter… be worked out diplomatically with the British and the Arabs, so that if a state can be set up there they may be able to set up on a peaceful basis.” U.S. support would end there, as he was not willing to dedicate U.S. armed forces to the arduous task of implementing a Jewish state and keeping the peace in Palestine.²⁴

Truman’s statement and the apparent shift in U.S. foreign policy struck a cord with Lebanese peoples. It immediately appeared on the front page of many newspapers. Roughly ten days after Truman’s comment, only one Lebanese newspaper appeared to gather the courage to remark on renewed U.S. support for Zionism. Yet as Wadsworth reported, “the President’s remarks had in fact given rise to considerable speculation.” With World War II officially over, many wondered if “American policy

might be under Zionist pressure,” once again, “tending towards advocacy of [a] high-level unilateral decision permitting a new wave of Jewish immigration.” Lebanese peoples were wary of publicly debating U.S. foreign policy, in fear of jeopardizing U.S. support in their government’s negotiations with France over the full transfer of administrative power. Relations between Lebanon and France “were at best unstable and gave” locals “cause for serious concern.” Lebanese leaders felt that “Any strong Moslem anti-Zionist stand” at this particular juncture “would but further French attempts to accentuate Moslem-Christian disunity.” In a private conversation, newly-nominated Lebanese prime minister Sami Bey Solh told the U.S. representative that “it was only because of strong deterrent action” on the part of the Grand Sérial “that press and political leaders had been dissuaded from launching a new anti-Zionist campaign and using the President’s remarks as a point-de-départ for querying the good faith of war-time-made British and American statements” of full consultation with Arabs on all issues relating to Palestine. According to Solh, “a number of local personalities, including journalists and a committee from the anti-Zionist bloc had called on him in the matter and that it had been only with some difficulty that he had been able to persuade them that it was not in Lebanon’s interest to agitate the” Palestinian “question at the present delicate juncture of the country’s internal and external political relations.”

25 Lebanon, after all, was on the cusp of finalizing its long, arduous process of political decolonization.

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25 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 20 Août 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 27 Août 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade, Série B; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 31 August 1945, FRUS, 1945, vol. 8, 736-737; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 31 August 1945, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 15;
One week later, President Truman sent a private letter to British prime minister Clement Atlee. In light of the Holocaust, humanitarian considerations were most important to him at this time. His Orientalist mindset lent little credence to Arab public opinion. It was imperative that London revisit the White Paper of 1939, as its quota for Jewish immigration, “which had been extended through the war years, was about to be exhausted.” British officials, in the short term, “decided to continue Jewish immigration” into Palestine “for the time being at the existing rate of 1,500 per month.” British gatekeeping was not the answer to the Palestinian problem. At a loss on how to proceed in managing its mandate in Palestine, the British government responded by proposing “that the two governments should set up a joint body to examine the position of the Jews in Europe and the situation in Palestine.” Britain could no longer manage the situation on its own.\(^2\)

Reports of Truman’s private letter to Atlee, recommending the immediate admittance of 100,000 Jews into Palestine, was leaked to the U.S. press one month later and rapidly found its way into the Lebanese public sphere, coincidently sharing media space with a fresh round of rumors regarding Zionist land purchases in Lebanon and related collusion with the Maronite patriarch. Lebanese peoples immediately sent protests to the U.S. legation. Local leader Jamil Beyhum complained that “Great

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\(^{2}\) Wilson, *Decision on Palestine*, 63-64. For more on British policy toward Palestine at this time and internal discussions over the prospect of Anglo-American cooperation, see Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, The United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 383-396.
indignation overwhelmed the entire Lebanon.” The Lebanese press, for its part, overflowed with commentary. Truman was all over front pages of influential newspapers, like Beirut and Sodal Ansar. In a lead article, Beirut published an open letter to Truman, reproaching him for purposefully deceiving the Arab world. Arabs were “frustrated,” as “they respected him as Roosevelt’s successor, as well as the sentiment of humanity, equality and justice that distinguished the American nation” from others. Ad-Diar’s Mohamed el-Baalbeki did not share such optimism. Truman’s pro-Zionist statement taught Lebanese peoples a profound lesson. “Here the President of the greatest republic in the world gave a definition of democracy,” lamented el-Baalbeki. “Democracy consisted of eliminating an entire people on its own territory, that of its fathers and ancestors.” The language of democracy gave the oppressor the right to further oppress the oppressed. “It obligated people to desert their homes and their farms in order to please an immigration which, in itself, was the result of corruption overflowing across the globe.” It supported racism. “In this eloquent lesson on democracy,” he added, “the Arabs find new precepts to add to those of past experiences, dating back to World War I, the League of Nations, international bargaining, provisional occupations, and the formation of mandates.”

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27 Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, 33; Louis, The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951, 388; and Information, 26 September 1945, Beyrouth, Consulat; Fonds B; Carton 32; MAE, Nantes; Letter, 25 September 1945, RG 84; Beirut Legation, Supplemental General Records, 1944-46; Box 1; NARA; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 26 September 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 27 September 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes. For on covert discussions between Zionists and members of the Maronite community of Lebanon, see Laura Zittran Eisenberg, My Enemy’s Enemy.
Lebanese public opinion now reasoned that it was the time for the United States to engage with the Arab point of view. As a Lebanese senator pointed out, “the Americans until this point have only heard” Zionist “arguments… [N]ot having heard the Arab arguments, it was totally natural that they say that Palestine was a Jewish land.” Ignorance, many thought, explained Truman’s decisions. Beirut’s Muhieddine Nsouli implored Wadsworth to relay Lebanese apprehensions to the White House. The U.S. legation did just that. That very day, the director of the State Department’s Office of Near Eastern affairs, Loy W. Henderson, advised acting U.S. secretary of state Dean Acheson that “unrefuted allegations [we]re being made” throughout the Arab world “that the United States [wa]s not living up to the pledges which it ha[d] made repeatedly during recent years, to the effect that no decision should be made respecting the basic situation of Palestine without consultation with Arabs and Jews.” U.S. high standing, once again, risked “be[ing] undone… The mere resentment of the Near Eastern peoples towards the United States on the ground that we have decided to disregard the Arab viewpoint with regard to Palestine would be unpleasant.” The Arab world, Henderson contended, needed to trust the United States. “There can be legitimate differences between the Arab peoples, the Zionists, and ourselves as to what should be the future status of Palestine.” But “There should not… be any differences as to the willingness of the United States government to keep its word.” At this crucial political juncture, the United States’ global reputation was at stake. Acheson went on to relay this comment to Truman.28

28 Revue de la presse libanaise,” 1 Octobre 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 2 Octobre 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes; Henderson to Acheson, 1 October
Wadsworth, for his part, outlined the Palestinian question’s centrality in Lebanese imaginations. In the hearts and minds of Lebanese peoples, “from university graduates to mountain villagers, there [wa]s no more burning issue in the field of international relations. Palestine is their next-door neighbor,” he explained, and “they fear[ed] Zionist expansionism.” Popular frustrations toward U.S. foreign policy naturally reverted back to the Arab proverb: “The friend of my enemy is also my enemy.” At the heart of Lebanese motivations were two things: “Democracy and self-determination.” Wadsworth’s assessment of Lebanese public opinion appeared accurate, as Lebanese rallied and protested the advent of Balfour Day 1945. Both large and small towns across Lebanon, such as Beirut, Tyre, Sheheen, and villages in the Chouf, went on strike and peacefully took to the streets in the name of Palestine. Many of their leaders, as in the previous year, sent protests to the U.S. legation.29

On 13 November 1945, Lebanese peoples obtained the opportunity to formally make themselves heard as Britain and the United States announced the creation of a joint commission, entitled the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry (AACOI), charged with exploring the global and local dimensions of the question of Palestine.

1945, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, 751-753; and Acting Secretary of State to President, 2 October 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, 753-756.

29 Memorandum of Conversation, 3 October 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, 756-758; Memorandum of Conversation, 12 October 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, 765-769; Wadsworth to Henderson, 26 October 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, 791-793; Beirut to Secretary of State, 5 November 1945, RG 84; Beirut Legation and Embassy, General Records; Box 107; NARA; Beirut to Secretary of State, 13 November 1945, RG 84; Beirut Legation and Embassy, General Records; Box 107; NARA; and Beirut to Secretary of State, 5 November 1945, RG 84; Beirut Legation and Embassy, General Records; Box 107; NARA.
and the Jewish refugee problem. Official consultation with the Arab world would take place in key Middle Eastern centers, such as Beirut. Yet Lebanese public opinion openly condemned the formation of the AACOI, as it meant Britain’s abolition of the White Paper of 1939 and the re-opening of discussions concerning Jewish immigration. Foreign powers, under the cloak of a so-called international commission, would not dictate the fate of Palestine and deny Arabs their legitimate right to self-determination and complete independence. Palestine was a Palestinian matter, first and foremost. Besides, a solution already existed: democracy. As far as many Lebanese peoples were concerned, the Jewish and Palestinian questions were diametrically opposed. The destiny of prosecuted European Jews was not a fait accompli. Al-Jadid, at this time, openly wondered whether the AACOI was strictly created in order to give Jews more time and prolong the sanctioned period of legal and illegal immigration.

Elsewhere, Al-Assia published a long exposé, entitled: “What the Arabs want.” “The Arabs of Palestine,” it read, “want Palestine to be an independent country, completely independent, in order to become a member of the Arab League at the same level as the other Arab states.” The formal inclusion of the U.S. government into Palestinian affairs would not bode well for Arabs, furthermore, as “the Americans were for various reasons under the influence of Zionist propaganda.” The AACOI’s recommendations would likely tilt heavily in the favor of Zionism, thus further threatening relations between the Arab world and the United States. Historically speaking, Americans were always at the forefront of the Arab cause. During World

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War I, AUB president Howard S. Bliss relentlessly advocated for Arab and Lebanese self-determination. After the war, an international commission headed by two Americans, Henry Churchill King and Charles R. Crane, defended Arab rights. This said, Arabs wanted the U.S. members of the AACOI to discover the “truth” and “justice” inherent in the Arab cause. If the Americans remain true to their traditional democratic outlook, they will naturally abandon the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The United States needed to listen to the Arab world, engage with its perspective, and adopt Arab rights as it had in the past. Zionism was the only thing standing in their way.  

As Lebanon and the Arab world debated the AACOI’s motive, they also pondered its potential short and long-terms repercussions. Partition, many Lebanese worried, would be brought back into the equation, despite being labeled as a non-option after the failure of the Peel Commission of 1937. With the Palestinian problem apparently back to square one, Transjordan renewed a British-supported scheme to unite Greater Syria, which included Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, under its rule.

According to the Hashemite kingdom, a Greater Syria project would easily

31 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 19 Novembre 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes.

complement the partitioning of Palestine and help solve the Jewish problem. 

Hashemite calls for a Greater Syria produced Lebanese indignation, as it was perceived as yet another infraction upon Lebanese sovereignty. With full constitutional independence in sight, why would Lebanese want to abandon their efforts and submit themselves to Hashemite rule? Emir ‘Abdullah’s Greater Syria scheme, with its support for a partition of Palestine, failed to stymie Zionism. Members of the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies immediately denounced such plans. The press took it one step further, wondering if it was the product of an imperial scheme. It would, after all, please Britain, Zionists, and long-standing Hashemite ambitions. ‘Abdullah’s plan “implied the presence of imperialist considerations and Zionist influence,” affirmed Saout al-Chaab. “The Greater Syria project,” concluded Al-Telegraf, “is not only an instrument to colonize Arabs and to augment the number of Zionists, but it is especially a plot against the Arab League to prevent it from preserving and assuring the defense of Arab independence.” A united Arab kingdom under Hachemite rule, added another Lebanese newspaper, would only signify a new stage of British imperialism in the Middle East.33

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33 “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 26 Novembre 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassage; Série B; Carton 2095; MAE, Nantes; Note, 31 Octobre 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassage; Série B; Carton 2455; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 12 Avril 1945, Beyrouth, Ambassage; Série B; Carton 2094; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise,” 27 Novembre 1945, Beyrouth, Consulat; Fonds B; Carton 28; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue
Meanwhile, back in Washington, Congress once again supported Zionism and the prospect of partition, passing another resolution regarding Palestine. Such news, on the back of relentless Hashemite calls for the unification of Greater Syria, produced predictable Lebanese “disappointment.” The AACOI had yet to commence the first leg of its commission in Washington and U.S. public opinion appeared to unanimously promote partition. This was not a good start, as far as the Arab world and Lebanese peoples were concerned. During a session of the Chamber of Deputies, Sa’ib Salaam “said that the attitude of the U.S. Senate was reminiscent of Nazi methods, because it tended to force the hands of the [AACOI] in spite of many assurances that the committee would carry on the assigned work in all integrity and impartiality.” Rather than try to dictate the AACOI, the U.S. Senate should focus on its own affairs and attempt “to solve the Jewish problem within the territories for which it was competent to legislate.”

Notwithstanding their open opposition to the creation of the AACOI, Lebanese peoples realized that it was imperative that they take matters into their own hands, participate in the commission, and swing the international pendulum back in favor of the Arab majority in Palestine.

The AACOI held public hearings in Beirut on 18 and 19 March 1946. To the great disappointment of one AACOI member, the Lebanese government pre-arranged the agenda and handpicked individuals to testify before the committee. Leaving out controversial leaders of the Maronite community, who previously held private talks...
with Zionists, prominent U.S. lawyer and open Zionist Bartley C. Crum later commented that the Lebanese government “took no chances of any discordant note sounding in the prearranged Arab symphony.” And a symphony it was. One after the other, Lebanese participants fortified Arab decolonization. The Lebanese message to the AACOI was clear: Zionism presented a grave threat to Lebanese independence and the realization of democracy in the Middle East. Self-determination and self-government, furthermore, were inherently the basic human rights of Palestinian Arabs.

In his testimony, leading Shi’ite theologian Sheikh Yusuf al-Faqih deemed it unreasonable “to think that the Jews once established in Palestine… will content themselves with the bone leaving the flesh exist[ing] in Syria and Lebanon. The Middle East [wa]s too important in World politics to be tempered with in [a] Balfourian manner.” Representing the Lebanese press, Emile Bustani and Iskander Riachi implored that Lebanon “which abut[ted] on Palestine throughout its entire Southern frontier on a line which [wa]s far from any natural boundary,” dreaded “the danger of Zionist aggrandizement in Palestine” more “than all the other Arabs States. Zionist immigration ha[d] immediate repercussions in Lebanon—economic, social and political.” In addition, Zionists openly admitted to a national “programme” that “include[d] Lebanon.” In order to get rid of their “headache” in Palestine, the United States and Britain needed “to keep friendly with the Arabs” and grant Palestinian


36 Statement, 18 March 1946, RG 43; Records of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry re Palestine, 1944-1946; AACI Reference Files; Box 6; NARA.
Arabs what they deserved: independence. One thing, they assured, was for certain: “A Daniel is to come Judgement.”

The AACOI’s recommendations, followed by Washington and London’s decision on their implementations, would clarify to many Lebanese whether they were in a state of empire or decolonization. Jewish statehood in Palestine, they strongly believed, robbed Palestinian Arabs of their rights and threatened Lebanese sovereignty. The British mandate’s purpose was to prepare Palestinian peoples for independence, not re-colonization. It was unjust, therefore, that Britain exercised “its Mandate as an instrument for the subordination and even the elimination of indigenous populations in favor of foreign populations,” contended another Lebanese speaker, Maximos Saegh, Archbishop of the Melchite Catholic Community Diocese of Beirut and Byblos. “What will the Gentlemen investigating the question say if someone took away their property on the [precept] of bestowing the same upon the neighbor? When a gift is made, it should be made of the proper property of the giver.” According to Monsignor Saegh, in the wake of the San Francisco conference, which resurrected the spirit of human rights and strengthened the nobility of decolonization across the globe, “It [wa]s very dangerous and very grave for the future to rob the weak or poor populations of their rights.” Not only would such a thing violate the foundations of the United Nations, it would also contradict U.S. exceptionalism. Sheikh Tawfik Khaled, the Mufti of Lebanon, took the opportunity to remind the committee members “of two main principles for the sake which two worlds wars had been waged.” First, “There

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37 Statement, 18 March 1946, RG 43; Records of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry re Palestine, 1944-1946; AACI Reference Files; Box 6; NARA.
was] the right of self-determination advocated by the late President Wilson and others after the first world war, and,” second, “the right of peoples to choose the system of government which, in their opinion, [wa]s most suitable for them, as embodied in the Atlantic Charter… during the second world war.” The United States was at the forefront of both initiatives. The Arab world, explained Mikkadam Ali Mezher, religious judge of the Druze in Lebanon, “ha[d] faith in the principles of liberty and justice proclaimed by the American [government] which g[ave] all peoples the right of self-determination and of equality with other people.”38 Now was not the time to abandon them.

As events unfolded in Palestine, Lebanese peoples reportedly gained the impression that the United States was refusing to listen to them and thought that the universalist principles outlined above did not necessarily apply to the Arab world. U.S. Orientalism was perhaps best explained to the AACOI by Mrs. Selim Saab, the chosen delegate for “the women’s movement in” Lebanon. Everyone knew that “the American” was well versed in Zionism. But “Of the Arabs he knows little or nothing,” complained Saab. “He imagines them living in tents. He places them in a remote and unknown land called ‘Arabia’ and justifies the belief of the real Arabs that when Lord Balfour promised the Jews a national home in Palestine he was unaware that there were any Arabs in that country.” Arabs were the majority in Palestine. Like Americans, they had rights. They were far from being a so-called backward people, as

38 Statement, 18 March 1946, RG 43; Records of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry re Palestine, 1944-1946; AACI Reference Files; Box 6; NARA; and Statement, 19 March 1946, RG 43; Records of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry re Palestine, 1944-1946; AACI Reference Files; Box 6; NARA.
they internalized the modernity of human rights and decolonization, which had been advocated so eloquently by the United States in the recent past. “I am an Arab woman like other Arab women whether they live in cities or in villages, in that they are all intent upon doing their duty to their country and to respond to [the] feeling of justice deeply rooted in [the] Arab soul,” she explained. “Arab women do not hesitate to give their efforts to give themselves and to encourage their sons and brothers to do so in order to relieve Palestine of [the] present “situation by stopping promptly and fully all Jewish immigration and realizing the independence of that territory.”

The AACOI’s final product was much of what Lebanese peoples expected and feared. AACOI recommendations, submitted to the British and U.S. governments on 20 April 1946, leaned heavily in favor of Zionism by advocating the sudden immigration of 100,000 Jews into Palestine and the total abolishment of land transfer restrictions. To make matters worse, Palestinian Arab independence remained elusive, as the committee recommended that it be governed by an international, UN-sanctioned trusteeship in order to facilitate the implementation of a bi-national state solution. Palestinian Arab statehood was a distant reality. The status quo remained and the White Paper of 1939 was no more. The AACOI’s recommendations lent additional weight behind Truman’s prior initiatives by promoting his call for open Jewish immigration into Palestine.

39 Statement, 19 March 1946, RG 43; Records of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry re Palestine, 1944-1946; AACI Reference Files; Box 6; NARA.

When the AACOI report became public knowledge, Lebanese peoples condemned the United States and attacked Truman directly for his broad endorsement. According to a British report, Lebanese public opinion considered the United States “to be the chief nigger in the woodpile.” Washington’s support for Zionism skewed the inquiry from the onset. Truman, in particular, bore the brunt of Lebanese criticism. A local informant tipped off British officers in Beirut that a harsh op-ed directed at the U.S. president would soon appear in the Lebanese press. As the informant walked into the office of Al-Assia, “the editor said that the first thing he was going to do was attack Taraman to-morrow.” Confused, the British informant asked the editor “who Mr. Taraman was, and the editor with some glee, said, ‘Oh, haven’t your heard of Truman?’” In Beirut, “the word ‘Taraman’” was a slang term for “‘a silly man’.”

Lebanese reactions were “hostile” to the say the least. Besides immediately voicing an utter rejection of the AACOI report, “[a]ll towns” throughout Lebanon enforced a one-day strike. Demonstrations continued for the next week or so. “In general, reaction in [the] press, public, and official circles [was] disillusionment, hardening into [a] determination to resist [the] implementations of [the AACOI]’s recommendations,” reported Wadsworth. In fact, the U.S. diplomatic representative was “much impressed by [the] intensity of resulting anti-American feeling in official circles and among [the] informed public.” One Lebanese newspaper even went “as far as to print a picture of [the U.S. president] upside down with the caption ‘the idiot is overjoyed’.” Local antagonism reached such a point that in the night of 7-8 May 1946, a couple of men forced entry into the U.S. legation. “[T]hree fires” were “lit with

41 Beirut to Foreign Office, 1 May 1946, FO 371/52523; UKNA.
gasoline and nitro-cellulose among packaged American publications.” Office men “working on [the] upper floor” smelt “smoke” and “extinguished [the] fire,” thus preventing extensive damage.\footnote{Beirut to Foreign Office, 3 May 1946, FO 371/52521; UKNA; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 9 May 1946, \textit{FRUS}, 1946, vol. 7, 599-601; Beirut to Foreign Office, 8 May 1946, FO 371/52522; UKNA; and Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 9 May 1946, RG 59, Palestine-Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 6.}

Whereas the AACOI’s recommendations engendered severe condemnation, Truman’s open endorsement was at the root of Lebanese disenchantment. Lebanese peoples did not expect, nor want, the U.S. president to so explicitly support Zionism. In their opinion, “from [the] mountain of documentation and testimony,” that the AACOI, “like its predecessors, should produce only [an] ineffectual mouse was not unexpected. But that the United States, by [the] voice of its President, should take so unreservedly [a] pro-Zionist attitude” shocked “all those” Lebanese “who had long counted on its erstwhile seeming arder to implement [the] principles of international justice in [a] postwar world.” The United States openly discarded Lebanese public opinion and betrayed it self-proclaimed exceptionalist identity, not to mention the universalist principles of human rights and the spirit of decolonizaton. “Truman’s statement,” Wadsworth noted, was “read as [a] clear promise to Zionists that” the “imposition” of 100,000 Jewish immigrants “and [the] abrogation” of the White Paper of 1939 would “be major elements of America’s Palestine policy.” Members of the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies “lauch[ed] the most violent attack ever made against the United States.” \textit{Al-Akbar}, for its part, published a full-size picture of the U.S.
The U.S. government now appeared officially at odds with Lebanese society and the broader Arab world.

Lebanese public opinion was now very powerful and a dangerous force. In a private conversation with Wadsworth, Lebanese foreign minister Hamid Frangieh admitted that “we are touched to the quick… Public sentiment h[eld] that it were better to resist now than to wait twenty years and see a Zionist state.” Overwhelming public consensus concluded that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine could only be done by force. “Brute force may succeed in enforcing the [AACOI]’s recommendations, which will undoubtedly make Mr. Truman’s broad smile ever broader,” commented An-Nahar. “The American and British governments may mobilize all their powers to force their ruthless will on the Arabs, but the Arabs were confident that they will win this battle in which all the forces of imperialism had come together to deprive them of their legitimate rights.” The influential Beirut, for its part, opined: “If America and Britain wish[ed] to use force with the Arabs who had sacrificed for democracy, we would say plainly and openly that the Arab world will jump to defend itself against this shameful injustice.”

Palestine rendered populism as the benchmark for Lebanese public order and government. Many foreign observers were quick to note that the local population held

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43 Beirut to Secretary of State, 17 May 1946, RG 84; Beirut Legation, Supplemental General Records, 1944-46; Box 2; NARA.

44 Beirut to Foreign Office, 6 May 1946, FO 371/52521; UKNA; Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 10 May 1946, RG 59, Palestine-Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 6; and Beirut to Secretary of State, 17 May 1946, RG 84; Beirut Legation, Supplemental General Records, 1944-46; Box 2; NARA.
the Lebanese government hostage over Palestine. If Beirut, for some reason, went
against the popular grain and openly advocated Arab moderation or conciliation
toward Zionism, revolutionary change would take place. “There are strong dissident
elements in Lebanon which would take advantage of any development to attempt to
overthrow [the] government,” contended the U.S. legation. Such a prospect would
surely not bode well for Washington. If the current government “fell… there would be
[a] long period of mob rule direct[ed] first against Americans and foreigners generally
and finally develop into [an] anti-Christian move where Lebanese Moslems and Druze
would” likely reproduce the “Christian massacre of 1860.” The result would be
outright anarchy, as “Mob leaders would likely be found among religious fanatics.”

The United States, Wadsworth felt, needed to adapt its public policy in
Lebanon and the Arab world accordingly. The U.S. legation was up to the task of re-
calibrating relations with Lebanese peoples. Recent events should not be taken lightly,
but U.S. relations with Lebanese society on the issue of Palestine “followed a common
pattern not unlike the case history of a fever.” Whereas Wadsworth’s Orientalist
analogy may not have been the most appropriate, it did adequately reflect the dominant
U.S. approach to the Lebanese public sphere. Dating as far back as 1944, he explained,
the “temperature of Lebanese public opinion instantly shot up” as soon as word of a
U.S. pronouncement in favor of Zionism reached it. U.S. officers in Beirut were
immediately “certain of the prognosis; the fever would remain critical for a week, with
attendant symptoms of violent press attacks, speeches in the Chamber, and

45 Beirut to Secretary of State, 29 May 1946, RG 84; Beirut Embassy, Top Secret
Subject Files, 1944-50; Box 1; NARA.
delegations, petitions, and telegrams to the Minister.” In response, they extended “some conciliatory explanation which like a dose of quinine wound the fever down and after another ten days the incident would have been all but forgotten.” Three factors through these challenging sequences remedied Lebanese perceptions of the United States: “a) the average” Lebanese “had come to appreciate that Zionism was a domestic political issue to which American politicians must pay respect; b) he never for a moment was willing to believe that the American people, or their government, was hostile to the Arabs;” and “c) he knew that the United States was playing a prominent role in supporting Lebanese aspirations for independence.”

With full constitutional independence all but achieved, Lebanon began to form the impression that U.S. support toward decolonization had its limits. Washington indeed appeared unsympathetic toward Arabs. Had Americans internalized the Zionist cause and made it their own? Truman latest statement planted such seeds in Lebanese imaginations. Many now blamed Washington for the “misfortunes which ha[d] befallen [on the] Arab world.” Aware of this change, U.S. officers upped their dosage of public diplomacy and “Thereupon, the agitation subsided and affairs returned to normal.” Nevertheless, the norm in U.S. relations with Lebanese peoples was clearly in a process of metamorphosis. “The incident,” deduced Wadsworth, “left a deep scar, and no competent observer doubt[ed] that, if the United States determine[d] to implement the recommendations of the [AACOI] against the will of the Arab states, Lebanon, despite her Christian majority and warm ties with the United States, w[ould]

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46 Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 6 June 1946, RG 59; Lebanon Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 1.
stand loyally by the side of her Moslem neighbors.” The power of popular Arabism, decolonization, and human rights could not be taken lightly.

Severe Arab reactions to the AACOI report left Britain in limbo as to how to proceed with the question of Palestine and its mandate. Many Arab statesmen demanded a British rejection and insisted that the matter be submitted to the recently-created United Nations General Assembly for further consideration, thereby truly making it a topic of international discussions. The Truman administration, on the other hand, pressed that now was the time to address Palestine and that “The basis for the solution should be found within the framework of the recent unanimous report of the joint Anglo-American inquiry.” Siding with its close ally, London accepted the AACOI report in early August 1946 and, once again, proposed partition.48

Popular Lebanese resentment boiled over into violent assaults on the U.S. legation. For the second time in less than a year, a handful of vandals targeted Wadsworth’s headquarters in Beirut as a physical symbol of U.S. global power. One night, “shortly before 8:45,” Wadsworth reported, “an unknown person, or persons” slipped by a night watchmen’s round and “entered” the premise, “dropp[ing] two large hand grenades… on [the] floor of the main reception hall.” Shortly thereafter, most likely as the perpetrators fled the scene, “A third and smaller 350 French grenade was

47 Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 6 June 1946, RG 59; Lebanon Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 1; and Kuniholm to Secretary of State, 17 July 1946, RG 59; Lebanon Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 1.

48 Kuniholm to Secretary of State, 21 June 1946, FRUS, 1946, vol. 7, 633-634; Secretary of State to President, 29 July 1946, FRUS, 1946, vol. 7, 671-673; and Chayla à Bidault, 6 Août 1946, Mandate Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 1213; MAE, Nantes.
thrown by [the] railing of [the] front porch.” The explosions caused “very considerable damage… All office doors, which were well closed, were blown in; most of [the] windows were shattered as well as glass fronted bookcases and table tops.” In addition, “Slugs tore into desks and office furniture, and walls were pockmarked with shrapnel.” All in all, the U.S. diplomatic representative revealed, the “Blast was strong enough to raise from their sockets steel beams supporting [the] ceiling and second floor offices.” Fortunately for the State Department at the time, not to mention future historians, the “Code room at [the] back of [the] second floor was undamaged and all Legation files and records [we]re intact.” The British consulate less than an hour prior suffered similar “damage.”

The Lebanese government and many of its constituents condemned the attacks, but maintained “[d]eep-rooted opposition” to partition. The United States did the opposite a few months later. With bi-congressional elections only a few weeks away, on 4 October 1946, the eve of the Jewish Yom Kippur holy day, Truman implicitly endorsed the partitioning of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state and, once again, repeated his call for open Jewish immigration. Local anti-Americanism, the U.S. legation warned, “develop[ed] at an alarming rate.” According to a French diplomatic report, the U.S. staff was visibly distraught by Truman’s announcement and feared renewed attacks on the legation. A U.S. military attaché went as far as telling a French colleague that current U.S. policy risked losing the Arab world’s friendship and his

49 Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 5 August 1946, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 20; NARA.
feeling that, back in Washington, diplomatic messages advocating the urgency of change were simply being ignored.\textsuperscript{50}

Many Lebanese felt the same way. U.S. Orientalism became “the talk of Beirut.” In near unanimity, the Lebanese public sphere rendered U.S. policy toward Palestine as “short-sighted and irresponsible.” “We would have preferred if Mr. Truman and Mr. Dewey,” his Republic presidential counterpart, “had read Mr. Wadsworth’s reports around the Palestinian case before getting themselves involved into this mess,” editorialized Nsouli. “Mr. Wadsworth was the man who knew the Arabs well and examined the Palestinian case closely and he wasn’t less American than Dewey or Truman nor was he less of a patriot than they were.” If only they took the time to actually listen to the Arab world and read the U.S. diplomatic messages, “they would have looked at the Arabs and the Palestinian case differently. Instead,” the \textit{Beirut} columnist complained, “they preferred going for what would get them a few thousand votes in the coming elections.” In exchange for so few votes, they were “losing the respect and confidence” of the “Arabs.” “To most Lebanese, paradoxically enough,” wrote \textit{Le Jour}’s Michel China, brother-in-law of the Lebanese president, “American policy in Palestine” was “as easy to explain as it ha[d] been difficult to

\textsuperscript{50} Weekly Political Summary, 16 September 1946, FO 371/52858; UKNA; Chayla à Bidault, 14 Août 1946, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 1213; MAE, Nantes; Weekly Political Summary, 13 September 1946, FO 371/52858; UKNA; Harry S. Truman: "Statement by the President Following the Adjournment of the Palestine Conference in London,", October 4, 1946. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, \textit{The American Presidency Project}. \url{http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12520}; Memorandum, No Date, RG 43; Records of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry regarding Palestine, 1944-1946; AACI Reference Files; Box 1; NARA; and Chayla à Bidault, 8 Octobre 1946, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 822; MAE, Nantes.
understand. No Lebanese c[ould] understand why three or four million Jews who live in peace in the city of New York should insist upon installing, at the end of a gun, a hundred thousand Jews in Palestine, who c[ould] only be maintained, thereafter, at the end of a gun.” Unwilling to listen to Arab words, many Lebanese nationalist papers advocated the complete boycott of American goods “as an only recourse.” According to Al-Hayat, this was “the only language in which America can understand.”

With Lebanon in a “restive” state, “American prestige” there “seem[ed] to be at the lowest point in all time.” In private discussions with a U.S. officer, el-Khoury lamented “why Lebanon must suffer because of the internal political situation in the United States and whether” its fortune “was to be decided by the votes of New York City.” A Lebanese government press release published thereafter rendered Truman’s statement “as being wholly antagonistic to Arab rights” and “expressed disappointment in the United States of America which had been thought by the Arab countries to rank foremost among the nations of the world which sponsored the principles of freedom and justice.” “If we can weather the present cloudy period without reprisals, boycott or abrogation of contracts and concessions,” expressed a U.S. officer, “it will be a miracle.” Public diplomacy, more than likely, would “fall on deaf ears in the hard-boiled Phoenicien bazaarlik. It will take considerable patience and a display of more than normal tact to avoid open and public insult.” Barring an

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51 Kuniholm to Secretary of State, 10 Octobre 1946, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 19; NARA; Muhieddine Nsouli, 9 Octobre 1946, Beirut, page 1; Kuniholm to Secretary of State, 10 October 1946, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 19; NARA; and Weekly Political Summary, 30 October 1946, FO 371/52858. For Chiha’s full editorial, see M.C., “La logique en defaut,” Le Jour, 9 Octobre 1946, page 1.
unexpected swing in U.S. foreign policy, one thing appeared certain. “Events” were “leading to a climax, which will be the most serious which the Arab world has witnessed since World War 1.”

This juncture led some Lebanese to cast the United States in an “imperial” light for the first time. Prior to this point, the words “America” and “empire” held antithetical meanings in Lebanese imaginations, and were rarely, if ever, seen side by side. By so openly discarding Arab claims, many feared that Washington was adopting an “imperial” outlook similar to those of Britain and France. Yet for the time being, many Lebanese hesitated to do so and apparently refused to relinquish their exceptionalist perceptions of the United States. In any case, Zionism was to blame, not the American people. As exemplified by the coming on of Balfour Day 1946, Lebanese protests would continue and “The Palestine question continued to hold pride of place in the local press columns.” Palestine was now integral to Lebanese nationalism, as many advocated a solution that respected Lebanon’s independence and universal human rights. Decolonization and the struggle against empire appeared to be a way of life after independence. “Never,” commented a French official, “have we seen Beirut in such a patriotic fervor.”

52 Kuniholm to Secretary of State, 10 October 1946, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 19; NARA; Memorandum, No Date, RG 43; Records of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry regarding Palestine, 1944-1946; AACI Reference Files; Box 1; NARA; and Kuniholm to Secretary of State, 10 October 1946, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 19; NARA.

53 Information, 22 Octobre 1946, Mandate Syrie-Liban; Beyrout, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 1202; MAE, Nantes; Weekly Political Summary, 20 November 1946, FO 371/52858; UKNA; and Chayla à Bidault, 28 Novembre 1946, Beyrout, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 2455; MAE, Nantes.
Private British initiatives to engender peace between Arabs and Jews in Palestine faltered. If anything, they encouraged greater Arab mobilization. London, lost as to how to resolve the problem, opted in the final days February 1947 to officially abandon its mandate in Palestine, handing over all responsibilities regarding the Palestinian question to the United Nations. Washington, for its part, followed these developments with much “concern,” rapidly concluding that “1947 [wa]s going to be a bad year in Palestine and the Middle East, with increasing violence and grave danger to our interests in that area.” There was “little hope” in the United Nations General Assembly accomplishing what Britain set out to do. This said, what was the United States to do? Dean Acheson helplessly wrote Loy Henderson, “I am aware that this only poses but does not answer the $64.00 question but I have come to the end of my ideas this morning.”

Worse yet for Washington, many peoples in the Arab world and Britain blamed it in large part for the impasse in Palestine. Truman immediately sought to rectify U.S. image and make one thing clear: the growing perception that U.S. policy concerning Palestine was “motivated by partisan and local politicians [wa]s most unfortunate and misleading…America’s interest in Palestine,” he insisted “[wa]s of long and continuing standing. It [wa]s a deep and abiding interest shared by our people without regard to their political affiliation.” Truman’s explanation contradicted Wadsworth’s own public strategy in explicating the United States’ renewed support for Zionism.

Previous experiences demonstrated that the tactic of belittling U.S. policy as a product

54 Acheson to Henderson, 15 February 1947, FRUS, 1947, vol. 5, 1048-1049. For more information on private British decision-making and ensuing parliamentary discussions, see Louis, The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951, 460-463.
of electioneering most successfully, at least in the short term, reassured the Lebanese public sphere. Truman’s latest statement, if anything, solidified Lebanese fears that Zionism was U.S. policy in Palestine, plain and simple. The sincerity of U.S. ambivalence was called into question, leaving some Lebanese to think that an “American peril,” based on oil, dollars, and atomic bombs, was on the horizon in the Middle East. The United States’ place in Lebanese imaginations was in peril.\footnote{Harry S. Truman: "White House Statement in Response to Foreign Secretary Bevin's Remarks Relating to U.S. Interest in Palestine.," February 26, 1947. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12830; and Chayla à Bidault, 4 Mars 1947, Beyrouth, Ambassade, Série B; Carton 2455; MAE, Nantes.}

Palestine’s was not, however. As election season loomed in Lebanon, national politicians—whether sincere or not—frequently used it as a populist rallying-cry for their candidacies and Lebanese territorial integrity. The latest commission, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), whose formation the Lebanese government voted against, was the subject of much popular “opposition” and “distrust.” The United Nations, Lebanese nationalist papers concluded, “failed the Arabs and turned out to be a tool in the hands of Big Powers.” Passing through Lebanon, UNSCOP “was reminded of the grim determination of the Arabs to reject any solution which conflicted with their demands.” Much of the Lebanese press “believe[d] that this eighteenth commission of inquiry would” not “prove any better than its predecessors.” Its reliance on partition as the most likely solution linked its fate with that of the Peel Commission of 1937. The British answer to the independence
of India, many newspapers commented, could not “be taken as a precedent” for Palestine and decolonization more broadly.⁵⁶

UNSCOP’s report, submitted on 31 August 1947, further aggravated Lebanese distrust in the international system. The UN committee proposed two solutions to the question of Palestine. First, a majority plan “called for [the] partition of Palestine into [an] Arab State, a Jewish State, and” the internationalization of “the City of Jerusalem” under UN trusteeship, with Arab and Jewish independence obtained “following a transitional period of two years.” Furthermore, 150,000 Jewish immigrants would be immediately welcomed into the proposed Jewish state. UNSCOP’s minority plan, on the other hand, opposed partition, proposing the formation of a bi-national, independent federal state in Palestine. Lebanese public opinion rejected both options outright. “After a long period of ‘travail’ in America, Palestine, Lebanon, and Transjordan,” commented Al-Yom, “[UNSCOP] returned to Geneva to give birth to a Monster… Should international colonial forces think of carrying into effect [its] proposals, they will find out that they have to face not only the Arabs of Palestine, but all of the Arabs and all of the Moslems.” Beirut’s editorialist agreed.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Beirut Summary, 21 May 1947, FO 371/61710; UKNA; Beirut Summary, 18 May 1947, FO 371/61710; UKNA; Secretary of State to President, 16 May 1947, FRUS, 1947, vol. 5, 1085-1086; Beirut Summary, 18 May 1947, FO 371/61710; UKNA; Beirut Summary, 21 July 1947, FO 371/61710; UKNA; and Beirut Summary, 20 August 1947, FO 371/61710; UKNA.

⁵⁷ Editorial Note, 31 August 1947, FRUS, 1947, vol. 5, 1143; Beirut to Foreign Office, 8 September 1947, FO 1018/13; UKNA; “Semaine du 3 au 9 septembre 1947,” Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 1231; MAE, Nantes; and Beirut Summary, 27 October 1947, FO 371/61710; UKNA.
The power of public opinion both in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world posed a serious problem for the Truman administration. U.S. support for partition, and the ensuing creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, at the upcoming UN General Assembly debate would instantly send U.S. prestige in the Arab-Muslim world into a freefall. A “Loss of confidence in the sense of justness and in the impartiality of the United States had been accompanied during the last two years in the Arab world by a growing suspicion of [its] overall motives and by increasing doubt as to [its] national integrity,” Henderson reported. All in all, no solution would please both Arabs and Jews and an extended period of profound bloodshed appeared imminent. Yet partition would project the entire Middle East into a cataclysmic state for decades thereafter. The United States, therefore, needed to choose its position wisely.

The pressure, many Lebanese felt, was now on the United States to contain Zionism and prevent catastrophe in Palestine. At a loss as to how to resolve the Palestinian question, Britain ordered the evacuation of its troops. Both Arab and Zionist forces mobilized immediately. Lebanese society followed suit. According to Le Jour’s Michel Chiha, the United States’ “hour of responsibility in Palestine was up. Justice was calling.” The scales of Themis required balancing. Washington ought to formulate a clear Palestine policy; its Judgment Day was coming. Shortly thereafter, the Truman administration once again failed Lebanese public opinion it supported UNSCOP’s majority plan. Washington instantly became “the main target of attack” in Lebanon. Whereas the UN General Assembly debated the partition of Palestine,

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58 Henderson to Secretary of State, 22 September 1947, FRUS, 1947, vol. 5, 1153-1158.
influential Lebanese newspapers, such as *Beirut* and *Le Jour*, labeled the U.S. decision as “the greatest mistake ever” and one of “severe consequence.” As a UN vote drew closer, “There was no question that America was looked upon” by Lebanese peoples “as Zionist Champion No. 1.” On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181, by a final tally of thirty-three to thirteen and ten abstentions. Such news instantly catapulted Palestine into a “civil war.”

The UN verdict and more importantly, the central part that the United States played in its passage, “profoundly wounded” Lebanon. By facilitating the partition of Palestine and the eventual creation of a Jewish state there, the United States and the world organization that it played a leading role in establishing, the United Nations, abandoned the spirit of decolonization and succumbed to the temptations of empire. The next morning, no Lebanese headline omitted reference to the UN resolution. Yet only a few were able to fit in first impressions, which overflowed with shock. “Yesterday,” lamented *Beirut*, “universalism’s conscience committed suicide at the UN.” *An-Nidal*, for its part, proclaimed that “Since two thirds of the United Nations

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voted in favor of partition yesterday, that is for anarchy, the Arabs [we]re no longer responsible for the war that will inevitably take place."\(^{60}\)

Upon receiving such information, Lebanese society was overtaken with emotions. Many had not actually expected that “such radical a solution” as partition would be passed by the UN General Assembly. According to *Al-Kulliyah*, the AUB alumni association’s monthly magazine, the United States’ “regrettable decision for Palestine came as a severe shock to the student body[,] disturbing the students’ minds, nay, their very souls.”\(^{61}\) On 1 December 1947, Lebanese students, mostly from the AUB, Mukassen College, and the Collège de la Sagesse, organized demonstrations at their respective campuses. They paroled the streets of Beirut for two hours thereafter and repeated cheers about Palestinian Arab rights. A reported 5,000 Lebanese men and women eventually joined rank at the *Place de l’étoile*, sporting Lebanon’s national colors—red, white, and green—and waving the flags of various Arab states. Around the corner, Beirut’s downtown *souks* shut down in a symbol of solidarity. Calls against Zionism, the United States, and the international community could be heard throughout the area. Collectively, the protesters then proceeded to the Grand and Petit Sérail. From there, they made the rounds of the various diplomatic legations. At the United States’ Information Bureau some protesters threw stones at the building,

\(^{60}\) 25 Décembre 1947, Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 807; MAE, Nantes; and “Semaine du 26 novembre au 1 décembre 1947,” Mandat Syrie-Liban; Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 1231; MAE, Nantes. For more on how the United Nations served as an extension of empire, see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 17.

breaking some windows. Elsewhere others attempted to protest at the office of TAPLINE, an American oil company that was in the process of installing a pipeline that connected Arab oilfields to the Mediterranean Sea, at the Metropolitan Hotel. Lebanese police prevented them from doing so. All in all, no major incidents were reported. Similar demonstrations against the UN decision to partition Palestine reportedly took place in the port towns of Saida and Tripoli, as well as other Lebanese localities.\(^6\) The following morning, \textit{L’Orient} concluded that the Palestinian affair was far from over; indeed, it entered a new phase.

Lebanese commentators pointed the finger directly at the Truman administration and projected the United States in an “imperial” light. The U.S. government, first and foremost, rendered Zionism a Lebanese and Arab reality. “The United States,” an editorial in \textit{Le Jour} read, “believed that it would succeed where the British failed.” Washington’s “recklessness” would prove costly, however, as the will of the Arab world was behind Palestine. “The United States,” added Chiha, “managed its support for Zionism as if it were launching a business enterprise.” For more than a quarter of a century, the United States promoted humanitarian principles. Such U.S. propaganda cajoled the Arabs. “Today,” \textit{Ad-Dyar} reasoned, “the mas[k] has come off

and America showed its true face.” It revealed” its “colonial objectives.” Al-Hayat echoed this statement, proclaiming: “Remember that the Jewish state was founded by British imperialism, consolidated by American imperialism, and supported by Russian and French imperialism.”

Lebanese public opinion continued to manifest itself “in the streets.” Whereas Lebanese businessmen re-opened their own shops in Beirut’s marketplace that day, students called for a three-day strike and implored university administrators to shut down campuses. Fearing public clashes, the Lebanese government stepped in and informed all scholarly institutions to close down for the remainder of the week. A noticeable group of young children, in light of such decisions, paraded the streets of Beirut and affirmed that Arab Palestine would not succumb to Zionism and empire. Other student protesters revisited foreign legations and denounced partition.

Elsewhere, a group of Lebanese shabab implored the owners of a popular Beirut movie theater to halt all showings of U.S., British, or French films and to give part of their proceeds to local fund-drives supporting the Palestinian Arab cause. While Lebanese police stepped in to contain public order, the cinema owners gave way to student demands.

Lebanese protests against partition were not limited to the student population. Lebanese lawyers, for instance, registered their opposition and called a national

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meeting to examine myriad measures to adopt against the UN decision. A coalition of
Lebanese political parties, moreover, held extensive discussions on how to unite
Lebanese resistance to partition under one umbrella. Uncoordinated public protests,
many political leaders worried, wrongly focused Lebanese energies. A few rounds of
talks led to the establishment of central committee, reuniting all Lebanese political
parties and organizations, that would officially coordinate Lebanon’s engagements
with Palestine. Shortly thereafter, it opted to denounce and discourage all protests and
strikes in Beirut. It also opened an office to collect Lebanese donations for the
Palestinian Arab cause.65

The Lebanese press, while lamenting recent developments concerning Palestine
and its predictable impact on Lebanon, continued to hold the United States accountable
for their southern neighbor’s predicament. “It was as if peace was prohibited to our
generation,” Chiha wrote. Foreign leaders appeared as always to be dictating
Lebanon’s fate. With Lebanon in a state of acute distress, “we are entitled to ask how
the American government could adopt such a draconian attitude toward the Palestinian
affair.” Once again, Al-Hayat lamented, events demonstrated that understandings of
human rights and justice differed in “East” and “West.” According to Yom, “the Arabs
did not cease their struggle against Britain and France… why must they now fear
America?” “Perhaps what was more shocking” about the United States’ approach to
Palestine was the way it “understood” and processed “Arab questions,” explained
another editorial in Le Jour. “Despite its geographic remoteness, the United States had

65 “Contre Lake Success,” 4 Décembre 1947, L’Orient, page 2; and “Ni grève ni
successfully lined matters up to maximize a rapprochement with the Arab world.” Zionism, however, stormed into the U.S. political scene and persuaded Americans to “lose sight” of the Allied “sacred cause” to abrogate the age of empire and unleash an era of decolonization. Zionist propaganda convinced U.S. state and society that “the Arabs were bluffing and that they would definitely bow in the face of injustice.” The United States and Zionism misconstrued Arab “moderation” and “patience,” portraying it as “a sign of weakness.” A general public sentiment determined that the Arab world could no longer stand idly by and permit such misinformation to continue.66

Post-independence Lebanon actively resisted imperialism in Palestine in a variety of ways. Contrary to an appeal against public protests by leading political figures, many Lebanese continued to showcase their opposition to partition in streets across Lebanon. On 4 December 1947, the population of southern town of Tyre rallied in favor of Arab Palestine. Elsewhere, military volunteer recruiting stations quickly erected throughout Lebanon, with the notable inclusion of a site on the AUB campus. Within the first week of registration, a reported 538 people signed up at the AUB site. Students and faculty reportedly also raised 3,419 pounds and gave it to the Treasurer of the Permanent Palestine Office in Beirut. The Union of Lebanese taxi drivers, moreover, held private talks on how to participate in the Palestinian Arab cause. Rather than strike, they opted to encourage the Lebanese government to implement an additional tax on gasoline as a means to collect funds for Arab efforts in Palestine.

Lebanese taxi drivers were also prepared to volunteer their services to aid military efforts.⁶⁷

Lebanon physically and financially prepared for a war in Palestine that it blamed on the United States. The Lebanese public sphere’s “anti-American tone,” reported a British officer, “was maintained at a very high crescendo all through the month.” The United States betrayed not only Lebanon, but also itself, many Lebanese thought. One political commentator went as far as asking: “What if Roosevelt was still alive?” His successor had been instrumental in pressuring the United Nations to abandon its moral foundations, inherent in the ideals of the Atlantic Charter, and adopt partition. Truman’s weak character, which differed tremendously from that of Roosevelt, fixed on U.S. elections, rather than the grandeur of lasting peace in the world. What did the Arab world do to the United States to deserve such treatment? Arab peoples, until recent developments concerning the “Palestinian drama,” placed its hope in U.S. state and society. Americans, it appeared, did not understand the Palestinian Arab cause. “If Roosevelt were alive, things would have taken place differently. The great U.S. president” saved the world from Fascism and embodied democracy. He would not have let an election get in the way of his greater ambition of world peace. “It [wa]s with profound sadness and regret,” the editorial added, “that the White House adopt a pro-Jewish and anti-Arab policy.”⁶⁸


Never had Lebanon and the United States been at such great odds with each other. Lebanon unanimously stood behind the Arab cause, and as a result, against U.S. foreign policy. A new era emerged in the Middle East; rather than signaling the universal end of empires that appeared imminent, contemporary times were mired by a sudden U.S.-Arab divergence. That evening, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies discussed Lebanon’s formal engagement concerning Arab war efforts in Palestine. “Palestine,” Lebanese deputy Henri Pharaon declared, “must be convinced that Lebanese state and society will hold all of its commitments toward it, since the affairs of Palestine [were] those of Lebanon before being those of other Arab countries.” Partition presented “a direct threat to our lands, our homes, and our liberties.” Lebanese deputy Habib abi-Chahla deplored the United States “for alienating its liberal traditions.”69 The Arab world, Lebanese felt, did not rid itself of empire. Instead, it lost a major inspiration and sponsor of self-determination.

In an effort to redress its image, on 5 December 1947, the United States invoked an arms embargo on all shipments to both Arab states and the Jewish community of Palestine. U.S. munitions, in this case, would not harm Arabs or Zionists and Washington, Truman insisted, would not have blood on its hands. Lebanese public opinion nonetheless remained fundamentally at odds with U.S. policy toward Palestine. But many refused to let the latter sour its long-lasting relationship with Americans, as well as its sincere high regard for the AUB. Beirut’s Nsouli, in his column, paid homage to the U.S.-chartered institution that was so central to the core of Lebanon’s socio-political fabric. The AUB, Nsouli reminded readers, whole-heartedly

opposed partition and remained committed to fostering “the Arab world’s national and cultural renaissance.” But all talk of the legacy of the United States in Lebanon reverted back to a contemporary state of disillusionment with Washington. The Truman administration, unlike its predecessors, abandoned it outright. One could only hope, he concluded, “the sincere voices at the American University of Beirut will be heard by the United States and that justice will eventually overcome personal interests.” Some Lebanese could not hold back their frustrations, however, and that night, two firecrackers were set on the premises on the U.S. legation. “Ten days have passed since the partition vote, ten full days that demonstrated the extent of Arab determination,” concluded an editorial in Le Jour. “Washington was now well aware that the Arabs were not bluffing and that its imprudent policy engendered troubles in the region.” Past British lessons in the Middle East escaped U.S. decision-makers. History, many Lebanese thought, would surely repeat itself.70

In light of a recent wave of overnight incidents across Beirut, the Lebanese government suspended all rights to public protest. Many feared that Lebanese society was on the verge of chaos, leading one political commentator to bluntly write: “We are entering into a difficult period.” On 10 December 1947, the Lebanese Mufti issued a fatwa, calling all Lebanese Muslims to take part in a jihad to save Arab Palestine. “Force,” Sheikh Toufik Khaled insisted, “constituted the last recourse to defend the Holy Land,” that is Jerusalem, the third holiest site in Islam, “at a moment where a

majority of powers at the [UN] turned a deaf ear to calls for rights, peace and reason expressed by the Arabs.” Zionism “threatened the Arabs—Muslims and Christians—of their nationalism, their religions, their language, their lands, their possessions, their life, and their future.” “The [el-]Solh Cabinet,” a French diplomatic note opined, “seemed imprisoned by its extremist attitude toward the Palestinian affair.” Adopted merely to please Lebanese public opinion and divert public attentions away from faltering internal affairs, Lebanon’s aggressive support for Palestinian Arabs restricted its government to “a position of rebuttal and fear of being accused of mildness, as well as undermining Arab mobilization.” According to French officials, el-Solh kept his cabinet in power simply by fanaticizing public agitation regarding Palestine, which now began to haunt his government. “The Lebanese government gave all appearances of being overtaken by events.”

Lebanon was not the only Arab state handcuffed by public opinion. An Arab League conference, held in Cairo from 8-17 December 1947, reunited Arab heads-of-state in an effort to formulate a cohesive regional Arab policy toward the civil war in Palestine and outline the foundations for a potential coordinated military initiative following full British withdrawal. On a psychological level, a joint Arab intervention seemed logical, but populism, inter-Arab rivalries, and logistics presented Arab officials with grave problems. Newly independent states, like Lebanon, had yet to

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develop a respectable military infrastructure. With a U.S. arms embargo in full effect, it proved difficult to find substantial equipment and prepare for a serious campaign. King ‘Abdullah’s relentless insistence on his Greater Syria scheme as a solution to the Palestinian problem, moreover, fostered severe mistrust. Arab statesmen were hesitant to subordinate their principal lines of national defense to Abdullah’s command, whose army was by far the most organized and capable Arab military force in the region. This said, something had to be done to aid Palestinian Arabs, project Arab unity, and mollify the power of Arab public opinion. Rather than make concrete advances on a coordinated Arab League military intervention, Arab statesmen “agreed to form a volunteer force, the Arab Liberation Army, as well as contribute materials and funds to the local Arab war effort” in Palestine.\textsuperscript{72}

While the Cairo Conference took place and Arab peoples anxiously awaited its results, a detailed intelligence report found its way onto the U.S. president’s Resolute desk in the Oval Office. Preoccupied with other urgent matters, Truman eventually got to it on 16 December and was suddenly confronted with the realities of empire and decolonization in the Arab world. Local Arab protests, through the intelligence memorandum, found their way into the White House. The report forecasted “the future of U.S.-Arab relations” in light of the passing of UN Resolution 181. “In the two weeks since the UN recommended partition, popular reactions throughout the Arab world,” including Lebanon, “resulted in several” institutional setbacks. A group of “fanatic Arabs” was bent on curtailing the U.S. presence in the Middle East. Worse yet, local perceptions of U.S. global power were in the process of radical change. “The

\textsuperscript{72} Labelle, “‘The Only Thorn’,” 272.
substantial good will that had been built up for the United States in the Arab world the past hundred years by missionaries, educators, diplomats, technical specialists, and more lately business men and oil companies had been almost entirely dissipated during the past few months,” relayed the report. “This good will had been lost not primarily because of U.S. concurrence in a [UN] decision [inimical] to” Arab public opinion, “but because the Arabs [were] convinced that this decision represented an abandonment by the United States of those idealistic principles of liberty, justice, and democracy initiated by the United States in the Atlantic Charter, the Charter of the United Nations, and in the Constitution of the United States—principles which have been ably demonstrated by those Americans who have lived and worked with the Arabs in the Near East.” U.S. support for Zionism and the partitioning of Palestine, read the U.S. president, led the Arab world “to think that the United States [was] more interested in the Zionists than in its own security.” Perceived U.S. nonchalance toward its legacy in the Arab world, existing national interests, and Arab human rights resulted in the current state of Arab “bitter disillusionment and bewildered incomprehension.”

The power of U.S. exceptionalism betrayed the Arab world. Consequently, it was almost impossible to predict prospective developments.

The U.S. government, for whatever reason, had not anticipated such a brutal blowback in the Arab world. In a private conversation with British officials in London, U.S. secretary of state George Marshall “explained that Arab reactions had been even worse than we had expected.” Countless “disturbing” reports from allover poured into

73 No Author, 10 December 1947, Harry S. Truman Papers; Naval Aide to the President Files, 1945-53; Box 10; File: Arabian Relations (Dec. 10, 1947); HSTL.
the State Department. “The situation m[ay] blow up throughout the Middle East with serious reactions on the Americans as well as ourselves,” noted a British official. Marshall insisted that his government “would keep a careful watch.”

In early February 1948, Truman held a private, fifteen-minute conversation with Wadsworth, now U.S. representative in Iraq, in the Oval Office. In light of recent events, Wadsworth wrote a paper on Arab public sentiment that met the U.S. president’s approval. Truman told him that “The situation was certainly one for concern. He had kept in close touch... He himself saw alike with the State Department.” The White House worked on “the whole problem... actively and constructively. The basic trouble was and had been that of bullheadedness and fanaticism constantly interfered.” The U.S. president could not refrain himself from being utterly frustrated by the Palestinian affair. In his mind, the AACOI report outlined a viable framework for peace.

Discarding the reasons behind the Arab world’s opposition to the report, Truman exclaimed: “There had been a unanimous report.” U.S. efforts “failed because of British bullheadedness and the fanaticism of our New York Jews. The British were still being bullheaded and American Jews were still being fanatic about it.”

Wadsworth, at this time, insisted that partition was “unworkable.” Truman responded “that [it] was for the United Nations to decide, in light of experience.” The United States needed to objectively keep its distance. “The situation was bad,” he repeated, “and there was, as he had said, too much fanaticism.”

According to Wadsworth, the arms embargo did not go far enough in projecting U.S. non-involvement. “The Arabs’ keenest fear today,” he explained, “was

74 Note, 24 December 1947, FO 371/61583; UKNA.
that we, under Zionist pressures, would act unilaterally and send troops independently of the United Nations… We won’t,” the U.S. president answered, “but they (the Arabs) must first assure me, before I can give them any categoric promises that they won’t either.”

This, however, was highly unlikely, as the power Arab public opinion made Arab intervention inescapable, much like the prospect of U.S. military involvement. George Kennan’s Policy Planning Staff (PPS) supported Wadsworth’s claim and advocated the White House to resist domestic “pressures… which impel[led it] toward a position where [it] would shoulder major responsibilities for the maintenance, and even the expansion, of a Jewish state in Palestine.” U.S. policy concerning Palestine, therefore, “should be dominated by the determination to avoid being impelled along this path.” This was its best option at salvaging U.S. national security and mollifying “the great majority of the inhabitants of the Middle Eastern area.” Anything else “would further mean a review of our entire military and political policy” there.

As British withdrawal from Palestine approached and the likelihood of a regional war grew, the United States seriously reconsidered its public support for partition. An Arab-Zionist war, it seemed, presented no benefit to the Truman administration. Partition, contrary to previous high-level thinking, was no longer a viable option in Palestine. Arab public opinion made this clear. That said, the United States gave many signs of wanting to abandon partition altogether. Despite numerous calls by presidential consultant Clark Clifford and others not to appear “in the

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ridiculous role of trembling before threats of a few nomadic desert tribes,” Truman approved U.S. initiatives to promote the idea of UN trusteeship. On 19 March 1948, the U.S. representative to the United Nations, relayed Washington’s conviction “that a temporary trusteeship for Palestine should be established under the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations,” which “would be without prejudice to the rights, claims, or position of the parties concerned or to the character of the eventual political settlement which” the United States “hope[d] c[ould] be achieved without long delay.”

UN resolution 181, the United States publicly declared, could not succeed.

Whereas the “new orientation” in U.S. policy engendered much controversy at home, it received mixed reviews in Lebanon and the Arab world as a whole. In the short term, U.S. officers reported Lebanese public opinion as being “uniformly favorable, although somewhat reserved and cynical.” Whereas the perceived desertion of partition was well received, temporary trusteeship drew much skepticism and “suspicion.” Trusteeship, after all, did not mean full independence. The rights of Palestinian Arabs would still be ignored. Beirut openly congratulated “America on this step” and expressed “hope” that “it will abandon the proposal for trusteeship because we fear the temporary may become permanent.” Al-Talagraf, for its part, sternly contended: “We are not among those who are warmly optimistic. We oppose trusteeship.” Some newspapers, like Al-Hayat, rushed to proclaim victory. “America’s conscience has awakened,” one of its editorials read. Lebanese society refused “to

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77 Beirut to Secretary of State, 2 March 1948, RG 84; Beirut Legation and Embassy, General Records; Box 124; NARA; Clifford to President, 8 March 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 690-696; Memorandum, 6 March 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 687-689; and “The US proposes temporary trusteeship,” 19 March 1948, Israel’s Foreign Relations, vol. 1, Document 10.
believe that material considerations alone motivated the United States government. We refuse to say with others that a handful of oil, gold, and a seat of worldly powers could kill the conscience of a nation that has never been known to violate the rights of any country or cause human butchery.” The United States was unlike other Western nations. “Those holding the fate of nations in their hands”, it opined, “still contain, in their hearts, evidence of pure feeling.” Comments like the last were prominent in the Lebanese public sphere at this time, leading many in the U.S. legation to believe “that ‘the reservoir of good will’ was filling up again.”

Yet whatever confidence Lebanese peoples held for U.S. exceptionalism dwindled away following another U.S. press conference. In an attempt to allay domestic fervor, Truman explained “that he sought a trusteeship as a temporary measure, designed to stabilize Palestine from the expiration of the mandate on 15 May until partition could be implemented.” Partition, many Lebanese concluded, remained the end goal of U.S. diplomacy, not Arab rights. The United States “future intentions,” once again, appeared in doubt. A visibly embarrassed and distraught Al-Hayat, which openly celebrated the United States a week prior, did not hold back in bemoaning Washington’s betrayal. “The Arabs are not such fools,” it proclaimed. U.S. ambivalence further cultivated Lebanese distrust. The newspaper, as a result, adopted intransigence, claiming “We shall not throw down our arms. We shall not hold a truce. We shall not accept trusteeship until we are sure that partition is irrevocably

78 Beirut Summary, 29 April 1948, FO 371/68489; UKNA; Beirut to Secretary of State, 23 March 1948, RG 84; Beirut Legation and Embassy, General Records; Box 124; NARA; and Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 25 March 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israeli Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 16. For more on the controversy surrounding the U.S. decision to promote trusteeship, see Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, 47.
abandoned, and that trusteeship is an interval landing to independence, and not to partition.” An-Nahar assured that ensuing UN initiatives would prove uneventful. Beirut agreed, as temporary trusteeship “‘ha[d] been nipped in the bud’ by the absolute refusal of the Arabs to consider any solution other than [the] independence of Palestine as an Arab State.” The Arab world would not be cajoled by “diplomatic tricks and maneuvers.”

While discussions over Palestine continued at the United Nations, Zionism’s leadership determined that, in light of this, it was time to take matters into its own hands. The Jewish Agency ordered forces in Palestine to undertake an intensive military campaign to takeover the areas previously assigned to a Jewish state under partition. Zionist troops, at this time, threw caution to the wind and destroyed entire Palestinian Arab villages, regardless of whether local inhabitants surrendered or not. Zionist ethnic cleansing garnered the dire attention of the Arab world, especially following what the latter deemed as the massacre of Deir Yassin. On 9 April 1948, this Arab village located west of Jerusalem was the victim of a brutal Zionist military assault as “the Jewish soldiers sprayed the houses with machine-gun fire, killing many of the inhabitants. The remaining villagers were then gathered in one place and murdered in cold blood, their bodies abused while a number of women were raped and

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79 Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, 47; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 31 March 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israeli Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 16; and Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 8 April 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israeli Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 16.
then killed.” Palestinian Arab refugees suddenly poured into neighboring Arab states in unprecedented numbers, reaching a reported 20,000 in Lebanon.  

Palestine’s plight virtually dominated the Lebanese public sphere, as accounts of Deir Yassin and others atrocities flooded local media. Such news only heightened general Lebanese obduracy vis-à-vis a prospective internationally-orchestrated Arab-Zionist compromise. *Al-Hayat* went as far as declaring, “The Arab world will explode when it sees its women and children being slaughtered like sheep.” The “last word” belonged to the “Arabs.” Lebanese public opinion, once again, intensified. The population of Beirut concurred and called “a city-wide strike” for 16 April to commemorate the “Massacre of the innocents.” U.S. officers reported, “Bands of youth roamed the streets to ensure the closing of all shops. Traffic downtown was almost at a standstill.” Peaceful demonstrations took place all over the city. The Najjadeh, a Muslim youth organization, petitioned the U.S. legation. “The brutal and barbaric atrocities perpetuated by Jewish terrorists on Arab men, women and children in Deir Yassin and elsewhere in Palestine,” the message read, “should rouse human conscience against the Zionist criminals who desire to build up a State on a foundation of [the] skulls of infants and babies.” The Arab world neared “its end… [I]t will extremely difficult to control a natural out-burst of the general Lebanese public.”

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80 Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 88-90; and Beirut Summary, 28 May 1948, FO 371/68489; UKNA.

81 Chayla à Bidault, 19 Avril 1948, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 258; MAE, Nantes; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 14 April 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israeli Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 16; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 21 April 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israeli Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 16; Beirut to Secretary of State, 21 April 1948, RG 84; Beirut
Public pressure was so great that the Lebanese government had no other choice but to dedicate its little military capacity to the defense of Arab Palestine. Beirut pulled out all stops to satisfy public opinion and divert antagonisms. Such efforts began with the imposition of a news censorship on all information related to Palestinian developments. In national radio address, el-Khoury directly addressed popular discontent. “Lebanese. You have the right to be uneasy and circumspect, but there is no reason why you should be pessimistic or unjust toward your leaders,” declared the Lebanese president. “If the present juncture imposes a duty upon you, it is that of keeping cool, of being patient and calm so that the Government can consecrate all of its energies for the defense of Palestine, so that it can dam up, with the help of brother states, the Zionist flood in a country which has been and which will remain, with the help of God, an Arab entity.” The way to ameliorate Arab war efforts was to help and console Palestinian Arab refugees. “Open your hearts, therefore, and your homes, your churches and mosques, your schools and convents to them. Let them feel as much at home among us as they would feel in their own homes.” Arab governments, for their part, committed themselves “to fight and to vanquish under divine protection.” In early May, an official Lebanese communiqué informed its constituents that “some Lebanese troops moved to [the] frontier[,] but that they had specific orders against crossing over into Palestine or using their arms from Lebanese territory against persons in Palestine.”

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82 Legation and Embassy, General Records; Box 124; NARA; and Letter, 21 April 1948, RG 84; Beirut Legation and Embassy, General Records; Box 124; NARA.

82 Beirut Summary, 28 May 1948, FO 371/68489; UKNA; Beirut to Secretary of State, 27 April 1948, RG 84; Beirut Legation and Embassy, General Records; Box 124;
Military mobilization succeeded somewhat in tempering local hostility toward Beirut. Lebanese peoples diverted the crux of their critiques onto the international community and the United States in particular. The latter, above all, made an Arab-Zionist war in Palestine seem unavoidable. The “humiliation which Arabs have suffered can be wiped only in blood,” avowed Beirut. “The new grand conspiracy” around U.S. promotion of trusteeship “was woven,” exclaimed another Lebanese newspaper. “But it was woven with gossamer and could not be hidden from the Arab masses!” The placement of Palestine under the UN Trusteeship Council positioned it as essentially being an “American and British trusteeship,” since they controlled the UN branch. Trusteeship thus signified the “firm establishment of occupation and imperialism” in Palestine “until a propitious moment arrive[d] for imposing a new solution, which would perpetuate an imperialistic control” that “w[ould] naturally be called ‘independence’.” The United States was purposely misleading the Arab world and re-orchestrating a framework for partition. It was “indeed the greatest deception against the Arab peoples since the end of the second world war.”

Lebanese public opinion was psychologically prepared for war. Beirut, for instance, flatly insisted that Palestine “will not be the ‘land of Israel’, but a grave for Israel.” Ad-Diyar projected itself as “the editorial martyr: ‘We wish to die.’ And to the Arab leaders: ‘Lead us or get out of the way’.” An-Nahar proclaimed 15 May “the day

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NARA; and Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 2 May 1948, The Palestine Reference Files of Dean Rusk and Robert McClintock, 1947-1949; Reel 3.

83 Chayla à Bidault, 4 Mai 1948, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 258; MAE, Nantes; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 4 May 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israeli Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 17; and Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 5 May 1948, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 24; NARA.
of truth in the Palestinian battle.” Leadership, Beirut deemed, was its only option. On 12 May, a mere two days before the complete British withdrawal from Palestine, the Arab League and its members finally agreed on the parameters of a joint, coordinated military campaign in Palestine. The Lebanese government “had virtually no choice but to follow suit.” Besides, “going to war suited the leaders’ personal political interests.”

The United States was now in yet another difficult predicament, as Arab forces mobilized and rumors circulated in Washington that the Jewish Agency intended to declare the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine. On 12 May, Truman called a White House meeting “because he was seriously concerned as to what might happen in Palestine.” Clifford, at this time, pressed the president to extend full recognition toward a Jewish state. The State Department disagreed, as “such a move would be injurious to the prestige of the President” and would seem like “a very transparent attempt to win the Jewish vote.” According to a U.S. undersecretary of state Robert Lovett, “it would lose more votes than it would gain.” George Marshall, for his part, confided to Truman “that, speaking objectively, [he] could not help but think that the suggestions made by Clifford were wrong.” After an extended discussion, a confounded U.S. president avowed “that he was fully aware of the difficulties and dangers in the situation, to say nothing of the political risks involved which he, himself, would run.”

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84 Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 12 May 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israeli Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 17; Ghassan Tueni, 12 May 1948, An Nahar, page 1; Zisser, Lebanon, 145; and Eugene Rogan, The Arabs, 263.

85 Memorandum of Conversation, 12 May 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 972-976.
The question of recognition was a fragile and much-contemplated one. Truman, on the morning of 14 May, opted for recognition immediately following the declaration of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, “if it was set up.” Once Clifford relayed this decision, Lovett declared “that it was hard for [him] to believe that one day could make so much difference and emphasized the tremendous reaction which would take place in the Arab world.” The United States’ presence in the Middle East and its “many years of hard work” were in serious peril. Truman’s “political advisers,” Lovett concluded, “having failed last Wednesday afternoon to make the President a father of a new state, have determined at least to make him the midwife.” News of the pending birth of Israel reached the White House shortly before the deadline for the complete British evacuation of Palestine, scheduled for midnight local time on 15 May, which converted to 6 p.m. on 14 May in Washington. “At about twenty minutes to six” Lovett “was told that the President was going to make the announcement shortly after six o’clock.”

Eleven minutes after the Jewish Agency announced the creation of the provisional government of Israel, the United States publicly extended de facto recognition. News of U.S. recognition “dropped a bomb” on the United Nations, which was in the middle of discussions regarding trusteeship in Palestine. A “surprised” Charles Malik, the Lebanese delegate at the United Nations, immediately castigated so-called U.S. promises of neutrality extended to Arab states.

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and could not conceal his “profound frustration.” The U.S. government once again delivered an unexpected *volte-face*.\(^8\)

Back in Lebanon, state and society focused on their engagement in the first Arab-Israeli war and deemed that nothing would prevent the Arab world from liberating Palestine. Arab peoples, many Lebanese believed, often met foreign conquest, whether it was the Crusades, the Ottomans, or European occupiers, but they succeeded in their resistance. The formation of Jewish state was another chapter in the Arab struggle against empire. Decolonization, this time around, they deemed, promised an inevitable Arab renaissance. “Today,” affirmed *Al-Hayat*, “we commence a fight that will last until the last Zionist is chased from the Holy Land.” War in Palestine, explained *Ad-Diyar*, represented “the Arab world’s right to affirm its sovereignty, to live with dignity, and to demonstrate to the world that it was worthy of self-determination and respect.” Lebanon went to war in Palestine to “safeguard its independence and defend its rightful place within the concert of nations.” Lebanese peoples rallied behind their government’s military involvement, however limited. The Arab cause in Palestine was just. The Arab League intervention restricted Lebanese activities “to the comparatively passive role of containing Jewish troops along the Lebanese frontier.” Whereas the population had long prepared itself psychologically, the Lebanese military bogged itself in logistical ineptitude. “In effect,” explains

Matthew Hughes, “Lebanon had one infantry brigade with limited support arms for the war with Israel.”

Truman’s decision to formally recognize the state of Israel, many Lebanese reasoned, was far from a humanitarian one. Instead, it appeared inherently political. The U.S. legation in Beirut reported that “American de facto recognition of the state of Israel brought forth from the Beirut press the most bitter and condemnatory language yet used in the long controversy over Palestine.” Truman’s decision resulted in Washington’s replacement of London “as target number one for the full wrath of editorialists.” Worse yet, “Papers hitherto friendly to America led the press in its attack, particularly against the President.” “From Lincoln to Roosevelt,” wrote a Lebanese editorialist, “the American Presidential Chair has always been the symbol of freedom, but now in order to secure Jewish votes, Truman has forgotten all humanitarian principles and thrown shame on the so-called ‘first’ democracy.” “For once,” a British report explained, “papers of all political colours have combined, a rare thing in Lebanon, to show their disappointment, anger and feeling of betrayal at the American attitude.”

The power of U.S. exceptionalism in Lebanon further engendered local disillusionment. The elusive prospect of decolonization was not as natural and

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89 “Presse libanaise arabe d’aujourd’hui,” 15 Mai 1948, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 258; MAE, Nantes; Beirut Summary, 2 July 1948, FO 371/68489; UKNA; Rogan, The Arabs, 263; and Hughes, “Lebanon’s Armed Forces and the Arab-Israeli War, 1948-49,” 26-27.

90 Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 20 May 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 17; Beirut to Foreign Office, 22 May 1948, FO 371/68494; UKNA; and Beirut Summary, 2 July 1948, FO 371/68489; UKNA.
guaranteed as the United States had made it out to be. The Arab world did “not know
how to interpret the attitude of the American President, who first recommended
partition, then abandoned it, and now accepts it with a recognition which he
proclaimed at the first moment following the proclamation of a Jewish state,”
explained Beirut. U.S. policy regarding Palestine “has baffled us. We no longer know
what attitude to take towards a power which upholds today what it abrogated
yesterday.” The same could be said of U.S. anti-colonialism, as its decision blatantly
disregarded the basic Arab human right to self-determination and supported Lebanese
perceptions of empire in a post-independence era. “America has taken off the mask,”
conceded Ad-Diyar. “Do the faces of the statesmen blush when Zionism is their master
and they sacrifice the interests of their country for the sake of Zionism?” One thing
was certain: “We shall never forget. We shall remember the victims who are falling
now and who will fall on the field of struggle and honor, for whom America is
responsible.” Al-Hayat, which U.S. officers labeled as “the foremost advocate of
cooperation with the West,” declared its utter disappointment toward “the governing
mentality in the United States. If we cannot increase the votes of this or that party in
the presidential elections, we can tip the scales of the international struggle in the
Middle East.” Domestic politics was at the root of U.S. betrayal. “May God Bless you,
Mr. Truman, with the votes of the Jews of New York and their dollars.” “President
Truman thought about the electoral campaign,” added Le Jour, “while Palestine was
aflame and in blood.”91

91 Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 20 May 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israel Internal
Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 17; and K.G., “Fauteurs de désordre,” 18
Mai 1948, Le Jour, page 1.
Public antagonism was so high in Lebanon that AUB president Archie Crawford felt the need to send identical letters to the U.S. legation and the Lebanese press, outlining the university’s position. The AUB, after all, was the primary symbol of U.S. modernity in Lebanon. Crawford and U.S. members of the AUB faculty, in the letter, conveyed their own dissatisfaction vis-à-vis Washington’s Palestine policy and a rising popular feeling in Lebanon that U.S. state and society refused to comprehend and accept Arab and Lebanese political aspirations. “In our opinion,” the letter read, “a peaceful solution has been made more difficult, the best interests of the United States in this area have been injured and [the] prestige and good faith of our country as [a] champion of peace, mutual respect and justice have been greatly jeopardized.” Chiha agreed, commenting that the AUB president’s letter “certainly deserved attention.” Yet Lebanon could not help but express bewilderment at the White House’s persistent neglect of “one of the great U.S. institutions in the Near East[’s]” expertise regarding Palestine and its impact on the Arab world. “The formidable proximity and inevitably effervescent and sprawling nature of the ‘Jewish state’ imperiled, in Lebanon, the civilization and the spiritual fruits that the United States itself enjoyed,” Chiha contended.92

From the onset of the Arab League’s intervention, security along the border between Lebanon and northern Palestine remained precarious. As noted above, Lebanon’s limited military resources, a mere two thousands troops “with very little

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92 “Une protestation du Président de l’Université Américaine de Beyrouth,” 20 Mai 1948, Le Jour, page 2; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 20 May 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 17; and M.C., “Protestation américaine,” 21 Mai 1948, Le Jour, page 1.
armor and artillery,” engaged in a strictly defensive border protection mission.

Whereas Israel dedicated the brunt of its forces to eastern campaigns against Jordan and southwestern ones against Egypt, it nonetheless devoted notable military energies to the north. According to the U.S. legation in Beirut, “frequent Jewish raids into Lebanon” occurred during the first two weeks of war, “causing considerable damage.” The sufferings of southern Lebanese border towns further aggravated public opinion, lent additional credence to the popular belief that Israel was an imperialist entity, and jeopardized the prospects of peace, let alone a truce. The Lebanese government, alongside its fellow members of the Arab League, barely withstood Israeli military operations. After much debate, Beirut hesitantly agreed to a UN-sanctioned four-week cease-fire with Israel, despite the predictable disapproval of the Lebanese population. Scheduled to commence on 11 June, the cease-fire met much popular skepticism and discontent. A mere three days after its enactment, the Lebanese government formally charged Israel with “continued violation” along its southern frontier. Ar-Rawwad shortly thereafter deemed “international control a myth.”

As UN directed peace talks ensued and Lebanese fears of Israeli expansion intensified, the United States made the untimely decision of announcing its exchange of diplomatic representatives with the Jewish state. The Lebanese public sphere

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93 Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 25 May 1948, The Palestine Reference Files of Dean Rusk and Robert McClintock, 1947-1949; Reel 10; Editorial Note, 1 June 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 1085-1086; Editorial Note, 7 June 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 1102; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 16 June 1948, The Palestine Reference Files of Dean Rusk and Robert McClintock, 1947-1949; Reel 11; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 14 June 1948, The Palestine Reference Files of Dean Rusk and Robert McClintock, 1947-1949; Reel 11; and Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 1 July 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949; Reel 18.
interpreted U.S. diplomacy toward Israel as a form of tacit aid of its military initiatives and accused both of violating the cease-fire. Rather than keeping Israel and unlawful U.S. Zionist aid in check, the U.S. government did nothing but passively extend a carte blanche. “The White House,” Al-Hayat explained, “does not understand the meaning of truce… The United States sees nothing but elections, cares for nothing but votes.” Meanwhile, on 25 June, Beirut published an editorial that caught the attention of the U.S. legation. Written in the form of an open letter to the U.S. diplomatic representative, Lowell C. Pinkerson, the op-ed, entitled “One Dollar to Kill an Arab,” asked that the U.S. president be made aware of Lebanese disillusionment. Simply put, Lebanese peoples felt that the United States sold them and their special relationship out for the so-called Jewish vote. “When you arrive, and look at the Statue of Liberty,” Beirut contended, “you will be confronted with large signboards on which the following statement appears in big letters: “One Dollar to Kill an Arab!” Truman, in the midst of a re-election campaign, disregarded Arab human rights and turned a blind eye to international law in exchange for Jewish financial support. “Will you please tell President Truman, lord of the White House, that his policy has been wrong, from the American point of view first, and secondly from the human and Arab point of view?” U.S. funds were supposed to be used for positive development, as was the case with the AUB, not bloodshed. After that, “do not fail to tell the President that the friendship of the Arabs is of no more value than that of the Jews… Every dollar that an American contributes for the killing of an Arab is a vile dollar.”

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94 Beirut to Foreign Office, 29 June 1948, FO 371/68494; UKNA; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 1 July 1948, RG 59; Palestine-Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign
Notwithstanding endless UN efforts to broker a peace between the Arab states and Israel, its four-week cease-fire expired on 8 July. As it turned out, the formal cessation of hostilities tactically benefited Israel by allowing it to amass “more and better equipment than when [the] truce began” and transform its “semi legal underground militia into a full-fledged army.” The same could not be said for Lebanon and the other Arab states, however. According to a U.S. official, the “Arabs apparently found themselves in [a] dilemma.” Arab governments were well aware of both their incapacity to defeat, let alone hold, Israeli forces, as well as their inability to hold back popular outrage in light of peace, which would project Arab tolerance toward empire and the encroachment of Palestinian Arab human rights. The continuing presence of a Jewish state alone presented a “risk [of being] overthrown by resentful masses.” In the case of outright Arab military defeat, a similar outcome was highly likely. Yet, in that situation, many Arab statesmen reportedly contended that “blame could be thrown on America for [its] support and assistance to [the] Jews and on Great Britain for its refusal under American pressure to honor treaty commitments to supply arms.” Knowing full well that the “success of the Arab campaign was doubtful,” Arab governments re-engaged in war with the hope of buying time to prepare their populations for defeat.96

95 Macdonald to Secretary of State, 8 July 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 1201; and Morris, Righteous Victims, 191.

Time, however, was not their side. The second round of the first Arab-Israeli war was not a long one. After only ten days of hostilities, the belligerents agreed on another truce that lasted roughly three months. Instantaneous military setbacks overwhelmed Arab forces on all fronts and Israel expanded its area of control, incorporating a large part of Western Galilee that bordered Lebanon and was originally allocated to Palestinian Arabs under UN partition. This turn-of-events “produced an outburst of indignation in the” Lebanese “press against the Arab governments and individual leaders.” The Lebanese, alongside the remainder of the Arab world, felt misled by their own statesmen. Many perceived “that the liberation of Palestine and the defeat of Zionism would be accomplished in a matter of weeks, whereas it was now apparent that the Arab States had never been sufficiently well prepared to achieve a quick victory.” A U.S. official concluded, “had committed themselves so strongly and raised [the] hopes of the masses so high through [the] press and other media as to incur considerable personal risk by [a] withdrawal from current Palestine policy at least without period of preparation of public opinion.” The popular perception of defeat in Palestine would likely result in the “conceivable overthrow [of] administrations with consequent disorders.”

The Lebanese public, at this time, relentlessly blamed the Arab heads of state for Palestinian Arab shortcomings. An Arab defeat in Palestine appeared imminent. In


98 Beirut to Foreign Office, 31 July 1948, FO 371/68494; UKNA.

99 Patterson to Secretary of State, 17 July 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 1228-1230.
late July, a French report relayed that between 35,000 and 50,000 Palestinian refugees now found themselves on Lebanese soil, with more expected to be en route. The increasing presence of these distraught peoples, no to mention their resulting toll on Lebanese society and infrastructure, served as blatant proof of Zionism’s threat to Lebanese independence. Myriad Israeli threats “to extend Jewish military operations beyond the Palestinian borders” led Lebanese leaders to forewarn against “the dangers of Zionist expansionist ideas” and convey concern that “Lebanon would be the first objective of a new Zionist offensive.” Perhaps most importantly, it reminded Lebanese peoples of the Arab world’s failure to thwart empire, defend its basic right to self-determination, and solidify an Arab renaissance as a result of decolonization.

Following the publication of a highly influential essay by AUB Vice-President and Arabist intellectual Constantine Zurayk, entitled Ma’nat al-Nakba, or the Meaning of Disaster, many Lebanese referred to the stunning Arab loss in Palestine as just that: a disaster. Written immediately following the first UN cease-fire and published in Beirut in August 1948, the “hugely influential” Ma’nat al-Nakba “sum[med] up most of the feelings and attitudes” of Arab peoples vis-à-vis Palestine. “The defeat of the Arabs in Palestine,” Zurayk explained, “[wa]s no simple setback or light, passing evil. It [wa]s a disaster in every sense of the world and one of the harshest of the trials and tribulations with which the Arabs ha[d] been afflicted throughout their long history.” It was now up to the Arab peoples to introspectively reflect upon their loss. According to

100 Chayla à Bidault, 27 Juillet 1948, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 258; MAE, Nantes.

101 Beirut to Foreign Office, 4 August 1948, FO 371/68494; UKNA; and Beirut Summary, 19 August 1948, FO 371/68494; UKNA.
Zurayk, who obtained a Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1930 under the supervision of well-known Arab American Philip Hitti, empire remained at the root of all problems in Palestine and the only way to overcome it was through Arab unity. Disunity, after all, prevented Arabs from being victorious in the first Arab-Israeli war and realizing their ultimate ambition: the birth of Arab nations characterized by complete independence. Many states, for which the United States topped the list, supported Zionism and, as a result, stood against Arab self-governing ambitions. “There [wa]s no doubt that these” states “h[ad] been, and [we]re hostile to us,” he declared. Zionism and the presence of the state of Israel in Palestine represented empire in its totality. “The aims of Zionist imperialism,” Zurayk opined, was “to exchange one country for another and to annihilate one people so that another may be put in its place. This [wa]s imperialism, naked and fearful, in its truest color and worst form.” Zionism and its inherent expansionist aspirations, therefore, were “the greatest danger to the being of the Arabs.”

The ruthlessness of Zionism appeared increasingly clear in light of its ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestinian Arabs, endless UN complaints against Israeli truce violations, and the assassination of leading UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte on 17 September. The first Arab-Israeli war furthermore resumed in mid-October following an Israeli attack on Egyptians forces in the south. Shortly thereafter, southern Lebanon became a site of an Israeli offensive. Cross-border raids multiplied and a bombing campaign targeted the port city of Tyre. By month’s end, all Lebanese

and Arab forces stationed in north Palestine retreated into Lebanon. On the night of 30-31 October, Israeli troops executed a pre-determined military operation, traversed the Lebanese border, “and secured certain tactically important hills and observations points covering the frontier.” According to Benny Morris, this “was the first time the Israelis had crossed a recognized international frontier and invaded a sovereign Arab state.” On 1 November, Israeli forces “committed a major atrocity in the village of Hule,” as they “rounded up local inhabitants and POWs, crowded them into a house, shot them, and then blew up the building. Altogether thirty-four to fifty-eight persons died.” Until war’s end, Israel reportedly occupied thirteen Lebanese villages and committed numerous executions.\footnote{Chayla à Bidault, 27 Novembre 1948, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 258; MAE, Nantes; Macdonald to Secretary of State, 11 August 1948, \textit{FRUS}, 1948, vol. 5, 1301-1302; Avi Shlaim, \textit{The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World} (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 39; Morris, \textit{1948}, 344-345; and Pappé, \textit{The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine}, 191-192.}

In the minds of many Lebanese, their greatest fear became true; empire returned, this time in the form of Israeli aggression. In the final months of 1948, Zionism appeared in the midst of a military expansion into southern Lebanon. A Lebanese official hastily told a British colleague that “something had to be done to save Lebanon.” In a private conversation, el-Khoury informally asked Pinkerton to draw Washington’s “attention to [the] continued occupation [by] Jewish forces of [a] number of” Lebanese “villages and [a] considerable area in south Lebanon.” Israeli troops reportedly “presented documents for signature” to local leaders “of occupied villages requesting [the] incorporation of their villages into Israel and recognizing” the “Litani river” as the new international “boundary.” Such incidents evidenced long-
standing Lebanese claims that Zionism held parts of Lebanon in its sight. Unable to militarily defend itself, Lebanon hoped that the United States could diplomatically stop the Israeli offensive and force a retreat. The U.S. government, however, felt that it currently would not “be appropriate [to] intervene with [the] Israeli Government [on] this matter.” Such a responsibility belonged to the United Nations.104

Yet, in light of its own recent setbacks in the Holy Land, Lake Success was unable to reverse Israeli military advancements in Lebanon.105 As the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon entered a seventh week, the Lebanese president relayed his deep apprehensions to Pinkerton. El-Khoury once again asked the United States to “take initiative in pressing for [a] Jewish withdrawal.” It was imperative that Washington help him “veer away from [a] pro-Arab policy” and escape the wrath of Lebanese public opinion. He could not publicly appear tolerant toward the existence of Israel. U.S. diplomatic initiatives toward the Arab-Israeli conflict would likely decrease Lebanese anti-Americanism and stabilize the Middle East. Lebanon, el-Khoury added, required the United States’ “moral support.”106 This time around, Washington agreed.

104 Beirut Summary, 19 August 1948, FO 371/68489; UKNA; Keeley to Acting Secretary of State, 3 November 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 1542; Beirut to Foreign Office, 10 November 1948, FO 371/68499; UKNA; Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 6 November 1948, The Palestine Reference Files of Dean Rusk and Robert McClintock, 1947-1949; Reel 6; and Acting Secretary of State to Legation in Lebanon, 11 November 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 1569-1570.

105 Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 8 December 1948, The Palestine Reference Files of Dean Rusk and Robert McClintock, 1947-1949; Reel 6.

106 Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 16 December 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, 1670-1671.
U.S. officials quietly worked back channels and encouraged Israel to consider an armistice with Lebanon and the other Arab states. In early January 1949, the U.S. legation in Beirut reported that secret talks between Israeli and Lebanese military representatives were under way and appeared “hopeful.” Following the enforcement of a third UN cease-fire on 7 January, a UN mediator coordinated bi-lateral discussions concerning an Israeli evacuation from southern Lebanon. The Lebanese foreign minister, at this time, insisted that “Lebanon [could not] consider negotiations for armistice so long as Israeli troops remain[ed] on Lebanese soil.” Pinkerton commented that “Lebanon [wa]s prepared to go to almost any length short of signing [a] document formally recognizing [the] existence of [the] state of Israel.” One week into negotiations, both sides signed an agreement that ensured full Israeli military withdrawal.

Israel’s retreat stalled, however, as it claimed Syrian troops remained actively engaged in war on Lebanese soil. The additional call by the Provisional Government of Israel for a formal, international re-evaluation of its northern border met strong Lebanese objections. Lebanon, the Foreign Minister told Pinkerton, “would not yield one centimeter [of] territory and would not discuss in armistice negotiations [the] revision of frontiers.” The UN mediator and former U.S. State Department official, Ralph Bunche, considered “that an Israeli-Lebanese armistice agreement was ‘held up solely by Israeli intransigence.’” Israel eventually relented to its additional demands, in

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107 Macdonald to Secretary of State, 2 January 1949, FRUS, 1949, vol. 6, 598-599.

108 Pinkerton to Secretary of State, 11 January 1949, FRUS, 1949, vol. 6, 641; and Austin to Secretary of State, 19 January 1949, FRUS, 1949, vol. 6, 685-686.
light of increasing U.S. pressure. On 23 March 1949, Lebanon and Israel signed an armistice agreement, and on 2 April, no Israeli soldiers remained in southern Lebanon. But the imperial threat that was Israel and the betrayal of U.S. exceptionalism continued to occupy central places in Lebanese imaginations.

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109 Austin to Secretary of State, 2 March 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, vol. 6, 787; Wilkins to Secretary of State, 17 March 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, vol. 6, 846-848; and Chayla à Bidault, 5 Avril 1949, Beyrouth, Ambassade; Série B; Carton 258; MAE, Nantes.
On 20 February 1963, former Lebanese Ambassador to the United States Nadim Dimeshkie gave a talk at the AUB Alumni Club in Ras Beirut. Dimeshkie’s lecture outlined what he saw as separate approaches by the “West” and the Arab world vis-à-vis global affairs. Whereas the “West”—most notably the United States—processed international relations through a binary cold war view, he declared, many Arabs saw things differently. “Rather than view the advent of the Cold War in the Arab World in terms solely of Soviet calculated strategy for world domination, Arabs believe that it was made possible as a result of outstanding disputes between the Arabs and the West, and the failure to find satisfactory solutions for these disputes.” According to Arab peoples, one of those fundamental disputes consisted of the United States and Western Europe’s ongoing tendency to interfere in local affairs, even in the aftermath of the political decolonization of the Middle East. The force that feeds local aspirations and protests against foreign encroachment, Dimeshkie added, “is the sense of mission with which the present Arab generation is seized. The Arabs today are in a race with time… The Arabs are anxious to regain for themselves the state of national health and vigour which was dulled by centuries of foreign domination and exploitation. The Arabs
today want freedom and independence.”¹

Much to the chagrin of Dimeshkie and many Lebanese peoples, there remains an overriding historical tendency to process past Western interventions in the “Third World” predominantly through a “cold war lens,” thus exaggerating the superpower rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union and undermining the global and local credence of decolonization.² “Third World” yearnings for “freedom and sovereignty” is an integral part of the story of twentieth century world affairs. More specifically, the juxtaposition of cold war and decolonization narratives is crucial to gaining a better understanding of the first decades of the post-1945 period. As Lawrence Freedman explains, “The Cold War is a central part of the story of its time but not the whole story--in retrospect, other parts, particularly the process of decolonization, may turn out to have had more of a long-lasting impact.”³ This chapter thus tells the story of the first, overt U.S. military intervention in the Middle East from the vantage points of Washington and the streets of Lebanon, placing substantial emphasis on the latter.


³ Lawrence Freedman, “Frostbitten: Decoding the Cold War, 20 Years Later”, Foreign Affairs 89, 2 (March/April 2010): 136-144.
The advent of the Suez crisis of 1956—which pitted Egypt against the triad of Britain, France, and Israel—set the stage for the cold war to intersect with the borders of the Middle East and created a link within the chain of events that led to the U.S. military intervention in the Lebanese civil war of 1958. As outlined in the previous chapter, the Arab *Nakba* in Palestine sent Middle East society and politics into a tailspin. Arab peoples demanded justice and regimes across the region fell like flies. Decolonization remained ongoing as many post-independent Arabs perceived that empire struck back in 1948. Myriad national parameters, as a result, were reset and new orders established. Egyptians for their part grew increasingly convinced that their monarch, King Farouq, in light of ongoing corruption and poor decision-making vis-à-vis the Palestinian question, remained a tool of Western domination. If anything, *Nakba* reinvigorated Egyptian struggles against imperialism.

Egypt’s political decolonization, much like that of Lebanon’s, is not a straightforward story. The coming of Western power in Egypt dates back to mid-nineteenth century Ottoman modernization efforts and the construction of the Suez Canal. This controversial project, outsourced to a French entrepreneur Ferdinand de Lesseps, proved more costly than anticipated. Left with no alternative, Ottoman authorities in Egypt sold their shares in the recently-created Suez Canal Company to Britain in 1875 and ultimately declared bankruptcy in 1876. Britain and France as a result literally owned vital parts of Ottoman Egypt and controlled its finances. The Suez Canal henceforth became a strategic pillar of the British empire. Two years later, European power extended itself into the political realm when Egyptian authorities “invited” a British and a French commissioner to join the ranks of its cabinet.
European economic and political domination of Egyptian affairs aggravated the local population. Many blamed the incumbent governor for their shortcomings and protested against foreign encroachment. They demanded constitutional reform. They, as Ottoman subjects, wanted to rid themselves and their province of foreign meddling. To the dismay of the British and French, the governor succumbed to popular pressures in early 1882 and instituted a new constitution. These events met immediate European objection. Following four months of political disorder, Britain and France ordered naval units to Egypt. War finally broke out on 11 June 1882. Whereas France opted for retreat in fear of extensive war expenditures, Britain remained and declared victory a little over three months later. This event marked “the beginning… of a British occupation that would last three-quarters a century.”

British domination now extended into the military sphere.

Following the fall of the Ottoman empire at the end of World War I and the advent a the Paris conference of 1919, an Egyptian national movement gained prominence and demanded formal independence from British rule. As was the case in Lebanon at the time, Egyptian self-determination was denied and replaced with promises of gradual sovereignty. Britain extended nominal independence to Egyptians in 1922, which failed to satisfy national ambitions. After another decade of turmoil, Egypt and Britain re-negotiated the structural confines of their relationship. In August 1936, Egypt became constitutionally sovereign, with the exception of matters pertaining to the Suez Canal. Britain, for its part, obtained “preferential standing

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among foreign nations and the right to keep military bases on Egyptian soil.” The Suez Canal, arguably Egypt’s most valuable economic and strategic resource, remained under British control.

On 23 July 1952, a group of dissident military officials, known as the Free Officers, orchestrated a blood-less coup in Egypt. The new regime set out to achieve two principal objectives: full independence and self-sustained prosperity. Immediately upon establishing a viable government, the new regime undertook extensive negotiations with London regarding British military withdrawal from the Suez Canal Zone. On 19 October 1954, the parties reached an agreement and the last British solider departed the strategic waterway in mid-1956. Meanwhile, the Free Officers confronted another dire problem: economic hardship. Reliant on agriculture as the primary means of income, Egypt opted to undertake the ambitious task of building a hydroelectric dam at the head of the Nile, not far from the town of Aswan. The Aswan dam project symbolized an imagined Arab renaissance in Egypt. There was only one problem; it required outside funding. Egypt, now under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser, turned to the World Bank, the United States, and Britian for support. Strict conditions framed Western aid. The Egyptian raïs “balked at such stipulations, which amounted, in his opinion to foreign control over Egypt’s economy and foreign policy.” Nasser instead embraced “the Bandung moment” and the nascent spirit of non-alignment, opting for a middle ground in global affairs and refusing to openly align himself with either the Western or the Soviet bloc. Convinced that Egypt was

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6 Rogan, 196.

7 Adeed Dawisha, Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, 175.
going red, especially in light of its recognition of the People’s Republic of China, the United States retracted its offer to support the Aswan dam project in mid-July 1956.\(^8\)

Lebanese peoples, who anxiously followed Egyptian affairs and hoped that its efforts would generate a greater Arab renaissance throughout the Middle East, reacted to the U.S. decision “with widespread disapproval.” Many sided with Nasser. The West, it appeared, once again stood in the way of Arab decolonization. Empire prevented progress. Washington and London, \textit{Beirut} opined, purposely intimidated and pressured the Arab world. The United States, \textit{An-Nahar} warned, “was committing a grave mistake by defying Nasser in such a haughty fashion.” It was not helping its cold war cause. Knowing full well “that neither Nasser nor the Egyptian people [we]re communists,” the newspaper contended: “Nasser’s own opinion on communism [wa]s not sufficient alone to prevent Egypt’s foundering into its wake, should she be directed toward the current by vital needs and interests.” \textit{Beirut-Massa} pushed this idea further and declared “that the whole thing [wa]s a victory for Mosow.” Washington’s apparent disregard for Egyptian ambitions “opened the way for the Arab-Soviet rapprochement in the first place,” reminded \textit{Al-Jarida}.\(^9\) And Lebanese peoples sympathized with Egyptians.


Celebrations erupted across the Arab world following Nasser’s announcement of the nationalization of the Suez Canal company on 26 July 1956. Lebanese peoples, for their part, viewed the event as one of independence and decolonization. Many hailed Nasser for his defiance of the “West.” Beirut labeled his stand as being “honourable.” Lebanon, noted Bayrak, stood “with Egypt against foreign domination.” According to Al-Jarida, “Egypt had the right to do anything in the cause of self-defence.” “The West would not break Nasser like it broke Mossadegh,” the former Iranian prime minister who failed to solidify the nationalization of Iranian oil in 1953 and succumbed to Western pressure. It was time for the Western powers to respect Egypt and the Arab world and modify their policies. Yom concurred. Elsewhere, An-Nahar remarked that “the era of imperialism and political colonialism was completely over.”

Telegrams poured in from various Lebanese organizations, such as the Makassed Society and the Congress of Parties, congratulating Nasser on his initiative. Such sentiments also found their way into the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies. Lebanese prime minister ‘Abdullah Yafi applauded the re-affirmation of Egyptian sovereignty. As far as his government was concerned, the Suez Canal affair was not strictly an Egyptian one; it was Lebanese as well. Nasser’s move represented a greater wave of Arab decolonization. “It is our wish,” he declared, “that the Western powers should view the situation in the Arab world with more calm and understanding.” Arab peoples were not against the West; rather, they sought greater sovereignty. The Suez Canal, after all, was on Egyptian land. Recent events presented an opportunity to

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10 Beirut to Foreign Office, 27 July 1956, FO 371/119080; UKNA.
powers like the United States and Britain to counter long-standing popular perceptions and “prove that sincere collaboration between strong peoples and weak peoples [was] still possible. It [was] for them to show that their aim [was] not to humiliate and enslave the Arabs.” Lebanese society, affirmed Yafi, “are body and soul with the Egyptian people in its struggle for its recovery and its dignity.” Local demonstrations and proclamations of Arab solidarity gained center stage in Lebanon. The Lebanese press devoted its headlines to “the economic war’ between Egypt and Western states.”

In Beirut, the Najjadeh party organized an impressive protest march, which reportedly totaled roughly two thousand youth, in support of Egyptians and their leader. Similar demonstrations also took place in Saida and Tripoli. An impressed Al-Telegraf lauded “the ‘enlightened street’.” Nasser’s move, the newspaper reasoned elsewhere, was “a decisive step in the path of total emancipation.” The West needed to know that the Egyptian raïs represented the Arab world in its entirety, added An-Nidal.11

The process of and concerns surrounding decolonization therefore remained in the sights of many Lebanese. The imagined borders of Lebanon transcended the geographic space allocated to the nation-state form. They and their Arab neighbors were connected by their desire for greater freedom. “[T]he Arabs believe in the ‘Free World’,,” explained An-Nahar, “but do not want to live as slaves in it.” Nasri Malouf’s editorial in Al-Jarida read: “You (West) are to free to withdraw your aid offers; we are

11 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 28 Juillet 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; Beirut to Foreign Office, 28 July 1956, FO 371/119082; UKNA; The Arab World, 30 July 1956, p. 4; The Arab World, 31 July 1956, p. 1; Beirut to Foreign Office, 31 July 1956, FO 371/121609; UKNA; The Arab World, 31 July 1956, p. 3; and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 30 Juillet 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.
free to nationalize our waters and sand.” Lebanese parliamentary speaker Adil Usayran elaborated on this point, declaring that “Nasser’s move [was] a means to [an] end. The end [was] the liberation of Egypt from exploitation and servitude.” The nationalization of the Suez Canal company was “a question of national sovereignty,” added Lebanese foreign minister Selim Lahoud, “particularly since the company [was] juridically an Egyptian enterprise.” In the evening of 30 July, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies unanimously passed a resolution that reaffirmed its support toward the initiative of its “sister-country” to ameliorate “its political and economic independence.”

Overwhelming events, such as those in Lebanon, led the Eisenhower administration to conclude that it “should not be indifferent to the rights of peoples who [were invested in] the Suez crisis. Yet U.S. national security interests could not permit it to openly align itself with Arab popular sentiment either. The Suez canal was an important asset in the West’s global contest with the Soviet Union. Britain and France needed to be reassured of that. As Eisenhower put to it to U.S. secretary of state John Foster Dulles over the telephone: “show [them that] we are not indifferent but are not going to war over” the Suez Canal. Dulles responded by affirming that war was indeed on the minds of British and French officials. They even contemplated issuing Egypt an ultimatum: overturn nationalization or a threat of force. Eisenhower found that such an approach was a product of “out of date” imperial “thinking.” In this sense,

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12 *The Arab World*, 31 July 1956, p. 3; Heath to Secretary of State, 30 July 1956, RG 84; Lebanon, U.S. Consulate, Legation, and Embassy; Beirut, General Records, 1936-1961; Box 129; NARA; and Beirut to Foreign Office, 30 July 1956, FO 371/121609; UKNA.
it appeared that he concurred with popular Egyptian and Lebanese reasoning. U.S. secretary of treasury George M. Humphrey also could not get over the fact that “it looked as if” Britain and France “were simply trying to reverse the trend away from colonialism, and turn the clock back fifty years.” Whereas the Joint Chief of Staff sympathized with London and Paris and insisted that “Nasser must be broken,” the U.S. president disagreed. The Egyptian president “embodie[d] the emotional demands of the people of the area for independence and for ‘slapping the white man down’.” Any direct attack upon Nasser would likely turn “the world from Dakar to the Philippine Islands against us.” The United States, he believed, could not succumb to old imperial tactics.13

In the short-term, U.S. diplomatic efforts appeared to pay dividends. The United States, as An-Nahar and Beirut openly hoped, persuaded Britain and France to renounce military aggression. Yet the same could not be said regarding the task of convincing them that “the era of imperialism and colonialism was over.”14 In a tripartite statement released on 2 August, the Western powers neglected Arab calls for Egyptian decolonization and formally proclaimed that the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company defied international law. Egypt’s move threatened the waterway’s “freedom and security.” This said, they proposed the establishment of a conference of invited nation-states to negotiate the canal’s “operating arrangements under an


14 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe;” 2 Août 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.
international system.” The conference, for which the United States, Britain, and France agreed to participate, was scheduled to take place in London, on 16 August 1956.\textsuperscript{15}

When the conference opened, Lebanese peoples took to the streets in protest. A series of Lebanese organizations called for a nationwide general strike. Lebanese newspapers of all political and sectarian shades openly approved the popular initiative. The international gathering, many opined, was bound to be a total failure. \textit{Al-Jarida} endorsed the strike “because it needed to give the world an exact idea of the position taken by the Arabs in a question which engaged their sovereignty and dignity.” The strike, added \textit{Al-Telegraf}, showcased the Lebanese “will to defend their independence and sovereignty against Western imperialism.” \textit{Beirut-Massa} went as far as condemning the London conference as an “imperialist conspiracy.” Outside scheduled demonstrations, groups of people suddenly gathered across Beirut and Lebanon to voice their support for Egypt and objections toward the West. As a crowd massed in front of the Lebanese parliament, a local leader, nicknamed Abou Afif, allegedly got hold of a microphone and launched “into an attack on imperialism in the local dialect, with frequent use of profanities.” Some time thereafter, renowned Beirut singer Mohamed Salman unexpectedly performed “a song for the occasion on Parliament square,” which “inflamed the enthusiasm of the crowds.” Thousands of demonstrators waved pictures of Nasser and cheered slogans “against imperialism.” They unanimously voted by acclamation a series of resolutions in favor of Egypt. The last of which stated, “Any aggression against Egypt will be regarded as an aggression against

all the other Arab states.” That night, a British officer in Beirut relayed to London that
the Lebanese general strike was peaceful and “observed with unusual unanimity.” If
anything, commented Al-Telegraf two days later, “the historic strike cemented
Lebanese national unity and reinforced the populist movement against imperialism.”

The “picture as seen from Lebanon” showed sincere local dedication to the
global process of decolonization. Myriad Lebanese politicians, including Prime
Minister Yafi, Parliamentary Speaker Assayran, and Minister of State Sa’ib Salaam,
continuously delivered speeches in favor of Nasser and the Egyptian initiative.
“Portraits of the Egyptian dictator [we]re beginning to appear in all the shops” and
“nearly half of the taxis in Beirut also ha[d] his portrait displayed on the rear
window…” Yet Nasser’s growing popularity produced consternation with some
Lebanese, most notably Lebanese president Camille Chamoun. Some members of the
“Christian element,” rightly or wrongly, began to perceive “that the very existence of
Lebanon as an independent State [wa]s in danger.” Western imperialism, they worried,
was being replaced by Arab nationalism. Al-Amal, who openly supported the
nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, warned that Nasser’s interests did not
always coincide with Lebanon’s.17


16 The Arab World, 15 August 1956, p. 1; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 16
Août 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; The Arab World,
17 August 1956, p. 3; Beirut to Foreign Office, 16 August 1956, FO 371/121607;
UKNA; and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 18 Août 1956, Beyrouth,
Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.

17 Beirut to Foreign Office, 20 August 1956, FO 371/121607; UKNA; and “Revue de
la presse libanaise arabe,” 2 Août 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3;
MAE, Nantes.
As Lebanese commentators predicted, the London conference closed without reaching a suitable solution to the Suez crisis. The European decision to recall its nationals from Egypt in early September set off a fresh wave of speculation. War, once again, appeared imminent in Lebanese imaginations. Such speculations were well founded as one-month later, Israel, France, and Britain secretly convened “in a private villa in Sèvres, on the outskirts of Paris” to plot a closet joint-military offensive in Egypt. On 24 October, a signed Protocol of Sèvres outlined their plan of attack. On 29 October, Israel would invade Egypt’s Sinaï Peninsula and attempt to reach the Suez Canal. The following day, Britain and France would issue a public ultimatum to the warring factions and demand an immediate withdrawal from canal area and unconditional support for a temporary Anglo-French occupation. In the high likelihood that Egypt rejected, London and Paris would commence their own military operations the following day.\textsuperscript{18}

The Lebanese public sphere wasted no time in condemning Tel Aviv’s blatant act of aggression against Egypt and the Arab world at large. The Israeli assault was headline news. \textit{Al-Telegraf} saw traces of empire and accused “the West of inciting Israel to attack in order to regain control of the Suez Canal.” Lebanese officials, for their part, publicly asked the United States, Britain, and France to live up to their talk of peace maintenance in the Middle East and put a stop to Israel’s military campaign.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{19} “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 30 Octobre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.
Calls like this one, British and French officials surely felt, played into their master plan. Holding to their part of the Protocol of Sèvres, they issued an open ultimatum to both Egypt and Israel to evacuate the Suez Canal beyond a ten-mile radius.

The Arab world and the United States saw through the scheme. Dulles feared that, by offering the ultimatum, “the British and French might well be considered the aggressors in the eyes of the world, engaged in an anti-Arab, anti-Asian,” imperial “war.” The Eisenhower administration, being kept in the dark, felt manipulated by outdated, European selfishness. Hoover pointed out “that the British and French may feel like they have forced us to a choice—between themselves and the Arabs. They may in fact have felt that they have forced us into a position where we must go against the Arabs” and the self-perceived tradition of U.S. anti-colonialism. The entire situation, Eisenhower reasoned, was tainted by a “mid-Victorian style.” In the present eras of decolonization and the cold war, the United States simply could not stand for this. European imperial policies, Dulles added, were “not comparable with our own.” Upon receiving word that British and French forces were preparing a landing in Egypt, Eisenhower insisted that the United States demonstrate “a ‘hands off’ attitude” and told Dulles that he did “not want to be associated with them in the Arab world.”

As Lebanese peoples anticipated the opening of a second front in the Suez-Sinaï war, many turned to the United States to bring hostilities to an end. It was “America’s Hour,” as an editorialist from Le Jour put it. The U.S.-sponsored UN resolution condemning the Israeli campaign and Eisenhower’s public appeal to Britain

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and France to resolve the Suez crisis through “peaceful means,” transmitted over the waves of BBC Arabic and *Sharq al-Adna*, were widely acclaimed. Lebanese official and president of AUB Alumni Association Emile Boustani rushed to the U.S. embassy. In his opinion, the United States’ urgently needed to “use maximum influence to get British and French troops out of Suez.” In a separate meeting with U.S. officers, former president of the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies Habib abu-Chala echoed this sentiment. Fearing outright chaos, the Lebanese government declared a state of emergency. Public demonstrations became forbidden. News censorship was also enforced. According to a British report, “Security forces in Beirut were increased and guards were stationed at all foreign diplomatic missions and foreign commercial, educational, and religious installations.”

In the early evening of 31 October, an Anglo-French aerial bombardment campaign of the Suez Canal area commenced. Egypt immediately ruptured diplomatic relations with London and Paris. The United States, for its part, responded by delivering a presidential message live from the White House. It could not stand by as European powers imposed their desires upon innocent peoples. Eisenhower not only denounced Anglo-French involvement in Egypt, but equated them to recent Soviet reprisals in Hungary, which began on 23 October and permeated the U.S. public

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sphere ever since. In his opinion, both situations were part of the same problem: Old World imperialism. The age of empire, he insisted, was over. The United States, itself a product of decolonization, could not sit idly by as “the will of these peoples for national independence… bec[a]me more and more insistent.” His government, Eisenhower insisted, “was not consulted in any way about any phase of” the Suez-Sinaï war. “Nor” was it “informed of them in advance.” Rather than holding on to the imperial past, as the Soviet Union, Britain, and France appeared to be doing, the United States remained fixated on the future and the establishment a post-imperial era. If it had its way, justice would reign supreme.23

The National Security Council (NSC) met at 9 a.m. on 1 November to discuss the advent of the second Arab-Israeli war. “For many years now,” Eisenhower remarked, “the United States has been walking a tightrope between the effort to maintain our old and valued relations with our British and French allies on the one hand, and on the other trying to assure ourselves of the friendship and understanding of the newly independent countries who have escaped colonialism.” Cold war considerations, however, appeared to jeopardize this long-standing balancing act. A U.S. failure, in this instance, to standby the basic human right of independence would surely jeopardize its prestige and interests in the “Third World.” “We will be looked upon as forever tied to British and French colonialist policies,” feared Dulles. “In short, the United States would survive or go down on the basis of the fate of colonialism if the United States support[ed] the French and the British on the colonial

issue. Win or lose, we will share the fate of Britain and France…” Eisenhower believed in the inevitability of decolonization. European colonial empires “were going downhill with the kind of policy that they were engaged at the moment in carrying out.” Besides, “How could we possibly support Britain and France if in doing so we lose the whole Arab world?” Strategically speaking, that part of the world was crucial to U.S. cold war efforts. As far as the United States saw it, decolonization and the cold war were at odds with each other.

In a presidential campaign speech delivered from the Convention Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, later that day, Eisenhower played on the city’s symbolism to U.S. independence in an effort to reify current-day U.S. anti-colonialism vis-à-vis Suez and Hungary. “In such a world—at such a time—‘a decent respect for the opinion of mankind’—in the words of our Declaration of Independence—requires that we state plainly the purposes we seek, the principles we hold,” declared Eisenhower.

In June of 1776, Richard Henry Lee, rising before the Second Continental Congress to move his resolution for American independence, declared: ‘The eyes of Europe are fixed upon us; she demands of us a living example of freedom.’ One hundred eighty years later, we know that the eyes of the world are fixed upon us. And we must ask ourselves; what kind of an example of freedom do we give to our age? What are the true marks of our America—and what do they mean to the world?

The contemporary United States, like its forefathers, stood for freedom above all. Belittling the existing plight of minority groups, such as women, African Americans, homosexuals, and indigenous peoples, not to mention those in unincorporated territories, like Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Guam, the U.S. president openly proclaimed: “We are—proudly—a people of no sense of class or caste.” The United States was exceptionally not like European empires. It supposedly respected decolonization. “As
there can be no second-class citizens before the law of America, so—we believe—there can be no second-class nations before the law of the world community.” Freedom and liberty, he believed, were “America’s greater purposes.”

Eisenhower’s message was generally well received by Lebanese society. His reaction to events in Egypt was quoted directly in much of the press and extensively in radio broadcasts. Unable to offer sufficient commentary on the U.S. declaration in time to make print, Lebanese newspapers overwhelmingly condemned foreign intervention in Egypt. There was no doubt, Al-Hayat concluded, that “This was not a campaign against Abdel Nasser but an imperialist war against the Arab nations.” “Britain and France, by using force,” commented An-Nahar, “seem to want to prove that the giants of the 19th century have aged but are not yet willing to die. But the aged, be they giant[s] or midget[s], will die, be it today or tomorrow…” U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, Donald Heath, reported that, “During the last two days, various Lebanese personalities have come to see me or telephoned their high approval of President Eisenhower’s statements and the present American policy in the Arab-Israeli-French-English dispute.” U.S. declarations further amplified Lebanese denunciations of empire. Al-Jarida’s Bassem Jisr assured that “France and Britain already lost.” The fate of decolonization was on the side of the Arabs. They resolved to break Western imperialism’s grip on the Arab world. “Britain and France lost all prestige,” avowed Al-Telegraf. Only the United States reaped the rewards of Western heritage. U.S. efforts to bring about a cease-fire, Beirut added, won the confidence of Lebanese

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peoples. In light of the Soviet intervention in Hungary, An-Nahar’s Marc Riachi concluded: “The Arabs find by their side only the Americans.” This said, another editorial opined, the United States “needed to intervene” with its European allies and put an end to the crisis.25

Peace in Egypt appeared once step closer when, around the midnight hour of 4 November, the UN General Assembly passed another resolution and laid the foundations for the establishment of an emergency international unit to “secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities.”26 Yet, as news spread the next morning that Israeli troops gained control of the entire Sinaï Peninsula and Anglo-French paratroopers landed near Port Said, the Soviet Union publicly threatened Britain, France, and Israel with force. Moscow vowed to deploy volunteers to aid Egyptian efforts if they did not end military operations within twelve hours and withdraw all troops within three days.27 The United States immediately reacted by issuing a press release of its own, condemning the use of force by all parties. “Neither Soviet nor any other military forces,” it read, “should now enter the Middle East area except under United Nations mandate.” The Suez crisis, the United States avowed, would not become a hot war between cold war adversaries. With international tensions at an all-

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25 Heath to Secretary of State, 1 November 1956, RG 84; Lebanon, U.S. Consulate, Legation, and Embassy; Beirut, General Records, 1936-1961; Box 128; NARA; Heath to Secretary of State, 3 November 1956, RG 84; Lebanon, U.S. Consulate, Legation, and Embassy; Beirut, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 28; NARA; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 2 Novembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 3 Novembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.


time, London and Paris hurriedly accepted a UN-sanctioned cease-fire. Israel did the same the following day.\textsuperscript{28} Soviet intervention was no longer necessary.

The Lebanese press unanimously hailed the UN cease-fire and the apparent end of empire in Egypt. Some newspapers congratulated the Soviet Union. “The Arab world understood now that there [was] a big power prepared to protect it and to end aggression,” avowed \textit{Ad-Dyar}. “The Arab world understood also that the [United States], in her defence of peace, contented herself with talk: she would neither stop aggression, nor let others stop it.” As far as \textit{Al-Telegraf} was concerned, “the ‘Soviet bomb,’ meaning the Soviet communications… blew up imperialism in the Arab world. Imperialism” was “now ruined for ever.” Others, such as \textit{An-Nahar} and \textit{Al-Amal}, felt that, without U.S. efforts, war in Egypt would be ongoing. Following Eisenhower’s re-election to the U.S. presidency, the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), and the enforcement of a UN cease-fire in Egypt, Beirut’s Nsouli offered him “and his great nation our hearty congratulations and expressed the hope” that “he will begin a new era in Arab-American relations.”\textsuperscript{29}

Lebanese peoples, in the wake of Suez, openly idolized the Egyptian \textit{raïs} much more than their own president. Arab decolonization, many believed, could only continue under Nasser’s leadership. Many Lebanese called on their government to follow in Nasser’s footsteps and break diplomatic relations with the Western European


\textsuperscript{29} \textit{The Arab World}, 7 November 1956, p. 3; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 6 Novembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; and Heath to Secretary of State, 8 November 1956, RG 84; Lebanon, U.S. Consulate, Legation, and Embassy; Beirut, General Records, 1936-1961; Box 129; NARA.
powers, as Syria and Saudi Arabia had done. Beirut’s refusal to follow Nasser’s line created much controversy, both in and outside government, and led the Lebanese press to declare a ministerial crisis. Lebanese minister of foreign affairs Selim Lahoud openly came out against severance and claimed Lebanon’s necessity to fulfill its traditional role as a broker between the West and the Arab world. Some papers, most notably Al-Amal, contended that a break in diplomatic relations with Britain and France left Lebanon wide open to an increase in direct Soviet involvement or, worse yet, indirect support toward Muslim-dominated Arabism.  

Chamoun, for his part, was very sensitive to this point and worried over a serious challenge to Lebanon’s sectarian political system. The creation of a greater Arab nation, he felt, would surely relegate Lebanese Christians to the margins of power. In private conversation with the U.S. ambassador, the Lebanese president admitted that “he had been under heavy pressure to break relations with Britain and France but was holding out.” Whereas the Najjadeh, an influential organization that fully embraced Arabism, distributed a text that called for rupture, Chamoun relayed that “The worst pressure came from Syria[,] which [was] absolutely pro-Soviet… [I]t was urgent that something be done to stop [the] leftist element in [the] Syrian army

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30 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 5 November 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; Salim Yaqub, Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 57; The Arab World, 8 November 1956, p. 8; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 8 November 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 9 November 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 10 November 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.
from taking Syria definitely into [the] Communist camp.” According to Lebanese 
rumors, it reportedly already began to receive Soviet military aid.31

The stirring of anti-imperial sentiment in the wake of the Suez Crisis shattered 
the fragile consensus that held the Lebanese government together. As Arab leaders 
wound up an emergency Arab League conference in Beirut, Yafi and Salaam
submitted their resignations. The reason: Chamoun’s insistence that relations remain in 
tact with Britain and France. Late that night, a series of bombs exploded outside the 
famous St. George Hotel and a “sub-branch of [the] British bank of [the] Middle East” 
in Ras Beirut. This act against the hotel, in particular, proved heavily symbolic since it 
was “widely regarded as [a] British” spot. The incidents noticeably worried the 
Lebanese president. Popular dissent toward him exacerbated. The following day, 
Chamoun requested a visit with the U.S. ambassador. In his opinion, it was not easy 
“to achieve this moderation against Communist-loving[,] West-hating extremism [in] 
Syria and Egypt.” Worse yet, “He had also to contend with two ranking members of 
[the] Lebanese cabinet, prime minister Yafi and Sa’ib Salaam, who acted both 
unpatriotically and stupidly by orally resigning” at the “very beginning” of the Arab 
League “conference. Fortunately,” he admitted to Heath, the “act had boomeranged 
against them rather than against [the] President.” Arab nationalism threatened
Lebanese order. And the Soviet Union appeared dedicated to aid Syria and see this

31 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 12 Novembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 
PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; Heath to Secretary of State, 13 November 1956, RG 84; 
Lebanon, U.S. Consulate, Legation, and Embassy; Beirut, Classified General Records, 
1936-1961; Box 28; NARA; and Heath to Secretary of State, 9 November 1956, RG 
59; Confidential U.S. State Department Files; Palestine-Israel: Foreign Affairs, 1955-
1959; reel 11.
through. The plan already commenced, as the Syrian army massed its forces along the northern Lebanese border. Chamoun pleaded for U.S. military aid. The U.S. government, Heath responded, would consider his request.32

Lebanese discontent toward the Chamoun regime continued to mount. Many newspapers, such as Beirut-Massa, complained of the rigorous censorship imposed upon them in light of the declaration of a state of emergency. The Suez-Sinaï war appeared over. Yet the Lebanese government insisted on limiting popular forms of expressions. Chamoun’s heavy-hand reportedly censored media discussions concerning the resignation of Yafi and Salaam. Ensuing speeches of theirs were also prevented from reaching the press.33 By censoring national political developments, Chamoun went beyond the initial guidelines of the state of emergency. The Lebanese president’s decision-making remained the subject of much criticism, as he nominated a new six-man cabinet. His new government, which consisted of primarily Sami Solh as prime minister and Charles Malik as minister of foreign affairs, was heavily perceived as pro-Western and anti-Arabist. Many of its key members, most notably Malik, were

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32 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 16 Novembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; Heath to State Department, 17 November 1956, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1; and Heath to State Department, 20 November 1956, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1.

33 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 18 Novembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.
not even elected Lebanese deputies. As evidenced by editorial commentaries, Chamoun’s decision further divided Lebanese society.\textsuperscript{34}

In the early morning of 20 November, another bomb exploded “near [the] French controlled Banque de Syrie et du Liban.”\textsuperscript{35} Lebanese officials suspected Egyptian involvement. Its ensuing investigation created much national controversy. Later that day, a member of the Egyptian embassy in Beirut, Abdel Salam el-Miniawi, was accused of conspiring with local dissidents. During a routine traffic stop, Lebanese soldiers found explosives in the trunk of his car and “a map specifically covering” the area where the previous “explosion” took place “in the glove compartment.” The Egyptian ambassador General Abdel Hamid Ghaleb fervently denied Egyptian meddling in Lebanese affairs until the incident was “reported in a BBC broadcast.” Ghaleb and el-Miniawi were thereafter “quietly put on a plane and removed from the local scene.” According to an extensive British report delivered a few weeks later, Chamoun then asked the British embassy “to help publicize the discovery of weapons and explosives” and discredit Egyptian efforts.\textsuperscript{36} Chamoun found his proof that Arab nationalism threatened Lebanon. The Lebanese government released an official communiqué the following day.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{34} Heath to State Department, 19 November 1956, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1; and Heath to State Department, 20 November 1956, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{35} Heath to State Department, 20 November 1956, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{36} Heath to State Department, 4 December 1956, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1.}
The event led many to openly question Lebanon’s allegiances and re-negotiate its national identity. In the last few weeks, both the West and the Arab nation appeared dedicated to destroying Lebanese unity. What party would it ultimately choose? This question proved divisive within Lebanese public opinion. Many blamed Chamoun for manufacturing the reports to suit his own political ambitions. Al-Zawabi’ opted for the traditional Lebanese neutral course. As much as “it resented Western imperialism,” it “did not wish to see it replaced with Eastern imperialism.” Ongoing evidence of Syrian mobilization amplified the fears of some. Arab nationalism appeared to have sided with the Soviet Union. As-Sahafat denounced “brother states” for devising the plot against the new Chamoun government. “Without question, we are for Arabism, but we are not for the Arabism of one ‘Abdullah Yafi or one Sai’b Salaam,” it explained. “We are for an Arabism that Lebanon voluntarily adopted the day it joined the League of Arab States.” The Lebanese situation seemed to be worsening day by day. In a 24 November conversation with Heath, Chamoun confirmed that, in the “last 36 hours,” the Lebanese government “discovered another cache of weapons [and] explosives in [the] quarters [of] 6 Egyptian instructors at [the] Tyre Moslem College.”

In the meantime, many Lebanese acknowledged the United States’ relentless effort to engender a tripartite military withdrawal from Egypt. An-Nahar’s Tueni congratulated the United States for “taking the same direction as the independence movements of the peoples of Asia and the Middle East.” In another editorial, the

influential Lebanese newspaper also thanked the U.S. government for its role in thwarting Soviet infiltration into Lebanon. “The Arab peoples who liberated themselves from Western imperialism only turn to the Soviets when the West leads them to believe that it continues to represent colonialism,” it explained. The United States was devoid of an institutionalized imperial past in the region. It held no territorial ambitions. For this reason, Lebanon would not refuse its assistance. U.S. aid “conformed with the evolution of peoples and their desire of emancipation.” Beirut-Massa, another popular medium, disagreed with this last point. Whereas it openly acknowledged Washington’s role in ending the Suez crisis, it maintained that the latter did not truly understand Arab aspirations. Arabs wanted the total liberation of all Arab countries. And the United States appeared as being far from neutral toward nationalist efforts in Algeria, Palestine, Arab protectorates in the Gulf, Libya, and Iraq. Suez was but only one chapter in the ongoing saga of Arab decolonization.

Following the British decision to finally withdraw its troops from Egypt, many Lebanese speculated over the next week or so about the future of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Whereas official censorship continued to limit debates over national politics, commentators used U.S. diplomacy as a platform to discuss national identity and Lebanese foreign policy. Tensions remained prominent. Some saw in the United States a last chance in maintaining Lebanon’s traditional ties with the West. In the

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pages of *An-Nass*, Jibran Hayek celebrated the U.S. decision to “at last rid its policy of its vagueness. It has, furthermore, freed this policy from the British Mandate.” The United States, the West’s most powerful nation, remained on the side of progress and modernity. “By heading in a different direction than her democratic sisters (Britain and France),” *Al-Jarida* added, “America was now a different entity altogether.” It was, after all, “the hope of the world.”

Elsewhere many invoked a cold war framework and wondered whether the United States differed that much from its Western European allies. According to *Beirut-Massa*, the U.S. position toward the cold war contradicted Arab decolonization and nationalism in many cases. Cold war struggles between the United States and the Soviet Union and the hot wars over decolonization differed, but were often interconnected. And Lebanon could not lose sight of its own bigger picture. “If President Eisenhower wants his name to be immortal, he should prescribe the remedy for the ailments of the Middle East. In preparing the medicine, he should put in enough ingredients to kill all the germs of imperialism,” it commented. “Westerners, moreover, must understand that they are not any better than Arabs or easterners. They should know that we don’t have tails in our backs.” Others openly opted for cautious optimism. “The mistakes of the old empires was that they always acted against justice in trying to find solutions for Middle Eastern problems,” wrote *Sada-Lubnan*. “It may be silly to warn the U.S. against what other states had done in the past. But we cannot help but receive foreign efforts to help us with some reservations.” The United States,

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39 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 29 Novembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; Middleton to Lloyd, 6 December 1956, FO 371/121607/42; UKNA; and *The Arab World*, 11 December 1956, pp. 1-3.
asserted Nsouli, “must play the part expected from her so Arabs may not lose the last hope in the intentions of the Western world.” Nsouli wished that “President Eisenhower[,] who is known for his love [of] freedom, peace, and justice… sticks to his excellent principles.”

Various border incidents with Syrian troops exacerbated Lebanon’s political divisions. Many newspapers, at this time, felt the need to clarify fundamental differences between Lebanese nationalism, Arabism, and communism. Some Lebanese officials, citizens, newspapers, such as *Al-Amal*, and international observers seemed to confuse them. They were far from synonymous. Soviet-sponsored Syrian raids into Lebanon, in numerous cases, did not coincide with popular Lebanese ideas of Arabism. Lebanon was and would remain its own sovereign entity. It also overwhelmingly rejected communism’s doctrine. Many Lebanese did, however, support Soviet aid toward Arab decolonization as had been the case in Egypt. In an open letter addressed to Eisenhower, *Al-Telegraf* avowed that it did not oppose a U.S.-Lebanon rapprochement. “Yet Lebanese peoples, who are Arabs, demand that the United States’ position reinforce the independence of Arab states and engender a just and equitable settlement to the Palestinian affair.” *Ad-Dyar*’s Melhem Ayash affirmed that “Egypt and Syria were neither for or against communism. They adopted a neutralist position that was dictated to them by the opportunity to profit from” the cold

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*40 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 5 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Editorial Review of the Lebanese Press,” 5 December 1956, FO 371/118851; UKNA; and Heath to Secretary of State, 10 December 1956, RG 469; Lebanon Subject Files, 1953-1958; Box 15; 350 LEBANON 1956; NARA.*
war rivalry. Decolonization, rather than the cold war, encouraged Lebanese peoples to embrace Arabism and selectively support Egyptian and Syrian initiatives against empire. The so-called Soviet threat was a myth.

Yet Lebanese peoples knew very well that the cold war, rather than decolonization, predominantly framed Washington’s foreign policy. In late December 1956, rumors circulated in Lebanon that Eisenhower was preparing to approach Congress for a special authorization to send troops to the Middle East as a preventive means to repel a Soviet-inspired conflict. “[T]he question of military intervention,” as Ad-Dyar referred to it, proved worrisome. Whereas Beirut trusted Washington, many feared the potential consequences. In his new newspaper, As-Siyassah, Yafi contended that “Britain and France [we]re behind the U.S. intervention in the Middle East.” Beirut-Massa wanted “the Americans and the Russians to understand that the Arabs [we]re not ready to have the allied (Anglo-French) influence replaced by a communist one.” The cold war, in other words, was not welcome in the Arab Middle East. It would only jeopardize its independence and conflicted with Arab decolonization.

To the dismay of many Lebanese commentators, on 5 January 1957, the U.S. president publicly shared a fresh Middle East policy that devalued Arab popular

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41 The Arab World, 11 December 1956, p. 3; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 11 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 12 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 15 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 21 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 22 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.

42 Heath to Secretary of State, 31 December 1956, RG 469; Lebanon Subject Files, 1953-1958; Box 15; 350 LEBANON 1956; NARA.
opinion with his colleagues in Congress and the world at large. In the wake of the British and French debacle in Egypt, Eisenhower asserted, a “power vacuum” surfaced in the Middle East and rendered it ripe for international communism. As the leader of the “Free World,” it was thus the duty of the United States to guarantee the independence and security of “the gateway between Eurasia and Africa.” Given that the United States “support[ed] without reservation the full sovereignty and independence of each and every nation of the Middle East,” it had to prevent the Soviet Union from dominating the region, as “the national integrity of other free nations [was] directly related to” U.S national security. “There is general recognition in the Middle East, as elsewhere, that the United States does not seek either political or economic domination over any other people,” he added. “Our desire is a world environment of freedom, not servitude… If the nations of that area should lose their independence, if they were dominated by alien forces hostile to freedom, that would be both a tragedy for the area and for many other free nations whose economic life would be subject to near strangulation.” This said, it was now time for the United States to increase its involvement and embrace the position of leading Western power in the region. “The free nations of the Mid East need, and for the most part want, added strength to assure their continued independence.”

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43 For more information on the domestic and international politics surrounding the Eisenhower Doctrine, see Yaqub, Containing Arab Nationalism, 87-117.

At first glance, many Lebanese expressed wariness toward the Eisenhower Doctrine as the cold war seemed a distant reality to local communities and failed to provide security against perceived greater threats, namely “Zionist or colonialist aggression from non-Communist countries.” Communism, after all, failed to obtain substantial popularity in Lebanese circles. Worse yet, the United States seemed to be unknowingly repeating the Anglo-French mistake at Suez and impeding Arab decolonization. Eisenhower apparently confused anti-colonialism and imperialism. The United States’ “imperial anticolonialism,” as William Appleman Williams later coined U.S. attempts to invoke anti-colonial sentiment in order to exercise empire, troubled many Lebanese. The United States’ self-perceived and project non-imperial identity did not justify direct intervention in the Middle East. Al-Ahd accused the United States “of perpetuating an aggression against the Arabs.” Ignoring Arab liberties, Washington invented the threat of communism in order to justify intervention and empire. As-Siyassah, for its part, regretted that “Eisenhower did not allude to another danger other than the communist danger, that is the imperialist danger for which an Arab state would one day defend itself against.” One could only hope that something enlightened “the American thesis.” According to Maurice Sacré, the U.S. doctrine infringed upon “Arab dignity,” Washington purposefully mocked Arab human rights and violated the spirit of the UN Charter. “In order to fill the vacuum in the Middle East,” Yafi asserted. “America must go straight into the heart of Arab peoples. This was the way to gain their amity.” Al-Telegraf went as far as saying that “the Eisenhower plan” was “worse than a foreign mandate on the Arab world.” In an editorial the following day, it shared its appreciation for the United States’ concerns,
“but asked it to give a particular effort to get to know and understand the aspirations of the Arabs.” Orientalism’s imperial culture and blatant disinterest in Arab popular opinion, once again, jeopardized the United States’ place in Lebanese imaginations.

The Lebanese government held a different stance, as it announced its intention to endorse the American initiative. A considerable number of newspapers supported its stand. Yet many Muslims and Christians viewed Chamoun’s overt support for the Eisenhower Doctrine as a clear violation of Lebanon’s National Pact of 1943.

Influential politicians and much of the press immediately castigated Chamoun’s pro-Western stance and maintained the National Pact’s paramount importance to Lebanon. Several Lebanese newspapers voiced suspicion toward U.S. intervention in their national affairs. Al-Jarida contended that “the vacuum in the Middle East will never be filled so long as our wounds, caused by the West, still bleed.” In the “pro-American” An-Nahar, Tueni expressed skepticism toward the prospect of an independent Middle East. The U.S. president, he stated, “has reminded us … that the fate of the Middle East is still, until now, decided outside the Middle East. He has reminded us of this painful truth, despite his carefulness to assure us that the ‘power vacuum’ that has happened in the Middle East will be filled by a strengthening of the independence of our countries and their sovereignty.” Two days later, Tueni added that the Eisenhower...

45 McClintock to State, “Joint Weeka 2,” 15 January 1957, RG 59; Lebanon; Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959, reel 6; Caroline Attié, Struggle in the Levant: Lebanon in the 1950s (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 110-111 and 134; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 7 Janvier 1957, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 5; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 8 Janvier 1957, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 5; MAE, Nantes; The Arab World, 8 January 1957, p. 3; and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 9 Janvier 1957, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 5; MAE, Nantes. For more on U.S. imperial anti-colonialism, see Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, 18-57.
Doctrine “really doesn’t solve all the problems in the Middle East.” In fact, “it might not even solve any of them.” Yet one thing was for certain: the U.S. government “barely awaited the withdrawal of Britain from Egypt and Jordan [and] the withdrawal of France from Syria and Lebanon before it came rushing down to fill in the empty space.” In Tueni’s opinion, “the United States’ borders ha[d] reached the Middle East.”

The Chamoun government’s quick embrace of the Eisenhower Doctrine indeed signaled that, in Lebanese imaginations, Beirut entered the United States’ so-called sphere of influence. Many did not object to United States per se, but to the idea that Lebanon was in need of immediate Western protection and now informally associated with a foreign superpower. A few weeks after Eisenhower’s speech to Congress, Kemal Jumblatt, Druze chieftain and leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, resolved in a press statement that the U.S. doctrine engendered “reasons for great fear and anxiety” for Lebanese and Middle Eastern peoples “because what this unilateral guarantee includes in the form of challenge to the anti-American front, and the abrupt moving of the cold war to the borders of the Middle East and its territories.” Many Lebanese wished to remain distant from the global realities of the cold war.

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Chamoun’s choice to officially align himself, his government, and Lebanon with the United States augmented the prospect of local and global conflict. Rather than protect Lebanese independence, the Eisenhower Doctrine threatened it. To Abdul Wahab Rifa’i, Secretary General of the National Committee in Lebanon, the return of formal Western influence to Lebanese communities was antithetical to the cause of Lebanese nationalism and Arab decolonization. Lebanese peoples, he avowed, “will never allow colonialism to” divide “them no matter the garment it hides under.”

The Lebanese government’s adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine increasingly divided Lebanese society. Matters worsened in early March when Congress passed legislation supporting the Middle East plan and news spread concerning the pending visit to Lebanon of U.S special assistant to the President, James Richards. The Richards Mission, which set out to travel to various Middle Eastern countries, sought to put ink to paper and solidify a new era in U.S.-Lebanon diplomatic relations. Upon its arrival, the U.S. mission encountered local strikes and protests. *Ad-Dyar* accused “America of negotiating with America.” The Lebanese government did not represent popular opinion. Notwithstanding, Chamoun eagerly signed the dotted line and solidified an agreement that committed the United States to delivering economic and military aid to his regime. In return, the Lebanese government publicly denounced “international communism” and declared its “allegiance to the Free World” in a joint U.S.-Lebanese communiqué. Lebanese

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47 Brooke to State, 7 February 1957, RG 469; Lebanon Subject Files, 1953-1958; Box 15; Lebanon-REPORTS-Annual Assessment 1957; NARA.
foreign minister Charles Malik shortly thereafter averred the agreement was “the most important diplomatic document ever signed by a Lebanese government.”

Lebanese reactions to the Richards Mission and the U.S.-Lebanese communiqué varied according to political beliefs and transcended sectarian categorization. Whereas pro-Chamounists instantly celebrated the Lebanese achievement, others fortified their opposition to the Lebanese government and the idea of a fresh Western tutelage. According to a U.S. report, “The formal announcement… ran counter to widely held Christian Lebanese desires to be the Switzerland of the Middle East and also to the Arab nationalist, ‘positive neutralist’ orientation of the bulk of the Moslem population.” Chamoun’s decision to openly defy Lebanese neutrality and align his government with the United States engendered much local criticism, leading Tueni to declare: “No longer will any government announce to the Lebanese masses that it is neutral. Neutrality is a myth.” Lebanon, many believed, isolated itself “from the rest of the Arab world” and replaced “the former French Mandate with an American Mandate and [wa]s about to be swallowed up by the Baghdad Pact,” a British-orchestrated regional defense alliance formed in 1955. At a rally, Najjadeh leader Mohammed Ali Rezz declared “that this siding with the West ma[de] of Lebanon a passageway for imperialism… [S]uch a top-policy step should

48 Heath to State, 3 April 1957, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 39; RICHARDS MISSION OUTGOING 1957; NARA; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 16 Mars 1957, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 5; MAE, Nantes; Brooke to State, 10 November 1957, RG 469; Lebanon Subject Files, 1953-1958; Box 15; Lebanon-REPORTS-Annual Assessment 1957; NARA; Heath to State, 16 March 1957, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 39; RICHARDS MISSION OUTGOING 1957; NARA; and Heath to State, 22 March 1957, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General Records, 1936-1961; Box 39; RICHARDS MISSION OUTGOING 1957; NARA.
have been the object of a national plebiscite.” Canadian officials in Lebanon, for their part, reported “a growing cleavage in Lebanese public opinion” vis-à-vis Chamoun’s foreign policy. “Although many Lebanese [we]re becoming increasingly concerned at the strain in which the present government’s foreign policy [wa]s placing on inter-confessional relations,” the report explained, “the political battle [wa]s fortunately by no means a purely Muslim [versus] Christian affair.”

Once Richards and his team departed, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies scheduled a special session to debate the Eisenhower Doctrine and Lebanese foreign policy more broadly. Opposition leader Rashid Karame immediately proclaimed, “The Eisenhower Doctrine [wa]s the heir of past colonialist projects that Lebanon ha[d] rejected.” Perplexed by Chamoun’s defiance of the National Pact, Karame further added that the cold war “involves the United States and the Soviet Union” and therefore “does not concern Lebanon.” Elsewhere, the Grand Sérail received a petition bearing the signatures of 250 AUB students, opposing the U.S. plan Yet whereas Chamounists were united, opposition members were not. Their problem was not general disagreement with Chamoun’s path, but the contours in which to express a unified position. According to U.S. reports, the split was caused primarily by “the refusal of Christian and Druze members (with a few notable exceptions) to go on


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record against the American Doctrine.” The Chamoun government, as a result, was “in
an excellent position to continue its support for” Eisenhower’s plan. Following a
grueling six-hour debate, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies extended a vote of
confidence to Chamoun’s cabinet by a count of 30 to 1, with five absences. Distraught
by the circumstances, seven Lebanese deputies, most notably Yafi and Karame,
“resigned and walked out.”

Determined to slow down Chamoun’s course, the seven former Lebanese
parliamentarians formed an opposition coalition, entitled the National Front. Other
important figures, like Sa’ib Salam, Hamid Frangieh, Ahmad el-Assad, and Philip
Tacla, quickly followed. Shortly thereafter, the newly-formed group, “from which all
clearly pro-communists elements ha[d] been excluded,” issued a public statement
outlining its positions on key Lebanese matters. “Lebanese policy ha[d] begun to
deviate from the clear-cut course outlined at the time when independence was
achieved,” it read. The Lebanese government “ha[d] adopted, or allowed to be
adopted, certain stands which ha[d] caused a large section of people to ask whether the
real aims underlying such deviations [we]re not to strengthen the position of certain
individuals and facilitate certain activities which c[ould] not be tolerated in our
country.” Above all, it rejected all foreign interference in Lebanese affairs, accused
Chamoun’s government of confusing foreign relations with national ones, and called

50 “Chambre des députés,” Le Jour, 5 April 1957, p. 5; Heath to State, 11 April 1957,
RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1; Heath to
State, 17 April 1957, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-
1959; reel 1; Heath to State, 3 April 1957, RG 84; Lebanon, Classified General
Records, 1936-1961; Box 39; RICHARDS MISSION OUTGOING 1957; NARA; and
Heath to State, 6 April 1957, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs,
1955-1959; reel 1.
“for [the] adherence [to the] principle [of] neutrality between East and West, [the] Bandung principles, and individual liberties.”51 Henceforth, the National Front led the Lebanese movement against Chamoun and his supporters.

To Lebanese citizens and foreign observers alike, the upcoming parliamentary elections of June 1957 would test the foundations of Lebanon’s political body and the National Pact. Prior to casting their ballots, many Lebanese citizens grew wary of their president’s ambition to amend the constitution in order to secure a second consecutive six-year presidential mandate. “In the pursuit of this ambition, and in his general taste for unbridled power,” renowned Middle East scholar Malcolm Kerr later observed, “Chamoun made himself a raft of enemies of every religious denomination, and came increasingly to rely on relatively inconsequential figureheads to represent sects in public office while their more prestigious rivals were shut out.” The United States got caught up in Lebanese politics, as the Eisenhower Doctrine “became something of a fulcrum for pro-government and opposition maneuvers.”52

Rumors rapidly circulated that Washington was propping up pro-Chamounists and interfering with electoral campaigns. To the dismay of Chamoun, the National Front organized myriad impressive public demonstrations. As calls for the “downfall of President Chamoun” intensified, the Lebanese government “forbid ‘peaceful

51 Heath to State, 17 April 1957, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1; and Heath to State, 11 April 1957, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1.

52 Malcolm Kerr, “The Lebanese Civil War,” in Evan Luard, ed., The International Regulation of Civil Wars (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 69; and Brooke to State, 10 November 1957, RG 469; Lebanon Subject Files, 1953-1958; Box 15; Lebanon-REPORTS-Annual-Assessment 1957; NARA.
demonstrations’.” Such orders were openly disregarded, leading to confrontations between Lebanese security forces and protesters. In one instance, an estimated 12,000 Lebanese rallied in Beirut near the Makasser school. A reported five people were killed and thirty wounded, including Salaam. National Front members were arrested as a result. Many Lebanese leaders consequently denounced Chamoun’s attempt to rule with an iron fist. In a conversation with U.S. officials, a distraught General Fu’ad Shehab avowed that further chaos in Lebanon could “be avoided if the President would compromise with some of the opposition leaders who are good Lebanese and personally pro-Western.”

Despite mounting anti-Chamounist sentiment and an onslaught of Egyptian, pan-Arabist propaganda activities in Lebanon, Chamoun supporters held course and shockingly won two-thirds of the available parliamentary seats, thanks in large part to covert CIA financial assistance. To the dismay of many, unpopular individuals like Malik were victorious, while anti-Chamounists such as Yafi, Salaam, el-Assad, Jumblatt, and other influential politicians suffered surprising defeats. The trans-

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53 Heath to State, 31 May 1957, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1; and Heath to State, 1 June 1957, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1.

54 Kamal S. Salibi, The Modern History of Lebanon (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 200; and Fawwaz Traboulsi, A History of Modern Lebanon (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007), 132. Former U.S. official Wilbur Crane Eveland later revealed: “Throughout the elections I traveled regularly to the presidential palace with a briefcase full of Lebanese pounds, then returned late at night to the embassy with an empty twin case I’d carried away for Harvey Armada’s CIA finance-office people to replenish… So obvious was the use of foreign funds by the president and prime minister that the two pro-government ministers appointed to observe the polling resigned halfway through the election period.” Wilbur Crane Eveland, Ropes of Sand: America’s Failure in the Middle East (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), 252.
sectarian National Front quickly charged the Lebanese president and his followers with corruption as their electoral defeats rendered many of its members constitutionally impotent. Henceforth, internal strife mounted over Chamoun’s strong pro-Western orientation, his rumored aspirations for an unconstitutional second presidential term, and general treatment of dissident forces. The opposition movement grew daily, incorporating peoples from myriad sections of Lebanese society.

Notwithstanding his electoral victory, Chamoun grew increasingly apprehensive over Nasser’s perceived regional ambitions and the opposition’s desire to dethrone him and shift Lebanon closer into Egypt’s orbit. Nasser’s sharp critique of Chamoun and U.S. support for the latter aggravated local frustrations. The United States, in turn, faced “a major psychological problem” in Lebanon: anti-American sentiments became infused with local antipathy toward Chamoun’s “authoritarianism.” According to a U.S. intelligence briefing, U.S. standing in the Middle East was in decline, as “many Arabs believe that, in the face of the Arab ideal for Arab unity, the U[nite]d S[ta]tes desires to keep the Arab world disunited in order to dominate the area, and is committed to work with ‘reactionary’ elements to that end.” This also applied to Lebanon. A U.S. report concluded that “efforts to prove that the U.S. is not an ‘imperialistic’ power should be intensified and dramatized.”

55 Brooke to State, 10 November 1957, RG 469; Lebanon Subject Files, 1953-1958; Box 15; Lebanon-REPORTS-Annual Assessment 1957; NARA; Briefing Note by the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Cutler), 21 January 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960, 12: 15; and “Arab Student Attitudes Towards the U.S. and the USSR,” Nevins to Handley, 31 March 1958, RG 306, Office of Research and Evaluation International Survey Research Reports, 1950-1964, Box 8, NARA.
The Lebanese situation soon took a turn for the worse. On 8 May 1958, a civil war erupted following the mysterious murder of Nasib al-Matni, a Christian member of the opposition and editor of Al-Telegraf. Al-Matni’s death shocked Lebanese society, leading to accusations that Chamoun orchestrated the tragedy. Many Lebanese took to the streets and conveyed their discontent toward their president, his foreign policies, as well as his rumored desire to unconstitutionally extend his presidential mandate. In an editorial appearing the morning he was killed, al-Matni called for the Lebanese president’s immediate resignation. “Lebanon’s interests, Lebanon’s eternal independence, and the interest of the people make it essential for the individual to sacrifice himself for the benefit of the whole,” declared the soon-to-be martyr of the Lebanese opposition. In objection to the assassination and in hope of overturning the incumbent government, the National Front called a general strike “to protest what was called ‘the rulers’ provocative policy.’” The Lebanese press also observed a three-day strike.\(^5^6\)

Local protests against Chamoun quickly took on an aggressive anti-American tone in the northern coastal town of Tripoli. On 10 May, local demonstrators experienced deadly clashes with state police, creating an insurmountable wave of resentment toward the Chamoun regime and its American “protector.” As a result, Lebanese citizens showcased their frustrations and torched the United States Information Service (USIS) library in Tripoli to the ground. “When the fire department

\(^{56}\) Heath to State, 16 May 1957; RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1; Cited in Qubain, *Crisis in Lebanon* (Washington: The Middle East Institute, 1961), 69; and “The Situation in Lebanon, May 12, 1958,” 12 May 1958, RG 59, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, Box 2216, NARA.
attempted to save [the] library,” the U.S. embassy later discovered, the “mob intervened and prevented their action by gunfire.” According to U.S. missionaries in Tripoli, the situation was “very, very bad.” Members of the Lebanese opposition hastily rushed to the U.S. embassy in order to condemn these violent activities and assured U.S. officials that they bore no responsibility, indirectly acknowledging the power of the Lebanese masses. Two days later, on 12 May 1958, similar anti-Chamounists and anti-U.S. protests took place, as the USIS library in a Muslim, working-class quarter of Beirut locally known as the Basta, suffered the same fate as the one in Tripoli. Desmond Stewart, a British writer living in Beirut, witnessed the attack. “The vast majority of people taking part were children of intermediate school age,” he later wrote. “Everyone seemed in excellent humour and the family parties on surrounding balconies looked placidly on. Everyone I spoke to … seemed aware that the burning was a symbolic act.”

As chaos spread to all corners of Lebanon and an opposition movement gained momentum, Chamoun feared for his life and appealed to the major Western powers—Britain, France, and the United States—for help in restoring order. The so-called rebels, he claimed, received weapons and additional aid from Nasser and United Arab Republic (UAR) nationals via the Syrian-Lebanese border. Nasser was

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unwelcomingly interfering in the internal affairs of Lebanon and Lebanese government forces could not hold on for much longer. For this reason, Chamoun proposed a Western military intervention. Even as the United States understood Chamoun’s concern, it could not commit itself without UN-approval. Britain and France agreed. The Lebanese government, thereafter, brought up the question of UAR meddling to the UN Security Council, but once again fell short of gaining international support as the newly-created UN Observer Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) failed to find clear evidence of UAR interference.58

Notwithstanding Chamoun’s setback, Washington contemplated the eventuality of direct involvement in Lebanon’s civil war. According to U.S. ambassador Robert McClintock, public diplomacy would be required to properly buttress a U.S. military intervention. “There is [a] sufficient basis of genuine Lebanon antipathy for Chamoun’s second tenure of office to provide a fertile seed bed for charges [that] Western ‘imperialist’ powers are intervening in favor of one local politician against what would be represented as an authentic will of the people,” added the U.S. ambassador. CIA director Allen Dulles commented separately that Washington “would have a major propaganda opportunity in Lebanon if and when things quiet down a bit.” That evening, Eisenhower approved direct U.S. military support to Chamoun, if requested. Deeming French participation “a great mistake,” the U.S. government joined forces with Britain in order to plan a joint military operation for Lebanon. U.S.

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58 McClintock to State, 21 May 1958; RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 2; and McClintock to State, 1 July 1958; RG 59; Lebanon, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 3.
credibility and cold war considerations, according to Eisenhower, trumped the upholding of American prestige in Lebanese imaginations.59

The Lebanese opposition immediately condemned Chamoun’s appeal for Western intervention and the U.S. intention to “ship additional arms and munitions to Lebanon’s security forces.” In retaliation against governmental accusations that Lebanese “rebels” were the recipients of military support from the UAR, it emphasized that the civil war in Lebanon was strictly a Lebanese matter. Besides, U.S. material assistance constituted a clear, foreign interference in Lebanese affairs. “Sound rule cannot be based on the force of arms, violence, the seeking of the help of imperialist Powers, and the invitation of these Powers to interfere to force the people to give way to what they do not like,” the opposition proclaimed. “The true government emanates from the will of the people alone. The people have lost confidence in their rulers. Those rulers having lost the confidence of the people, have no alternative but to leave the seat of government.” In a hand-written letter to McClintock, Jumblatt additionally conveyed his disappointment concerning the U.S. position toward the civil war and openly wondered why the United States would chose to oppose the popular cause against Chamoun and aggravate the current situation.60


60 McClintock to State, 16 May 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 1; “Statement by the opposition parties accusing Western powers of intervention in internal affairs of Lebanon,” 15 May 1958; and “Statement by the opposition parties refuting the charges made by the government,” 16 May 1958, in M. S. Agwani, The Lebanon Crisis, 1958: A Documentary Study (New York: Asia
Following the end of the media strike, newspapers and radio stations also began an intensive campaign against the Chamoun government, U.S. involvement in the Lebanese civil war, and the latter’s recent assistance in augmenting Chamoun’s security forces under the umbrella of the Eisenhower Doctrine. In Beirut-Massa, ‘Abdullah Mashnouk warned that in the face of Washington’s maintained support for Lebanon’s government and “the [violation] [of] our sovereignty[,] any counter-interference which seems [to] rescue us from [the U.S. government’s] aggression would be more than welcome.” According to Yafi, the U.S. “attitude ha[d] touched off [a] general indignation in [the] country which once thought it could have faith in American goodwill. But it seem[ed] American goodwill now means one thing, furnishing ruling gangs with weapons [to] destroy [the Lebanese] people’s unity and undermine their right” to self-governance. Chamoun was “a tool of [the] new American imperialism which strives to replace British and French imperialism,” asserted Voice of Free Lebanon on 21 May 1958. Only Chamoun’s outright resignation could restore order in the land of cedars.

Finally various Lebanese peoples expressed their frustrations toward Washington’s support for the unpopular and repressive Chamoun regime. On the night of 18 May, a bomb reportedly exploded in an “apartment building with 80 percent

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American occupancy.” Elsewhere, the U.S. Embassy in Beirut received a strongly worded petition bearing the names of women from various echelons of Lebanese society—including local leaders, such as Madame George Kfouri (president of the Women’s Renaissance Society) and Madame Emile Cortas (president of the National Girl’s College), as well as other citizens, such as Miss Leile Beyheum, Miss Nina Jaroudy, and Janette Hébois. During his frequent visits with U.S. officials in Lebanon, Nassif Accari, an apple and citrus grower from northern Lebanon, actively promoted the cessation of American unfriendliness vis-à-vis the “will of the people.” “If American ‘cooperation’ with the Opposition were impossible,” Accari avowed, “the United States should adopt a strongly-neutral position which would preclude the supply of weapons or ammunitions to the Government… [A]nything short of this would mean continued fighting and bloodshed because the Opposition would never give up.” Shortly thereafter, Maronite Patriarch Butros Boulos Meouchy shared his thoughts on U.S. involvement in Lebanon with Desmond Stewart:

I know America, I lived there many, many years, in Los Angeles. I like many Americans, but now I think that they are mad. They are endangering all their interests in the Middle East, and for people like Malik, and Chamoun … none of them represented Lebanon. By identifying themselves with a handful of adventures, the Americans will lose everything. They will drive everyone, the Christians included, into the arms of the Russians.

Public calls for Chamoun’s immediate resignation and a change in U.S. policy multiplied across Lebanon. According to the U.S. embassy in Beirut, Lebanese anti-U.S. sentiments manifested themselves most frequently “in efforts to discredit the pro-American policies of the Lebanese Government” and stemmed from “the heritage of the Turkish, French, and English periods of pre-eminence in the Middle East.” Lebanese peoples transposed past antipathies toward these ex-imperial powers onto the
United States, due to its aggressive efforts to incorporate the Arab world under its cold war-driven “sphere of influence.”

It rapidly became apparent that, given current contemporary circumstances, a military intervention would do more harm than good to both Lebanese society and the U.S. government. “Although a rapid solution to the Government-Opposition struggle would check growing anti-Americanism,” the U.S. embassy asserted, “the general trend in Lebanon is expected to be away from a strongly-Western orientation and towards greater ‘positive neutrality’.” In a conversation with a U.S. official, long-time president of the Lebanese Association of Industrialists Philippe Tamer bolstered the latter comment, as he supposed, “Lebanon’s only long term solution [was] to reject the Eisenhower Doctrine and similar attachments to the United States and the West, and to adopt a policy of strict neutrality,” thus abiding by the National Pact of 1943. An American military intervention in the current civil war, he added, would prove to be a “disaster” for U.S.-Lebanon relations and Lebanon’s fragile order of things. “If the U[nited] S[tates] were to intervene pursuant to a request supported by Chamoun and his Cabinet,” a Special National Intelligence Estimate explained, “the intervention would almost certainly be regarded with hostility by a majority of Lebanese, including nearly all of the Moslems and perhaps as many as half of the Christians.” In the case of

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62 McClintock to State, 19 May 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 2; “Anti-Americanism in Lebanon,” Robert McClintock to Secretary of State, 5 June 1958, RG 84, Beirut, Classified General Records, 1936-1961, Box 41, NARA; Stewart, Turmoil in Beirut, 74; McClintock to State, 23 May 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 2; McClintock to State, 24 May 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 2; McClintock to State, 30 May 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 2; and McClintock to State, 12 June 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 2.
intervention, U.S. military forces would be confronted by many Lebanese “not presently hostile to the West but acting either in opposition of Chamoun or to foreign intervention in principle.” “If we should put US forces into the Lebanon,” read another internal memorandum, “it would be difficult to extricate them with any appearance of success.” The challenge of a triumphant withdrawal, furthermore, “would probably grow, rather than diminish, as our presence was prolonged.”

On 30 June 1958, to the relief of the Eisenhower administration and the Lebanese opposition alike, Chamoun succumbed to public pressure and revealed his decision not to seek a second presidential term. The Lebanese Chamber of Deputies thereafter announced that it would select Chamoun’s successor at the end of July. Despite these announcements, conditions in Lebanon worsened. The potential return of foreign, “imperial” boots on Lebanese soil continued to preoccupy local communities. Anti-U.S. sentiment came in various shades as Lebanon’s foreign policy and national identity, as well as U.S. global power were continuously negotiated. Many supporters of the Lebanese opposition regarded U.S. intervention as the return of foreign domination. “The leaders and not the peoples of America are playing with fire,” Al-Telegraf contended. “We hope that through his wisdom President Eisenhower will prevent war and prevent [American leaders] from addressing one threat after another to

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the Lebanese people, because such threats will not have any effect as the people believe in their just cause and right for freedom and life.”

According to U.S. officers in Lebanon, “anti-Americanism [was] just below the surface” in the southern town of Saida and was “being aggravated by the present situation.” While complaining that U.S. aid should be delivered directly to local organizations, rather than through Beirut, a mukhtar (village leader) opined: “We used to think of America as an honest country, a good country devoted to democracy and the rights of the people. It was the British and the French who were imperialists and imposed upon people rulers they did not want. But now we begin to feel differently towards America.” This sentiment, the U.S. embassy concluded, “was prevalent throughout the area and came from people of all walks of life.” Tueni also protested U.S. involvement, claiming that the price of foreign intervention was too high for Lebanese society. “What kind of independence will we have if we are continuously indebted to the West?” he asked. “And what authority will we have on our country when it is the care of the West?”

Those Lebanese who supported Chamoun perceived U.S. inaction as a sign of betrayal. Some peoples in Zahleh and the Bekaa valley also grew disenchanted with Washington’s foreign policy, but on a different level. Nicholas Halibi, manager of the Zahleh American Center, offered “sarcastic and angry remarks wherever he goes,”

64 5 July 1958, RG 263, FBIS, Box 92, reel 5, NARA.

contending, “that Lebanon has been deserted by the United States.” A local baker also voiced his frustration, asking: “Where are your American friends?” and proclaiming that he preferred “to die rather than live through Abdul Nasser’s invasion, which would surely come since the Americans did not keep their promises.” In Zahleh, U.S. officials reported, the Eisenhower Doctrine was “condemned as a complete failure.”

On 14 July 1958, rebellious members of the Iraqi military orchestrated a coup d’état, overturning the British-installed Hashemite monarchy and killing pro-Western leaders, such as Iraqi prime minister Nuri Saïd. Crowds across the Middle East rejoiced, as their Arab brethren eliminated the vestiges of foreign domination in Iraq. The *Voice of Free Lebanon* hailed the Iraq revolution and vowed that “the Lebanese people are now determined more than ever to liquidate the regime of imperialist agent Camille Chamoun.” Salaam, for his part, declared it “a great event in the march onwards to Arab liberation.” He considered it “a great victory for Lebanon and for Lebanese people.” According to *Al-Telegraf*, “one should no longer count upon the support of princes, kings or rulers… Any foreigner who has a real grasp of where his interests lie can longer count solely on the support of the people… He must of course first manage to win their trust…” As calls like this one multiplied, Chamoun urged

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Eisenhower to send U.S. military forces to Lebanon immediately “in order to save it from a hostile invasion and a disastrous civil war.”67

The Eisenhower administration took little time to commit itself to the security of the Chamoun regime. That morning, U.S. officials discussed the politics of intervention and enacted *Operation Bluebat*. The potential impact of U.S. involvement in Lebanon’s civil war weighed heavily on their minds. “If we do not respond to the call from Chamoun,” Dulles opined, “we will suffer the decline and indeed the elimination of our influence – from Indonesia to Morocco.” U.S. military intervention, however, would surely engender “a very bad reaction through most of the Arab countries.” Nevertheless, Dulles strongly believed that “we should send our troops into Lebanon.” Eisenhower, for his part, was in agreement, but retained strong concerns regarding “the temper or the attitudes of the people throughout the area.” Vice President Richard M. Nixon was also sensitive to public opinion, as U.S. establishments in Lebanon might once again become the target of violent anti-U.S. protests. “In a way,” Nixon added, “this is our greatest risk – as to what the mobs will do.” Despite a foreseeable intensification of Arab anti-Americanism, Eisenhower concluded that Washington could not afford to “lose” the Middle East, like it had “lost” China. The U.S. president would later write in his memoirs: “In Lebanon the question was whether it would be better to incur the deep resentment of nearly all the

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Arab world … and in doing so risk general war with the Soviet Union or to do something worse – which was to do nothing.”68

Following the White House meeting, Eisenhower ordered roughly 14,000 marines to land in Lebanon in order “to protect American lives and … to encourage the Lebanese government in defense of Lebanese sovereignty and integrity.” Britain and France, to the relief of U.S. officials, opted against direct participation in the military intervention. As U.S. troops prepared to set foot in the land of cedars, the U.S. president remained apprehensive vis-à-vis Lebanese perceptions toward the American display of military power. “The trouble [was] that we have a campaign of hatred against us, not by the governments but by the people,” Ike voiced to Nixon before the landing. “The people [were] on Nasser’s side.” Shortly thereafter, in a telephone conversation, Dulles reassured Eisenhower of his decision to send troops to the Middle East. “As far as Lebanon was concerned,” attested the secretary of state, “we were on pretty solid ground – that there was a large segment of the population on our side there.” Upon receiving word of the U.S. commitment, a relieved Chamoun stressed to McClintock his belief that U.S. “landings must be [conducted] with [an] impressive show of force as possible because of Arab psychology involved.”69


At 3:00 p.m. local time, a first round of U.S. forces landed on Khalde Beach, four miles outside Beirut. They surprisingly faced no noteworthy opposition, as the beach “was a peaceful scene entirely divorced from revolutions, coup d’états, and the troubles of the cold war.” U.S. troops were stunned by “the overzealous welcome given by the friendly Lebanese,” General Sydney S. Wade later reported. “Instead of enemy forces—Lebanese children; instead of enemy armor—soft drink carts.” “Witnessing the assault were bikini-clad-sunbathers, Khalde villagers that had galloped on horseback to the site, and the beach workmen who had dropped their tools and had run to shore.” As U.S. forces charged Khalde Beach, local Lebanese “waved and some even cheered. A few of the young boys even attempted to help the Marines in bringing ashore some of the heavier equipment.”

Roughly three hours later, the Lebanese president explained to his constituency the reasoning behind his appeal for U.S. intervention. Lebanon’s “freedom and sovereignty were in serious danger of falling victim to a foreign plot,” proclaimed Chamoun over the waves of Radio Liban. “Lebanon has always been true to Arab friendship and brotherhood. Lebanon has been tolerant about its Arab brothers, but will not accept [the] idea that [the] will of outsiders can be imposed [on] this country.” U.S. intervention was not his first choice, but in light of the Iraqi revolution, it was now the only viable one to assure the security of Lebanon. Following the presidential


statement, *Radio Liban* announced that the U.S. government ordered 5,000 of its Marines to enter Lebanon immediately and assured that the latter were now in Lebanon “to protect American lives and assure [the] sovereignty of Lebanon.”*71

Lebanese opinions toward the U.S. intervention were indeed mixed. A considerable number of citizens shared the enthusiasm of the beach bums outside Beirut. Jubilation was frequent in many Chamounist circles, most notably that of Mount Lebanon, and some Muslim circles as well. *Al-Amal* offered its gratitude to the United States. “The landing of American troops in Lebanon,” it claimed, “[wa]s an extraordinary measure dictated by exceptional conditions in extraordinary circumstances.” The U.S. intervention “[wa]s a temporary measure and will end when the reasons for it are removed … whatever the results, it will strengthen the entity of independent and sovereign Lebanon.” Zahle and parts of the Bekaa valley hailed the arrival of U.S. forces. “Bonfires were kindled, guns were fired in the air, Americans were embraced in the streets and in Zahle it required extraordinary efforts by the authorities to subdue the celebrators at a late hour Tuesday night,” a U.S. survey team reported. Opposition forces, for their part, “seemed stunned” at the unforeseen “development.” Nonetheless, Salaam urgently warned via radio: “imperialism ha[d] returned with its armies to the beloved homeland in a hideous plot hatched with the traitor agent Camille [Chamoun] and his criminal gang.” As both Lebanese peoples and U.S. officials processed the local and global politics of intervention, one thing

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appeared evident to McClintock: the landing of U.S. Marines “began a new era in [the] current Lebanon crisis.” The U.S. intervention threw Lebanon “into a tailspin.”

The Lebanese civil war became a part of the struggle for decolonization in many Lebanese imaginations. A feeling of betrayal flooded Lebanese society, as many were shocked that the United States, the so-called leader of the Free World and defender of democracy, embraced “empire” in Lebanon like others before it, thus disparaging the “will of the people” and denying them their human rights to full independence without unwanted external interference. Lebanese leaders did not hold back. Adil Usayran, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, immediately disputed the U.S. presence and repudiated Chamoun and Eisenhower’s *raison d’être* for intervention in Lebanon’s internal affairs. Since the start of the civil war, he contended, “the interests of Americans and their lives have thus far not been exposed to any danger.” Chamoun’s request for foreign troops and the U.S. acceptance revived the legacy of empire, leading many Lebanese to equate the move with those of past colonial times and present struggles to the so-called Third World. Former Lebanese president Bechara el-Khoury condemned the action as a “violation of Lebanese 

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independence and sovereignty.” In a message sent from Damascus, as Lebanese authorities denied its dispatch from Beirut, ex-foreign ministers Henri Pharaon, Youssef Salem, Phillipe Tacla, and future president Charles Hélou contended: “No democratic free country[,] big or small[,] would accept [the] landing of foreign troops on its territory in accordance with the request of one man.” Chamoun, Jumblatt deduced, betrayed the Lebanese peoples by reneging his presidential oath “to protect Lebanon’s independence, to ensure that its entity [was] not to be influenced by any foreign country, and to care for the friendly relations between Lebanon and other countries.”

The Lebanese media was equally, if not more, critical of the U.S. intervention. Even though authorities explained that the U.S. venture was not a permanent one, according to Tueini, Lebanese peoples could not help but fear a U.S. takeover of the Lebanese government. Foreign troops, “even if [they] come as liberators, turn in time into occupying forces.” The dominant perception of a U.S. occupation hindered Lebanon’s chances at peace, making it clear that “foreign troops will not solve [the] Lebanon crisis.” Editorialist Michel Abou Jaoude elaborated on this point, contending that “the crisis ha[d] gone out of our hands and into the hands of the dominant and the powerful.” It was in the Lebanese peoples’ best interest to regain control of their civil

war and rally together in the name of national unity to find a quick and effective solution. “The need for heroes and patriots,” he added, “exceed[ed] the need for international forces or American forces.” For this reason, a current emerged from within Lebanese society that the task of protecting Lebanese sovereignty belonged to Lebanon, not the United States. As the conflict had not yet “degenerated into a religious war,” many Lebanese advocated for an internal, trans-sectarian solution exempt of outside meddling.74

With its direct involvement in Lebanon’s civil war and the physical presence of 14,000 troops, the U.S. government sought to engage with Lebanese society in order to mollify local anti-Americanism, manufacture popular consent, and facilitate Operation Bluebat as much as possible. Washington thus employed public diplomacy to improve its image and facilitate cross-cultural dialogue with the Lebanese population. It was crucial, after all, to explain to the Lebanese peoples the reason behind the U.S. landings. The U.S. embassy played a crucial role in this endeavor, using various means to offset unfavorable perceptions concerning Washington’s involvement in Lebanese affairs. One of the first efforts to abate the power of anti-Americanism was the dropping of leaflets. American airplanes dropped one million, single page six inch by eight inch leaflets in various urban and rural areas of Lebanon “to explain President Eisenhower’s decision [to] send American forces to help that country maintain its

independence.” Bearing a picture of Eisenhower, the leaflet addressed the “Citizens of Lebanon.” Written in Arabic and signed by the U.S. president, it used a gendered language of U.S. exceptionalism to project the benevolent paternalism of U.S. global power. The U.S. troops, it read, “are here to assist you in your efforts to maintain the independence of Lebanon against those who desire to interfere with your affairs and who have endangered the peace and security of your homeland. The American officers and men have left their homes to assist you in the protection of your way of life, your property and your families.” The leaflet also highlighted the temporary nature of the U.S. presence, declaring that the United States “will leave your country as soon as the United Nations has taken measures assuring the independence of Lebanon.” U.S. officials in Beirut deemed this cultural strategy an effective one, as they had not found “one copy of the leaflet lying about only three hours after the drop: all had been picked up and read.” The following day, they reported that Lebanese newspapers from myriad political perspectives approved the U.S. message and concluded that “it shows that the American forces at least did not come here to support one political figure but to protect our independence.”

But, contrary to U.S. reports, this explanation failed to convince Lebanese peoples of the U.S. intervention’s validity and necessity. Many Lebanese continued to question Washington’s logic of intervention, leading them to brand its choice to physically involve itself in Lebanese affairs without local popular consent as a new age

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of empire. Distancing itself from the spirit of anti-colonialism that inspired its opposition to the Suez crisis, an *Al-Hayat* editorial opined, the United States “[wa]s now fighting to get its own way” in the Middle East. Under the headline, “America’s aggression ends the myth of democracy,” Yafi vilified U.S. diplomacy and contended, “America is the leader of all democratic countries and the free world but now it has become in our eyes the ugliest picture of colonialism.” The Lebanese peoples, he added, “will not be fooled anymore by its love for world peace or its desire to maintain the freedom of small nations and their independence. We are now more than certain that the United States’ foreign policy doesn’t differ from that of any of the Western colonial countries and that its goal is to ensure its control over the world and to open the door to colonialism and to Zionism.” Troubled by the United States’ “uncharacterized” resort to empire, Yafi rhetorically asked: “What do we call this country occupying Lebanon against its will?”\(^\text{76}\) Many deemed it to be “imperial.”

Unfolding events in Lebanon did not make matters easier on the U.S. government. Four days after the intervention, reports emerged that a majority of the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies did not support Chamoun and his request for U.S. involvement. Usayran refused to relent in his opposition to Chamoun and U.S. foreign policy, arguing that the former failed to consult the chamber before requesting a foreign intervention. Influential political commentator ‘Abdullah Meshnouk opined, “Chamoun himself ha[d] no right in claiming any form of legitimacy after the majority

of parliament has claimed their disapproval of his traitorous actions… The foreigners will leave because that is the rule of the people and Chamoun will be damned by god.”

This point further consolidated the idea that the United States, through its cold war-driven support for Chamoun and decision to engage in armed intervention without popular consent, was becoming an “imperial” power in Lebanese imaginations. In an editorial, Dr. Suheil Idriss reevaluated U.S. global power and its place in Lebanese society. In light of its intervention in Lebanon’s internal affairs, Washington exposed “that it has become today the biggest colonial country in the world, and that its colonization is the most dangerous to mankind because it is always trying to justify itself with a number of proverbs and values, and by doing so, it is giving people the illusion of liberation whereas in fact it is enslavement… Perhaps the real Lebanon” will be the first to defeat “American colonialism” and uncover “this giant country that is controlling the world with its lies, misrepresentations and ambitions. The Arabs were able to get rid of French and English colonialists but today they’re invited to fight this devil that is claiming it is the headquarters of democracy and the source of freedoms!” Abou Jaoude also questioned U.S. motives, claiming “it is quite clear that Beirut’s calls would have never reached the ears of Washington if Washington didn’t

intend on hearing them in the first place.”78 A imperial culture of Orientalism prevented it from doing so.

Lebanese communities continued to share mixed attitudes toward U.S. involvement in its internal affairs. Since the initial landing at Khalde Beach, the U.S. embassy in Beirut “received many telephone calls, cables and letters from political personalities, Lebanese correspondents and persons of all stations in life commenting on the presence of United States troops in the country.” Father Yussuf Norib Harb and lawyer Jean Norib Harb, for instance, expressed profound appreciation for U.S. support and “asked that the troops remain until Lebanon’s future as an independent country [was] assured.” McClintock conducted a random poll of ten “man-in-street types” and found that there was a “tremendous reserve of good will toward the U.S. government.” Many of the latter reportedly “overcame their immediate objections [toward the] presence of U.S. troops but not their fear [that the] troops would be used to maintain President Chamoun in office…” Others were quick to profess their amity for the American people, while criticizing Chamoun’s request and Washington’s initiatives. Naim, a Muslim concierge at the Shams apartment building in Beirut, conveyed his opinion to a resident, U.S. official Harry Howard. The Muslim population, in Naim’s estimation, predominately rejected the U.S. government’s involvement in Lebanon’s internal affairs. “This does not mean … that Muslims dislike Americans as individuals at all, or would seek to do them harm,” he contended. Rather, the White House was at fault “in supporting Governments, whether in

Lebanon, Jordan, or Iraq, which are not … either representative of the people or responsive to their aspirations.” Anti-Americanism in Lebanon, he explained, was the by-product of local resentment toward the Chamoun government and U.S. “imperial” culture.⁷⁹

Following the deployment of U.S. marines, Eisenhower sent a special emissary, Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs Robert Murphy, to conduct a preliminary assessment of the Lebanese crisis and facilitate a political solution. In his first report to the U.S. president, Murphy qualified the U.S. intervention “successful in that it ha[d] worked smoothly, our forces and equipment [we]re ashore and not a shot ha[d] been fired.” Yet its political impact was “dubious.” Chamoun was clearly at odds with a majority of his constituency to the point that “he ha[d] been a self-constituted prisoner in his residence for 67 days” and “ha[d] apparently not dared to look out of the window of his house during this period…” This said, it was evident to him that Chamoun’s initial story to the White House did not necessarily match the realities on the ground in Lebanon and that it had been to some extent misleading. This was not to say the U.S. intervention was a mistake, but existing circumstances demanded a re-evaluation of U.S. strategy. “Taken in isolation,” Murphy reported, “our military operation here obviously does not provide a solution to the political problem weighing upon us in the Middle East.” After all, “the mere presence of our forces in a small

portion of the country seems to have brought no fundamental change in the local political climate.” If anything, it amplified Lebanese opposition to Chamoun and intensified the civil war. For this reason, Murphy recommended that, rather than fortifying the presidential palace and fending off international intrusions, it was in the United States’ best “interest to promote a solution of the immediate and major Lebanese political problem, i.e. the election of a new president.” This turn of events would surely conciliate the Lebanese crisis and offer the United States a face-saving window for gradual withdrawal. As another U.S. official put it shortly thereafter, “we [need to] get out as soon as it is possible to get out.”

In light of Murphy’s and other reports, Eisenhower deduced that “we must do a better job in winning the minds of the Arab peoples.” More had to be done to gain Lebanese support for its presence, as existing efforts failed to counter the United States’ “imperial” image. Another key U.S. weapon used in shaping popular opinion, unbeknownst to the Lebanese public, was its access to Radio Liban, a Lebanese government-sponsored radio station. Immediately following the landings, U.S. officials in Beirut “appealed to the Ministry of Information for one-and-a-half hours of broadcast time on Radio Liban.” On 23 July 1958, the Chamoun regime granted program rights to the USIS in Beirut “without attribution” to the United States, as well as the installation of “two direct lines linking [the] subcenter studio in [the] Embassy to [the] Radio Liban transmitter.” In the process, Lebanese authorities also permitted U.S. public affairs officers the immediate interruption of programming in order to

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deliver “breaking news” regarding U.S. military and diplomatic efforts. One obstacle stood in the way of U.S. public diplomacy via Radio Liban, however. The Lebanese radio station had a “woefully weak signal,” which could barely be heard in Beirut, let alone the remainder of Lebanon. Washington, therefore, lent the radio station a ten-kilowatt transmitter. This proved successful, as U.S. officials reported, “Beirut radio could now be heard in Cairo… Beirut Radio was now heard strongly and clearly beyond the Lebanese borders.”

Radio Liban played an integral role within U.S. public diplomacy during Washington’s intervention in the Lebanon crisis of 1958. Above all, the USIS in Beirut used its radio time to persuade Lebanese popular opinion “of the legality and benefits to them of having American Forces temporarily in Lebanon as a bulwark against external aggression.” U.S. programs, which conveyed “hard news and explanatory commentary,” served as a critical “means of countering distortion and hostile propaganda already appearing in the ‘revolutionary’ wing of the Lebanese press and flooding the air from Radio Cairo, Damascus, Moscow, and various clandestine stations operating in Syria and Lebanon.” U.S. airwave messages strictly stressed “positive stories” and sought to appeal to Lebanese nationalism, thus encouraging Lebanese peoples to distance themselves from Arabism and Nasserism. They also aggressively painted grand pictures of U.S.-Lebanon cooperation and joint efforts “to

preserve Lebanese freedom and sovereignty.” Finally, U.S. agents sought to gain local trust and consent toward the U.S. mission by continuously emphasizing “Eisenhower’s and Dulles’ promise to withdraw the U.S. Forces when Lebanon requested them to go.”

As U.S. public diplomacy gained momentum, the Eisenhower administration met to discuss the Lebanese situation and the ways in which it could carry on the promotion of a benevolent image in Lebanon. The perceived threat of Arabism, Dulles noted, continued to haunt U.S. prestige in the Arab world. “We must regard Arab nationalism as a flood which [wa]s running strongly. We cannot successfully oppose it, but we can put up sand bags around positions we must protect.” Eisenhower agreed with the secretary of state, adding “that a Western position cannot be held against the underlying and often unthinkable convictions of the Arab world, because we then ha[d] no way of dealing with them.” Public opinion, *grosso modo*, could not dictate U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, but popular consent was instrumental to solidifying U.S. global power in the ages of decolonization and the cold war. The United States, therefore, had to work with Lebanese peoples and their views. “We must either work with it or change it, or some of both,” Eisenhower declared. While recognizing that local discontent toward U.S. foreign policy was a *fait accompli* of global affairs, the U.S. president remained perplexed as to “how to get ourselves to the point where the Arabs will not be hostile to us.” Somehow, the United States had to

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overcome its struggle “to get in touch” and direct “the mood and the emotion of the people.” The only apparent way immediately to do so was to ensure the election of a new president, that the latter obtained the consent of opposition leaders and enact military withdrawal. Murphy, McClintock, and other U.S. officials in Lebanon pressed local personalities of all persuasions to abandon hard lines toward Chamoun and the U.S. government, thus creating a climate more favorable for Lebanese reconciliation. Such efforts proved successful, according to a U.S. report, as “papers remained optimistic regarding special envoy Murphy’s peace solution seeking.” Salaam, for his part, publicly encouraged opponents of Chamoun “to avoid activities which might enable Chamoun [to] provoke fighting between U.S. forces and [the] opposition.”

U.S. discussions regarding relations with the Arab world intensified at this time. As the Eisenhower administration discussed the possibility of U.S. participation in a Western intervention in Jordan, Director of the United States Information Agency (USIA) George Allen opined that “would be a very bad thing” from “the public relations point of view.” “The United States had a convincing story on Lebanon and we have some hope of coming out of the Lebanese situation with honor and dignity, but our position is not even best in Lebanon,” Allen said. “We must adjust to the tide of Arab nationalism, and must do so before the hotheads get control in every country.”


84 McClintock to Secretary of State, 24 July 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5; McClintock to Secretary of State, 23 July 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 4; and McClintock to Secretary of State, 22 July 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 4.
Dulles, for his part, continued to belittle the significance of popular opinion and public diplomacy, as U.S. priorities should primarily be directed toward the Arab governments, not the Arab peoples. “While it was important to win as much support from public opinion [as possible],” he affirmed, “the United States could not abandon its positions, its friends, and its principles merely because its actions happened to be unpopular.” Eisenhower once again concurred with his secretary of state. Yet, he reminded his colleagues “that we want to get the indigenous peoples as well as governments on our side if possible. Otherwise our policies would stand on a foundation of sand, and the arms and economic assistance we send to these governments will eventually be used against us.” “If the people are alienated,” Ike added, “we are in a very bad position.” Dulles responded that “it was difficult to get people on the side of the West if Western policies were intrinsically unpopular.” In his mind, the primordial question was: “[D]o we allow ourselves to be driven out of an area just because our position there is unpopular?” Nixon, who witnessed the furor to anti-Americanism firsthand in Venezuela, re-centered the discussion by claiming that “there was sometimes a tendency to equate the voice of the mob with the voice of the majority. The two voices were not always the same.” Acts of violence against the U.S. government, in his opinion, did not represent “the majority of the people.” Siding with Dulles, Nixon acknowledged the importance of gaining the support of popular opinion, “but we could not allow a wave of mob emotionalism to sweep away all our positions in the Near East.”

85 “Memorandum of Discussion of the 373d Meeting of the National Security Council,” 24 July 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960, 12: 100-109. On 13 May 1958, local Venezuelans attacked U.S. Vice President Richard M. Nixon’s car as he visited the
Meanwhile, the Lebanese opposition made U.S. withdrawal a condition of its full participation in the election of a new head of state. According to its “Revolutionary Manifesto,” a refusal to implement this fundamental demand would engender a boycott of the elections and a prolongation of the “revolt.” Chamoun, for his part, was left with no other alternative but to encourage his supporters to respect such demands and elect a new Lebanese president. On the eve of the election, a pro-Chamounist deputy revealed to a U.S. embassy officer that the outgoing Lebanese president “had hoped [the] arrival [of the] Sixth Fleet would provide him with sufficient strength and maneuverability to extend [his] term in office, but now [Chamoun] realizes [that] this [wa]s not the case.” In other words, by invoking the cold war, in a last ditch attempt to maintain power, Chamoun successfully duped the Eisenhower administration into coming to his aid.

On 31 July, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies crossed the “election hurdle” and elected General Fu’ad Shihab to the Lebanese presidency. Both Washington and the Lebanese peoples lauded the regime change as it signaled a coming end to

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86 McClintock to Secretary of State, 29 July 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5; McClintock to Secretary of State, 30 July 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5; and McClintock to Secretary of State, 26 July 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5.

87 McClintock to Secretary of State, 31 July 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5.
Chamoun’s reign and brought U.S. withdrawal one-step closer to realization. Many Lebanese communities welcomed the prospect of a U.S. retreat, but held back as they awaited physical proof. In a conversation with McClintock, the newly-elected Lebanese president conveyed that he was “under very intense pressure from various political elements including moderate groups as well as [the] opposition” to deliver “an immediate public declaration calling on U.S. forces to withdraw from Lebanon.” The Lebanese situation was not ripe for such a declaration on his behalf, however. Besides, the opposition needed to hear from Washington. Shihab consequently wondered “if it might not be possible for the United States (and he hinted a statement would have greater impact coming from the President Eisenhower) to make [a] declaration indicating that with [an] improved security situation in Lebanon, it would presently be possible to re-embark” U.S. forces. Perhaps by happenstance, while questioned in a press conference on his reaction to the Lebanese election, Dulles declared, “we would not stay in Lebanon after we had been asked to withdraw by the duly constituted Government of Lebanon… We might not think that it was wise to withdraw, but we would withdraw under those conditions.” In a conversation with McClintock the following day, Shihab shared that “this was exactly what he had in mind and was very please at the tenor of [the] Secretary’s remarks.”

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88 McClintock to Secretary of State, 31 July 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5; Cited in E.W. Kenworthy, “Marines to Leave Lebanon if Asked,” New York Times, 1 August 1958, page 1; and McClintock to Secretary of State, 1 August 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5.
As news of a change in U.S. policy toward withdrawal spread throughout Lebanon, President-elect Fu’ad Shihab publicly declared that the “evacuation of ‘foreign troops’ [was] one of [his] national goals.” According to Shihab, the presence of U.S. Marines in Lebanon became a threat to “national unity.” He was left with no other choice but to publicly request a U.S. exit. In private, both the U.S. government and Shihab agreed that “withdrawal” would serve as the most powerful tool in mollifying the civil war and amending the U.S. image in Lebanon. McClintock, for his part, firmly believed “that a spectacular re-embarkation of one battalion across the beaches with attendant publicity if undertaken soon would have beneficial political impact both here and abroad.” In response, Dulles acknowledged, “We have very much in mind [the] psychological value of some reduction in US forces [from] Lebanon in [the] near future.”

Yet initial Lebanese reactions to withdrawal were not as Washington anticipated. Chamoun supporters and others urged the United States to stay in Lebanon. Henri Pharaon, who unsuccessfully tried to mediate a solution to the civil war, told the U.S. embassy, “it would be deeply regretted by all factions in Lebanon if US forces left this country ‘too soon’.” According to Dr. Vahalen Tachdjan from the Bekaa Valley, U.S. troops were critical in maintaining the internal stability of Lebanon. In his opinion, “a vicious confessional struggle will break out when the

89 McClintock to Secretary of State, 5 August 1958, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Lebanon: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5.

90 McClintock to State, 7 August 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5; and Dulles to McClintock, 10 August 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5.
troops depart… [F]or this reason, the troops must remain.” Many pro-Chamounists
elements concurred with Dr. Tachdjian and openly criticized all potential changes in
U.S. military activities. According to the U.S. embassy, they commonly complained,
“If you are not going to stay, you should have never come,” and, “Why did you come
if you are going to take no action?”

Other Lebanese citizens welcomed the prospect of an American retreat, but
expressed skepticism. Salaam, for instance, questioned the sincerity of U.S.
withdrawal and dismissed Washington’s announcement as one of strict symbolism.
“While rejoicing over this symbolic step toward evacuation,” he declared, “past
experience and events force us to be vigilant in regards to such measures which do not
satisfy our demand that there be a departure of all occupation troops.” An-Nahar also
displayed skepticism, as “the 1,800 marines are a small fraction of the 14,000 or
15,000 in Lebanon. Their withdrawal can only be construed as a token act of good
faith toward all U.N. members.” In a conversation with a U.S. official, Blanche Daoud,
a Lebanese secretary, discussed the potentiality of withdrawal. As the former informed
her that U.S. forces “would leave as soon as their mission had been accomplished,”
Daoud responded by saying: “don’t kid me, you and I both know they are here to
stay.” U.S. troops were also subject to local resentment. On one occasion, the hoisting
of an American flag by U.S. troops led the Lebanese police to take it down. “U.S.

91 McClintock to State, 6 August 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal Affairs and External
Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5; “Political Situation in Lebanon,” Memorandum of
Conversation, 11 August 1958, RG 84, Beirut, Classified General Records, 1936-1961,
Box 42, NARA; and McClintock to State, 12 August 1958, RG 59; Lebanon: Internal
Affairs and External Affairs, 1955-1959; reel 5.
forces had been invited in,” the latter justified to the U.S. forces, “but … they were not in occupation and … the sovereignty’s was Lebanon’s.”

The first battalion of 1,800 Marines departed on 13 August 1958, a mere month after entering Lebanon. On 8 October 1958, the United States, in agreement with the Lebanese government and the United Nations, officially announced “complete withdrawal.” Two weeks later, the last U.S. Marine departed. Some Lebanese were disenchanted with this move, but many contended that the U.S. decision to intervene in the Lebanese civil war of 1958 was not the United States’ “finest hour.” With the formation of a new Cabinet under the slogan “no victor, no vanquished” the following week, a significant majority of Lebanese peoples were relieved to witness the American retreat and the end of a bloody civil war. “All Lebanon—from political leaders to man-in-street—hailed [the] new four-man cabinet” led by Karame and the “end of strikes.” “For the first time in over five months,” a French officer in Beirut commented, the city “regained its animation. We had almost forgotten the noise, the agitation, and the typical chaos of the Orient.” Excited to have regained their regular activities and to reconnect with their neighbors, Christian and Muslim merchants”


embraced each other “in a sign of reconciliation.” Salaam even went so far as to say: “this is the happiest day of my life.” Al-Telegraf stated that, “the independence of Lebanon could only be safeguarded by Lebanese unity.” The Maronite Patriarch agreed, telling Beirut-Massa that, “In Lebanon, we do not have to complain about sectarianism, but those who make it a business and profession.” The front-page of Al-Kifah bore two pictures of U.S. soldiers on the verge on withdrawal and bore the English headline: “GO HOME.” “The summoning of the fleet was a grievous political error,” An-Nahar added. The U.S. forces were “leaving behind the final conviction that [they] will not return, and that [it] is stupid to rely on it or use it as a threat against any side. We should live together as one people and one state without fleets or armies to protect us or else it would be better that our aspirations for independence and dignity ‘evacuate’ with the last soldier leaving us today.”95

Following withdrawal, U.S. officials considered what L’Orient called “Operation Prestige” “an eminently successful exercise in limited war.” The landing preserved the socio-political status quo in Lebanon and U.S. prestige in the Arab world. As McClintock recalled, it “served to check both Soviet and Nasserist aspirations, while at the same time heartening our friends in [the] free world.”

95 McClintock to State, 16 October 1958, RG 469; Lebanon Subject Files, 1953-1958; Box 12; LEBANON-POLITICAL AFFAIRS 1955-1956; NARA; Louis Roché à le Ministère des affaires étrangères, 24 October 1958, Direction Afrique-Levant, Liban LA 628, 1953-1959, MAE, La Courneuve; “Withdrawal of US Troops Evokes Joy,” 26 October 1958, RG 263, FBIS, Box 92, reel 8, NARA; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 9 October 1958, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 5; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 27 Octobre 1958, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 5; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 21 Octobre 1958, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 5; MAE, Nantes; and “Press Reaction,” 26 October 1958, RG 263, FBIS, Box 92, reel 8, NARA.
USIS in Beirut also judged its activities “an unqualified success,” as it believed Lebanese peoples understood U.S. involvement.⁹⁶

Perceived short-term achievements aside, one is left to question the long-term impact of the first contemporary, overt U.S. military intervention in the Middle East. Prior to 1958, the cold war and the rivalry between Washington and Moscow were relegated to discussions of world politics in national newspapers and local coffee shops. The arrival of government-issued U.S. forces changed things, as post-independent Lebanese peoples witnessed the formal power of Washington first hand for the first time. Many Lebanese filtered U.S. global power through past and present experiences with decolonization and associated U.S. cold war strategy with the legacies French and British imperialism. To the disapproval U.S. officials, U.S.-Lebanon relations increasingly took on new, “imperial” dimensions. Despite departing on relatively “good terms,” the presence of U.S. boots in Lebanon left a profound imprint on Lebanese society and U.S. foreign policy.

CHAPTER V

EMPIRE BY ASSOCIATION

By the conclusion of the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948-1949, U.S. standing in
Lebanese and greater Arab imaginations was at an all-time low. U.S. interests
appeared in serious jeopardy. And so were popular Arab interests. Following the U.S.
decision to support the creation of the state of Israel and their humiliating military
defeat against Zionism, Arabs mourned the loss of Arab Palestine and the United
States. According to this mindset, the circumstances surrounding Nakba left the Arab
world without the main defender of liberty, democracy, and decolonization:
Washington. The Arab world, at this time, wanted the United States to return to the
putative anti-imperial roots of its forefathers and facilitate an Arab renaissance. In the
minds of many, only Israel stood in their way.

Dr. Nabih Faris, a prominent professor at the AUB, conveyed this sentiment in
an article published in the Beirut-based, English-language newspaper, The Daily Star,
roughly three years into the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arabs remained in a state of
disenchantment. Openly addressed to a U.S. audience, Faris’s editorial sought to
answer the “frequently asked… question: What do the Arabs want?” As an individual
who was “familiar with the gropings of the Arab mind,” he was well positioned to
shed light on the U.S. dilemma. Arab peoples, above all, wanted the United States to abandon its perceived support of European empires and their ongoing enterprises. Arab peoples, “like America herself in the eighteenth century,” struggle “for their independence.” And the Palestinian cause stood at the forefront of Arab decolonization. Washington, Faris contended, must “disengage her Arab policy from her Israel policy. Israel,” after all, “came into being mainly by virtue of American intervention against the articulate though ineffective protest of the Arab world.” The United States should not stand against the Arab world and maintain its blanket support for the Jewish state. “A new leaf must be turned,” argued the AUB professor. “And it [wa]s for America to convince the Arabs that a new state ha[d] been made.” Israel could no longer dictate U.S. policy in the Middle East. If anything, the United States needed to display a more evenhanded approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. “The fate of the free world and of America herself might depend on such a consideration.”

Otherwise, the advent of another war in the Middle East was inevitable and the promises of U.S.-Arab relations and decolonization would be lost.

Despite the signing of official armistices between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the Middle East remained in flux. The conflict redrew the regional map and fixed new, international borders. The demarcations “followed no natural topographical contours.” Such realities exacerbated the likelihood of conflict, as the new borders “abruptly severed Arabs from their lands and kin.” Daily lives suffered. The very visible plight

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1 Bruins to Secretary of State, 21 August 1952, RG 59; Confidential US State Department Central Files; Lebanon, Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954; reel 13.

of Palestinian refugees, furthermore, served as an ongoing reminder to Lebanese, Jordanians, Syrians, and Egyptians of their humiliating defeat to Israel. Empire dealt another blow to the Arab world. Arabs, as a result, maintained much animosity toward the Jewish state and its patrons.

The Arab-Israeli conflict played a central role in shaping Lebanese perceptions of the United States. U.S. officials, as a result, remained preoccupied by the proliferation of Arab anti-Americanism and pondered various ways to improve U.S. image in the Arab world. On 1 May 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson echoed U.S. concerns, conveying his sense of urgency in “stemming this tide of anti-Americanism,” as “the current emotionalism bode[d] no good for the interests of the United States, nor for that matter for the best interests of the Arab states themselves.” In order to offset this problem, Acheson proposed that U.S. posts in the Arab Middle East undertake an extensive public campaign to reinforce U.S. “impartiality” regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict.³

There was a major problem, however. U.S. policy at the time failed to support this initiative. Words did not equate to deeds. The Truman administration hesitated to publicly take a tough stand against Israel and promote peace in a sincere way, thus fortifying the popular Arab idea that Zionism’s imperialist ideology dictated U.S. policy.⁴ In Arab imaginations, reported a U.S. official, the United States “continued to support Israel not only morally, but economically as well.” U.S. initiatives to redress

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³ “Anti-Americanism in the Arab World,” Acheson to certain American diplomats and consular offices, 1 May 1950, RG 59 511.86/5-150; NARA.

⁴ Peter Hahn, Caught in the Middle East, 98.
its standing, whether it be through economic or social aid, sought to alter “this hard core antipathy because the measures taken ha[d] been directed toward allaying the symptoms of the Arab malaise rather than attacking its cause.” Although Lebanon showed “the greate[st] popular sympathy” in the Arab world, “both official and public, for the U.S.,” it remained in distress over the betrayal of U.S. exceptionalism.⁵

Whereas many in Washington remained convinced its contemporary leadership and humanitarian initiatives toward Palestinian refugees improved U.S. stock in Arab imaginations, U.S. officers in the Arab world felt otherwise.⁶ The view from Beirut differed drastically from that in Washington. On the eve of upgrading the U.S. legation in Lebanon to the status of embassy in January 1952, U.S. diplomatic representative Harold Minor relayed his deep sense of frustration over U.S. involvement in the Middle East. The United States was “being criticized” and doubts “[w]ere being expressed.” The Middle East, he warned, would slip “away from us if our policies w[ere] not carefully considered and boldly enunciated.” And bold they needed to be. Minor, above all, was “struck at the paradox of our position” in Beirut. Lebanese peoples and their government remained openly antagonistic; yet there existed “a basic friendliness on the part of people which c[ould] still be exploited with hope of success.” Lebanese peoples, in his opinion, maintained “a reservoir of goodwill toward us; this reservoir [wa]s sound but almost dry of water and in need of replenishing. One

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⁵ Frechtling to Gildden, 15 December 1950, RG 59; General Records of the Department of State, 1950-1954 Central Decimal File; Box 2847; NARA.

⁶ Under Secretary Report from James E. Webb to James S. Lay, Jr. "Progress Report by the Under Secretary of State on the Implementation of United States Policy toward Israel and the Arab States (NSC 47/2)," January 26, 1951, RG 59; Records of the Department of State; Decimal Files, 1950-1954; NARA.
has to visit provincial towns, as I have been doing, to observe the affection for us which exist[ed] in the hearts of many simple people.” With the reserves at near drought levels, U.S.-Lebanon relations were “at a crossroads.” The best way for the United States to refill the reservoir was to accompany current humanitarian activities with “declarations and actions designed to win the hearts and minds of the masses.” More water did not suffice; rather, a more sustainable infrastructure proved crucial. According to Minor, “It [wa]s with the improvement of the superstructure” of U.S.-Lebanon relations “that we should now be concerned.” A genuine, “unbiased attitude regarding the Palestine problem” served as a solid starting point, for which Lebanese peoples so far had “not see[n] such evidence. Equal financial treatment in the refugee and economic fields for Israel on the one hand and forty million Arabs on the other, for example d[id] not strike” them “as fair.” Lebanese confidence in the United States required serious restoration. “As one open critic put it to” the U.S. diplomatic representative, “‘A man who has been bitten by a snake is afraid of a piece of rope.’” It was up to the United States to salvage and restore Lebanese trust.7

But mutual understanding proved elusive for the remainder of the Truman administration. Upon his election, U.S. president-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower vowed to present the United States and the world with a “new look.” His holistic approach also applied to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Ike wanted to show the Arab world that times were changing. Unable to resist the opportunity, Minor once again “play[ed] this last (tragic) movement of Near Eastern sonata.” He repeated his call for U.S. impartiality.

7 Minor to Secretary of State, 3 December 1951, RG 59; General Records of the Department of State, 1950-1954; Central Decimal Files; Box 2847; NARA.
“We must simply reassure Arabs, set at rest their overwhelming fears, and give
evidence to objectivity,” avowed the U.S. ambassador in Lebanon. “If this [wa]s not
done, it [wa]s quite possible [the] Arab world w[ould] drift into chaos and ultimately
go [the] way of China.” Despite relative military tranquility in the Arab-Israel conflict,
Arabs remained “punch drunk, but they [we]re very much back in the ring for another
go ad ha[d] plenty of new-found energy and friends to see them through.” Now was
the time to aggressively promote peace. And only a perceived impartial United States
could undertake in this daunting task. “But if we [we]re to make progress,” Minor
maintained, “we must endeavor to see things through their eyes and understand the
complexities which govern them.” Only “[o]nce they [we]re convinced that we [we]re
not solidly with Israel and against them, and once our leadership position [wa]s
restored, we c[ould] follow a middle of the road course with courage and conviction.”

Once in the Oval Office, Eisenhower received multiple reports that supported
Minor’s plea. A National Intelligence Estimate, dated 15 January 1953, put it bluntly:
the “United States[’] association with Israel [wa]s a continuing irritant in US-Arab
relations and the major obstacle to the acceptance of U.S. influence in the Middle
East.” Arabs claimed “that the United States [wa]s partially responsible for the
establishment of Israel, which” they understood “as an act of ruthless anti-Arab
imperialism.” An avid advocate of public diplomacy, Eisenhower asked his secretary
of state, John Foster Dulles, to undertake an extensive tour of the Middle East and

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For more on Eisenhower’s new look, see John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of
Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the
relay in person the president’s commitment to U.S. impartiality toward the Arab-Israeli conflict and the overall aspirations of Arab-Muslim peoples. The State Department included Beirut as one of Dulles’ destinations.9

“Armed with a thick, confidential black book which summarize[d] 160 foreign problems culled from top secret State and Defense files… Dulles went marching through the Middle East” in early May 1953. Lebanese peoples, the State Department wrote in a position paper, “resent[ed]” the “creation of Israel, but not as do other Arab states.” Whereas the Lebanese government officially stood by the position of the Arab League, some of its conservative and sectarian-minded “Christian leaders” privately buttressed the “establishment of another enclave against [the] Moslem world.” In spite of their position of power, such views were marginal at best. Lebanese public opinion demanded and gave such leaders “no choice but to follow other Arabs on the Palestine issue,” as “the emotions of the street c[ould] arise on the question as easily as in more fanatical countries.” This said, “The immense reservoir of good will was heavily drained in Lebanon by our support of Israel.”10 The U.S. task to promote impartiality and prepare Lebanese peoples for peace appeared to be a daunting one. Yet


impartiality was an important concept in U.S. attempts to distance itself from the perception of empire and the popular struggle for decolonization in post-independence Lebanon and the Arab world.

If Dulles failed to take such words seriously, he was in for a big surprise once he set foot in Beirut. Upon exiting the airport, his entourage got a solid look at Arab disenchantment. Demonstrations against U.S. foreign policy took place all over the city. The magnitude of protests even took the Lebanese government by surprise. If anything, the U.S. secretary of state rapidly realized the urgent need to replenish Lebanese trust in U.S. global power. The U.S. delegation immediately headed for the Lebanese president’s residence. Camille Chamoun, at this time, shared his belief with Dulles that U.S.-Arab relations were “at a crossroad.” Chamoun relayed that Lebanese peoples did not hate the United States, but held “a feeling of bitter disappointment as a result of Palestine.” This question preoccupied Lebanon and reminded Lebanese of its state of ongoing decolonization.11

Lebanese foreign minister George Hakim, in his meeting with Dulles, added that the Arab-Israeli conflict prevented Lebanon from undertaking “its traditional role” as an “intermediary between East and West.” Dulles told Hakim that “He was grieved... that a measure of ill will will now replace[d] good will.” The current state of U.S.-Arab relations was a product “of a previous administration” and “while it w[ould] not be possible to obliterate the past (Israel exists and it will continue to exist), it d[id] not preclude the possibility of [a] better friendship to eradicate the scars.” Thanks to

the growing presence of Lebanese immigrants in the United States, U.S.-Lebanon relations rested on a strong foundation. Americans, whether it was through the AUB, commercial companies, or missionary work, also had their own connections to the land of cedars. Dulles’ own sister, he confided, “lived in Beirut for two years.” Lebanon’s welfare was of interest to the United States. For this reason, the Eisenhower administration committed itself to a position of objectivity vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict, which greatly affected Lebanese quotidian life. “The past could not be undone,” he once again confirmed, “but it [wa]s possible to proceed from here on with fairness and impartiality.” Arab peoples mattered to the U.S. president. This alone justified his current visit. Hakim welcomed Dulles’ comments and “concluded the conversation by expressing his high hopes in the new American administration and stating his belief that it [wa]s still not too late to save the Near East.”

From there, the U.S. secretary of state went to his last major stop of the day: the home of Lebanese prime minister Sa’ib Salaam. Salaam immediately told Dulles that, “The faith which the Arabs had in America has… been lost and it must be regained.” The United States needed a new look in places like Lebanon. Dulles agreed. The United States, he explained, sympathized with Arab peoples and decolonization. Contrary to popular beliefs in Lebanon, it had “not lost its faith in freedom.” As he told Hakim prior to seeing Salaam, “the United States [wa]s not a colonial-minded power.” Washington granted independence to Cuba and the Philippines. As evidenced in the case of Indochina and Egypt, it continued to fight for “colonial and dependent people.” Empire was not its ambition, whether it be in the Middle East or elsewhere.

The United States did not support Israeli expansionism. It was now “prepared to consider measures and concert action to prevent aggression by Israel.” Such statements pleased the Lebanese prime minister. He declared them to be “well-founded.” U.S. leadership in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Salaam insisted, was imperative.\(^{13}\)

After a good night’s rest, the U.S. delegation headed to the Chamber of Deputies and met with members of Lebanese Foreign Affairs Committee. Chaired by ‘Abdullah Yafi, the committee presented Dulles with a statement, which outlined a number of suggestive changes to U.S. foreign policy. Atop the list was a new position toward the Palestinian question. Lebanese peoples, it maintained, did not want peace with Israel. What they wanted was the United States to contain Zionism and use its influence to obtain Israel’s compliance with UN resolutions, as well as halt immigration. As he had done the day before, Dulles reassured the Lebanese leaders that Washington was “against any aggressive tendencies by” the Jewish state and “a new era of Arab-American relations” commenced. After a brief meeting thereafter with a few U.S. “Near East hands,” Dulles bid farewell to Beirut and left for Damascus.\(^{14}\)

Upon his return to the United States, Dulles reported to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee his perception of Arab bitterness. Above all, Dulles explained, Arab peoples from Cairo to Baghdad feared empire in the form of Israeli expansionism and loathed the United States’ apparent support. Arabs were “very much afraid of


Israel, and th[ought] of Israel as an expanding state, and that under the influence of [the] expansion of Zionism, they [we]re going to keep bringing more and more Jews in, and they w[ould] have to expand.” They were also fully aware of the Jewish state’s military superiority. Israel’s “army would march in a few days to Damascus, and there would be nothing to stop them.” The United States needed to turn the tides of popular Arab perceptions and distance itself from the perception of empire in the post-independence Middle East. Dulles believed that his visits planted seeds that “may help to eliminate the fear that [wa]s felt in the Arab countries.”

Another way to do so would be to play a much more active role in promoting peaceful coexistence and thwarting ongoing border incidents between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Existing boundaries, established during the first truce of the 1948-49 war, were “drawn in a very artificial way.” Innocent Arabs, most of which were either farmers or refugees, infiltrated Israel daily. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF), in turn, adopted a military policy “to shoot at any Arab who crossed the line.” As Dulles informed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “a great many people along the border who actually live in their homes, technically, but their back yards, so to speak, their little bits of plots of land and their well from which they get their water, is on the other side of the armistice line.” According to the U.S. secretary of state, “it might be just as if you took this room and drew a line in the middle, there is a house over these and the vine and the fig tree is on this side.” Arab peoples were being shot at when attempting “to get some water or pick a fig.” This did not make sense; it simply
generated more Arab antagonism toward Israel and foreign governments, like Washington, that supported its creation and continuing existence.\(^\text{15}\)

The U.S. government had to escape the crossfire. Dulles himself was convinced of this. Impartiality was the necessary course to avoid entanglement in Lebanon’s ongoing decolonization. Following his trip, he now believed that “the Arab peoples [we]re willing to listen more receptively and with less prejudice or mistrust to what the United States ha[d] to say than they ha[d] been for some time.” Much skepticism remained, but Washington saw an opportunity. The U.S. secretary of state informed diplomatic posts across the Arab world to suddenly trumpet U.S. objectivity. Most importantly, he told them to convey that “The United States [wa]s making progress in understanding Arab problems, attitudes and aspirations” and that it was “interested in the well-being of the peoples of the Middle East.”\(^\text{16}\)

During a NSC meeting, the Eisenhower administration fixed its objectives concerning U.S. public diplomacy in the Arab world. In order to reverse “present anti-Western trends in popular attitudes,” the U.S. government must “convince local leaders and peoples that the age of Western imperialism [wa]s over; and that Western positions [we]re being willingly readjusted in an enlightened manner and with full respect for national independence and sovereign equality of the Near Eastern states as rapidly as the interests of security allow[ed].” In order to continue to regain lost prestige and amend

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\(^\text{16}\) Secretary of State to Certain American Diplomatic Posts, 6 July 1953, RG 59; Records of the Department of State; Decimal Files, 1950-1954; NARA.
the popular Arab view that U.S. policy was pro-Israeli and supported empire in the Middle East, it was imperative that the United States “[m]aintain both the fact and appearance of impartial friendship with the Arab states and Israel, avoiding preferential treatment of any state and demonstrating equal interest in the well-being of each.”

Meanwhile, border clashes between Israel and its Egyptian and Jordanian neighbors steadily escalated. Increasingly impatient with Arab infiltrations, the Israeli government created “a special commando unit, named Unit 101, commanded by [Ariel] Sharon,” to stymie Arab movement in and out of Israel. This “brutal” task force undertook numerous raids into the West Bank and Gaza to reprimand infiltrators. On 18 October 1953, Sharon’s unit went too far. In retaliation for an attack on a house and killings in an Israeli settlement east of Tel Aviv, Unit 101 invaded the Jordanian border village of Qibya, killed roughly sixty innocent civilians, and burned down the village. According to Avi Shlaim, “The Qibya massacre unleashed against Israel a storm of international protest of unprecedented severity in the country’s short history.” The United States, for its part, issued a press release, conveying “the deepest sympathies for the families of those who lost their lives in and near Qibya during the recent attacks by Israeli forces.” Israel would be held accountable. The United Nations Security Council convened shortly thereafter and, with U.S. support,

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18 Morris, 278; and Shlaim, 90-91.
passed a resolution that reproached Tel Aviv in the “strongest” terms. UN and U.S. condemnation did not prevent further incidents from taking place, however. Resolved to protect its sovereignty, Israel simply shifted its reprisals to military targets, rather than civilian ones. Arab infiltration organized itself and, in 1954, started to receive logistical support for Egypt. Israeli “sorties,” as a result, “increased in size and firepower.”

Border incidents multiplied and Israeli expansionist talk generated further anxieties in neighboring Arab states, like Lebanon. The Lebanon-Israel border, up to that point, was “relatively stable” by comparison. Beirut tried its best not to antagonize the Jewish state by relocating “many of the Palestinian refugees northward, to camps in Beirut, Tyre, and Sidon, and effectively seal[ing] the border with Israel.” Yet border incidents elsewhere gave Lebanese peoples and its government the impression that “Israelis” were “deliberately engaging” in a “series of military, quasi-military and political actions aimed at keeping [the] frontiers in turmoil.” Israel, many felt, sought “new arrangements” with Western powers to the detriment of the Arab world. It tested U.S. foreign policy. Washington, a U.S. officer in Beirut opined, could not hold “both sides equally responsible. The fact [wa]s that Israel ha[d] gotten out of line and real impartiality require[d]” U.S. censure. “After all, a referee does not cease being

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20 Shlaim, 82; and Morris, 279 and 282.
impartial when he penalizes an offending team.” Dulles and Eisenhower agreed and vowed to “continue [their] present policy of impartiality.”

U.S. reprimands failed to stabilize the Israel-Lebanon border and the region as a whole. Instead, other sources of dispute emerged. In light of mounting immigration into Israel, water became a highly touted resource for development and modernization efforts. Israeli interest in the diversion of the Jordan River, which ran through Lebanon and Syria, alarmed its Arab neighbors. Dating back to 1951, Tel Aviv tried to obtain water rights on Arab-owned land in order to gain greater access to the Jordan River and facilitate agrarian projects in the Negev desert. In spite of numerous UN-led negotiations, Arab-Israeli talks faltered. Notwithstanding, the Jewish state continued to work toward the alteration of the international waterway. Israeli refusal to follow international law led to further U.S. public condemnation and the suspension of aid in late 1953. A month later Israel relented and the United States released aid funds. Lebanese fears did not evaporate, however, as it worried that, “unless held in check,” Israel “may some day attempt to expand at Lebanon’s expense” and “establish control over the waters of the Litani River,” a northern tributary of the Jordan River.

In an attempt to allay such concerns, the Eisenhower administration initiated a fresh round of talks to reach an agreement over water rights. It charged Eric Johnston, chairman of the Advisory Board for International Development, with the difficult task

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of fostering Arab-Israeli cooperation. The Johnston mission, in its initial stages, appeared mildly successful with Arab governments. Yet Arab public opinion rejected the principle of collaboration with the Jewish state. In Lebanon, newspapers remained heavily critical of the U.S. initiative and accused Washington of facilitating Israeli neo-imperial expansionism. *Al-Amal, Beirut-Massa,* and *Yom* charged Johnston of being the representative of Israel, not Eisenhower, and conspiring against the Arab world to the benefit of the Jewish state. Elsewhere, *Yom* contended that the entire Lebanese population stood against the Johnston mission. “It did not want Israel, with the goal of expansion and conquest in mind, to strengthen itself at the detriment of the Arabs.” “The Arabs,” affirmed *Ad-Dyar,* “would never let their resources be advantageous to their enemy.” According to *Bayrak,* “Lebanese waters needed to stay in Lebanese territory.” The United States must understand this fact, added *Al-Ahrar.* “What was surprising was that the United States did not hesitate to side with Israel when Israeli interests opposed those of the Arabs. We owned these waters,” it proclaimed, “and neither Johnston or anyone else could despoil us.” Washington, *Beirut-Massa* deduced, once again disparaged Lebanese human rights and independence. Lebanon’s well-being and progress depended on the international waterway. U.S. impartiality was under heavy scrutiny.²³

²³ Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East,* 173; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 14 Février 1955, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 17 Février 1955, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 18 Février 1955, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 21 Février 1955, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 22 Février 1955, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.
Official Arab-Israeli efforts to work out a deal over the diversion of the Jordan River came to abrupt end in late February 1955. Under the leadership of Sharon, an Israeli operation against Arab infiltration in the Gaza strip raided and destroyed various Egyptian military sites and killed thirty-nine people and injured thirty-two more. The incident, much like Qibya, alarmed the international community and led the Arab states to suspend water negotiations. The viciousness of the Israeli campaign in Gaza rendered it “the most serious clash between Israel and Egypt since the signing of the armistice agreement in 1949.” Palestinians in Gaza reportedly demonstrated for days and heavily criticized the Egyptian government for its failure to defend their cause. The Israeli raid shook Lebanon as well. Despite an immediate U.S. condemnation, the Lebanese government insisted that Washington “may lose the support of the Arabs… if it d[id] not act most carefully in the present most delicate situation in the Near East.” The Arab world did not want peace with Israel and the United States should stop pressuring it to do so.” Another U.S.-sponsored resolution condemning the Israeli attack on Gaza passed through the UN Security Council in late March.24

In spite of Beirut’s warning, the U.S. government initiated its first full-fledge attempt “to negotiate a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement,” code-named Project Alpha. Initially conceived as a joint, private enterprise with Britain, Alpha quickly became a strict U.S. venture. The Arab-Israeli situation was seriously detrimental to U.S. national security interests. Worse yet, an Arab-Soviet

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rapprochement appeared on the horizon. Something urgent needed to be done. In the late summer, the Eisenhower administration opted to make Project Alpha public. Knowing full well that Arab official and popular reactions would likely be negative, Dulles discerned that, “If ‘Alpha’ [was] to be done at all, it should be done while we could speak as the friends of both.” With the Johnston mission in shambles following official Arab rejections, Dulles decided that he would publicly reveal Project Alpha and the sincere U.S. commitment to impartiality. On the evening of 26 August 1955, in front of the Council of Foreign Relations, the U.S. secretary of state extended an official offer of mediation for the first time and openly promoted a peace settlement. Lebanese reactions unfolded as Washington anticipated. Notwithstanding, Dulles seemed pleased with the way in which events developed. In a private note to Eisenhower, he confided that his conviction “that the move was a good one.”

Yet Dulles’ speech failed to calm Lebanese fears concerning empire and Israeli expansionism. With border tensions on the rise once again, the Lebanese press accused Israel of attempting to foment another war. Peace, as far as it was concerned, remained

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out of the question. It would not fall prey to intimidation. Israel’s ongoing border
campaigns, *An-Nahar* contended, sought to prevent Arab rearmament and justify its
own aggression. “Today, tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow,” it proclaimed a few
days later, “Israel was determined to undertake ‘its preventive war.’” Many felt that it
was now up to the United States and other Western superpowers to restrain the Jewish
state and prevent further bloodshed. *Al-Ahrar* openly doubted Western intentions.
According to *Bayrak*, U.S. and British inactivity encouraged Israeli aggressions.
Public condemnation did not suffice. Fearing that the cold war may extend itself into
the Middle East, *Beirut-Massa* warned the United States against supplying Israel with
arms, just as the Soviet Union did with Egypt in late September 1955. *Al-Jarida*
demanded that Washington publicize its policy. In the event that the United States
deliver weapons to the Jewish state, it vowed that the Arabs would venture into deep
collaboration with Moscow. “All U.S. aid to Israel,” it affirmed, “w[ould] be
compensated with Soviet aid to the Arabs.”

Following Nasser’s decision to nationalize the Suez Canal company in late July
1956, a U.S. intelligence report concluded that Israel would not attack Egypt in the
foreseeable future. During this time of crisis between the Arab world and the West, Tel
Aviv could not risk a fallout with the latter. Besides, Egypt did not want another war.
The Arab-Israeli conflict would remain limited to border clashes. As Anglo-French

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27 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 29 Octobre 1955, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91
PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 4 Novembre 1955,
Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise
arabe,” 5 Novembre 1955, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes;
and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 19 Novembre 1955, Beyrouth, Ambassade;
91 PO/D; Boîte 3; MAE, Nantes.
aggravations over Nasser’s move exacerbated, Washington remained convinced that Israel would not directly partake in the nascent Suez crisis. According to another Special National Intelligence Estimate, it was “highly unlikely” that Israel would launch “unprovoked major attacks on the Egyptian forces in Sinai or against any other Arab states.” Tel Aviv, it reasoned, “almost certainly recognize[d] that the Western powers could not let it get away with such an attack if the West wished to preserve any standing with the other Arab states.”28 But as Chapter 3 discusses, Washington was gravely mistaken. On 24 October 1956, Britain, France, and Israel signed the Protocol of Sèvres and committed themselves to war with Egypt.

Intelligence reports aside, the Eisenhower administration maintained a close eye on Israel. And on 28 October, the president publicly condemned Israeli military mobilization. Eisenhower’s concerns were well-founded, as Israel officially invaded Egypt’s Sinai desert two days later. Ensuing U.S. efforts at the UN, which branded Israel as the aggressor, received a hero’s welcome in Lebanon. The Lebanese press turned to the United States and its commitment to impartiality in order to bring hostilities to a halt and stymie empire in the Middle East. Beirut, for instance, appealed to Washington to stop the Jewish state at once. “If America truly desired to maintain peace in the Middle East,” it declared, “it only had to give the order to Israel.” In light

of the Anglo-French ultimatum of withdrawal from the Suez Canal zone, *Beirut-Massa* deduced that it was for the United States to serve as mediator in the Suez-Sinai war.  

As the Israeli army gained control of the Sinäï desert and strategic parts of the Gaza strip, Eisenhower maintained his insistence to hold Israel accountable as an aggressor and vowed that his government lead international efforts to produce a cease-fire as soon as possible, which the United Nations sanctioned on 1 November. Many Lebanese newspapers lauded U.S. efforts, but maintained a critical eye. “The Arabs that counted out the West and the UN salute President Eisenhower and convey their confidence in America,” avowed *Beirut*. The United States’ moral assistance toward the Arab world, Mohammed Naccache insisted, “would not be forgotten. But U.S. foreign policy could not limit itself” to verbal reprisals. Lebanon overflowed with celebrations upon learning that Britain, France, and Israel agreed to a UN cease-fire. Lebanese public opinion, at this time, was perhaps best exemplified by a Lebanese grocer, who vowed that the Arab victory at Suez signified “the beginning of real independence in the Arab world, independence from the colonial West.”

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The United States appeared in Lebanese imaginations to be re-aligning itself with decolonization. Eisenhower’s position during the Suez crisis, Beirut reasoned, served as a positive first step in a gradual shift toward genuine impartiality toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. An-Nass attributed this change in large part to U.S. diplomacy, but its “responsibility” did not stop there. “The U.S. must force Israel to respect UN resolutions,” stated the Lebanese newspaper. “We hope that America will not add more mistakes to the errors it ha[d] committed in Palestine.” To the grave discontent of Lebanese peoples, Israeli withdrawal faltered. It slowly began to pull its troops from Sinai in late November. The Lebanese public sphere sustained its pressure on Washington. “The Arabs today,” explained Beirut’s Mouhieddine Nsouli, “expect[ed] the United States to use all efforts in stopping her allies from committing more errors in the future… [T]he U.S. must play the part expected from her,” that of an impartial mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict, “so [the] Arabs may not lose the last hope in the intentions of the Western world.” Al-Telegraf maintained that, “in order to win the friendship of the Arabs, America must cease all aid to Israel.” Beirut-Massa pushed it one step further by claiming, “America had the duty to recognize the absolute sovereignty of all Arab countries,” including Palestine. It could no longer support a “fait accompli” there. Palestinian Arabs, according to the UN Charter of human rights, which celebrated its eighth anniversary, were entitled to self-determination, respect, and dignity. On 15 December, Al-Telegraf published an open letter to Eisenhower, demanding that he reinforce Arab independence, facilitate decolonization, and engender a just and equitable settlement to the Palestinian affair.31

31 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 8 Novembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91
Israel once again tested U.S. impartiality one week later when Ben-Gurion publicly refused to retrieve Israeli forces from Gaza. By mid-January 1957 the Jewish state “was back to the old international frontier, retaining only” the Egyptian areas of “Sharm ash-Sheikh and the Gaza strip.” The Lebanese public sphere continued to pressure the United States to hold Israel accountable to UN resolutions. Popular skepticism resurfaced following the declaration of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Many wondered what role Israel played in U.S. regional strategy. Yom did not doubt the United States’ good intentions and firmly believed that it did not hold expansionist ambitions in the Middle East. It did, however, accuse Washington of being the tools of European imperialism and Zionist expansionist projects. “If the United States seriously desired to save relations between the Occident and the Orient,” it avowed, “it only had to accept popular, Oriental aspirations and simultaneously recognize their right to control their own fate.” In the immediate future, the Arab world wanted Israel out of Egypt. The United States concurred. The Jewish state eventually gave in to U.S. pressure and evacuated all of its troops from Egyptian territory by 8 March.

PO/D; Boîte 4; MAE, Nantes; The Arab World, 9 November 1956, p. 9; Morris, 299; Editorial Review of the Lebanese Press, 5 December 1956, FO 371/118851; UKNA; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 7 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 4; MAE, Nantes; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 11 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 4; MAE, Nantes; and “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 15 Décembre 1956, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 4; MAE, Nantes.

32 Morris, 299.

33 “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 8 Janvier 1957, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 5; MAE, Nantes.

34 Morris, 299-300.
Nevertheless, the positive U.S. image waned during the time leading up to its military intervention in the Lebanese civil war of 1958. Inter-Arab rivalry, at this time, diverted considerable popular attention from the question of Palestine. As U.S. marines departed Lebanon in October 1958 after a three-month mission, the Eisenhower administration sought a rapprochement with Lebanese leaders and peoples. In an effort to publicly accommodate Arab societies, Washington sought closer ties with Cairo and publicly distanced itself from unpopular conservative regimes. These policies meant keeping the sensitive Arab-Israeli conflict on the back burner.\(^{35}\)

The strategy proved effective in Lebanon. While refraining from public statements on controversial regional issues and appearing to be on the sidelines as newly-elected President Fu’ad Shihab “was putting the Humpty Dumpty called Lebanon back together again” following the Lebanese civil war of 1958, the United States regained some lost ground “as the raging waters” in Lebanon “so rapidly returned to calm.” According to the U.S. embassy in Beirut, “the man in the street… had the comfortable feeling that Uncle Sam was still well disposed toward Lebanon.”\(^{36}\) Encounters between U.S. public affairs officers and Lebanese leaders were crucial to this development, as Americans were able to establish a dialogue, explain U.S. foreign policy, and consequently gain trust. “Every USIS officer at the post”, relayed an inspection report, “had uppermost in his mind this past year the need to seek out

\(^{35}\) Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*; and Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, 248.

\(^{36}\) McClintock to State, 26 March 1960; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1960-1963; Box 2050; File 783A/1-1160; NARA.
important Moslem leaders in the country with a view convincing them that the United States [wa]s neither pro-Christian nor pro-Moslem and that our sole concern was and is to help Lebanon maintain its independence.” This effort also included quietly reassuring influential Arab nationalists that the United States would remain impartial in the Arab-Israeli conflict and keep Israeli expansionism and militarism in check.

““The work ha[d] paid off,” explained the report. “It [wa]s no mere accident that the important Arab nationalist papers such as Al-Anwar and Al-Kifah,” which were heavily critical of U.S. diplomacy, “devoted more and more space to U[nited] S[tates] I[nformation] S[ervice] materials.”

Relations between the United States and Lebanese peoples improved, evidenced by the various interactions with Lebanese figureheads. U.S. officers received sincere messages of appreciation of the contemporary U.S. position in their country and the Middle East as a whole. The United States was not interrupting Arab decolonization. Many leaders who had vehemently opposed and critiqued the U.S. global power displayed a change of heart. In a meeting with Sa’ib Salaam, U.S. ambassador Robert McClintock noted that “coming from a leader who had denounced the American landings in 1958 as evidence of Western imperialism,” his volunteered “statements that U.S. relations are better with Lebanon than in previous years [wa]s at least worth recording.” Even ‘Abdullah Yafi, considered to be an “authentic Moslem Arab nationalist,” appeared “sincere in stating that all elements in Lebanon cherished the good regard and friendship of the United States.”

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37 Inspection Report, 11 December 1959; RG 306; Inspection Reports and Related Records, 1954-62; Box 6; File: Lebanon; NARA.
avowed, “These opinions of the Moslem leader stood out in sharp contrast with the anti-American statements” made “publicly during the troubles of 1958. In general, however, Yafi’s views parallel[ed] those of other Moslem leaders in Lebanon who ha[d] come a long way from their former distrust of American motives.”

Popular protests against the United States also subsided considerably. In early April 1960, the largest U.S. naval contingent since the 1958 intervention docked at the port of Beirut for a weekend of rest and relaxation, providing a situation ripe for U.S.-Lebanese confrontations. Yet “on the whole,” the U.S. embassy concluded “the visit went well.” Thanks in large part to U.S. public diplomacy, “More than 7,000 naval personnel” from the U.S. Sixth Fleet “enjoyed leave in Beirut, and many were able to travel to various centers of historical interest (such as Baalbeck and Byblos) elsewhere in Lebanon” without harassment. The general shift away from anti-Americanism in Lebanon suggested a growing “respect for and cordial feeling toward the United States,” as well as an “increasing understanding of American policy and of the character of the American people and Government.” According to the U.S. embassy in Beirut, “The contrast between the violently anti-American Lebanese press of three years ago, and the largely objective and sympathetic press of today, [wa]s striking.”

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38 McClintock to State, “Political Views of Saeb Salam,” 9 February 1960; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1960-1963; Box 2050; File 783A.00/1-1160; NARA; and McClintock to State, 25 March 1960; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1960-1963; Box 2050; File 783A.00/1-1160; NARA.

39 Beaulieu to Secretary of State, “U.S. Naval Visit to Beirut,” 6 April 1960; RG 25; Box 7751; File 12375-40 pt. 1.2; Library and Archives Canada [LAC]; and Brooke to USIA, “Country Assessment Report for 1960,” 1 February 1961; RG 306; Foreign Service Dispatches, 1954-63, Asia. Box 3; File: Asia; NARA.
The hard work of the Eisenhower administration had paid off, leaving the new administration of John F. Kennedy to reap the rewards. U.S. public diplomacy ameliorated Lebanese anti-Americanism. Lebanon, furthermore, served as a window to understanding the current state of U.S.-Arab relations since it “reflect[ed] many of the opinions and feelings of the neighboring Arab states regarding Israel” and consequently the U.S. position toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. Lebanese positions toward Israel had “stiffened” in the last couple of years, catalyzed by the Knesset’s renewed effort to divert the waters of the Jordan River and its refusal to discuss a reasonable settlement to the plight of Palestinian refugees. The latter point served as a daily reminder of empire’s imprint in post-independence Lebanon. The Palestinian refugee question was a crucial one in balancing Lebanon’s political system and continuously threatened Shihab’s priority of promoting “a sense of national unity in Lebanon” and avoiding another civil war. In a private conversation with McClintock, Shihab revealed “his belief that for Lebanon to accept the 135,000 Moslems refugees as citizens would mark the beginning of the end of Lebanon as a state,” and added “that if these 135,000 Moslems became citizens the confessional balance of Lebanon would be definitely destroyed.” Lebanon, therefore, was “under no circumstances to accept the Palestinian refugees as citizens.”

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40 Briefing Memorandum; Papers of President Kennedy; Office Files, Countries; Box 121B; File, Lebanon, General, 1961-1962; John F. Kennedy Library [JFKL]; Beaulieu to Secretary of State, “Lebanese Attitude Toward Israel,” 10 March 1960; RG 25; Box 7751; File 12375 pt. 1.2; LAC; Kamal Salibi, “Lebanon under Fuad Chehab, 1958-1964,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 2, 3 (April 1966): 217; and McClintock to State, 25 March 1960; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1960-1963; Box 2050; File 783A.00/1-1160; NARA.
Finding a solution to the refugee question, in the minds of many, was a matter of Lebanese survival and decolonization. Any even-handed U.S. effort to promote this objective would be well received. In recognition of this fact, and its overall impact on U.S.-Arab relations, the Kennedy administration opted to support a UN initiative to resolve the refugee problem, directed by the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) which was headed by an American, Joseph Johnson. Such an endeavor under UN flagship, it reasoned, would reflect its basic approach of impartiality and avoid “‘frontal and public’ approaches to an Arab-Israeli settlement.” Quiet diplomacy on the part of the United States would minimize public outbursts against U.S. global power. To further prevent Arab haranguing, Kennedy also sent personal letters to key Arab heads of state, including Shihab, explaining its position on the refugee problem and furthering his predecessors’ policy of rapprochement. “It would be our hope,” wrote a U.S. official, “that these letters, plus the Arab refugee approach... w[ould] help us gain what the President [wa]s reported to have described as ‘money in the bank’ with the Arabs.”

The United States, at this point, extended full support toward the PCC. In a message to Kennedy, Robert Komer, member of the National Security Staff, elaborated on this point. “Arab-Israeli disputes ha[d] caused the US so many headaches over the past 15 years, and (we)re liable to cause so many more if not moved toward settlement, that the difficulties of starting up the Johnson plan seem[ed]...

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pale by comparison. There were few issues on which the US has had to expend more political, as well as financial, capital over the years.” A fair resolution to the Palestinian refugee problem, contrary to the opinion of many in the United States and Israel, enhanced the prospect of peace and reflected the national security interests of both Washington and Tel Aviv. Perhaps more importantly, it was important for the Kennedy administration to maintain its image of even-handedness. “Our overall prestige in the Middle East,” he affirmed, “[wa]s higher than it has been in many years.” To waste such cultural capital would be a tragedy. “We ha[d] to pressure Israel to come around” and allocate serious attention to the PCC and the Johnson plan. Finally, after much internal debate, the United States opted to fully support the UN initiative.

While the prospects of success seemed gloomy on all sides, the United States was quickly presented with another conundrum. In reaction to mounting calls from various corners of the Arab world for the destruction of Israel, Tel Aviv pressured Washington to publicly guarantee the security of the Jewish state. More specifically, as early as May 1961, Israel asked the White House to supply it with surface-to-air Hawk missiles. U.S. officials sincerely believed that the United States’ current high standing in Arab imaginations rendered peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict more probable. To sell Hawk missiles to Israel would signify to Arabs that the United States did not hold their security and regional peace in high regards. “The Arabs ha[d] come to have more confidence in the US as the US ha[d] continued to pursue a balanced policy and to

42 Komer to President, 2 November 1961; Papers of President Kennedy; National Security File, Countries; Box 148; File, Palestine Refugees, General Responses to President Kennedy Letter; JFKL.
show due for Arab interests,” read a memorandum to U.S. secretary of state Dean Rusk. “As time passe[d] and as our policy [wa]s implemented consistently, the Arabs w[ould] have greater confidence in our will to prevent expansion by Israel.” The United States, therefore, could not abandon such cultural capital in favor a “special relationship” with the Jewish state. “We believe that in seeking continuing military considerations with the US and in proposing periodically a US security guarantee, Israel seeks not only reassurances for its own people, but also a clear demonstration to the Arabs that the US is, in effect, allied with Israel.” The formation of such a perception in Arab imaginations jeopardized U.S. national security, as it “Would constitute a direct challenge to the Arabs by the US, destroying growing Arab confidence in our impartiality, and remove the protective covering of the UN behind which we deal with most Palestinian issues.” Such an occurrence “could not be counterbalanced” and “would render the US responsible in Arab eyes for every Israeli military venture.”

Yet as many in the State Department continued to lobby against a Hawk sale, other forces within the United States raised the heat on the White House as the mid-term election season approached. Feeling the “breezes,” newly-nominated U.S. ambassador to Lebanon Armin Meyer reiterated to President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy the importance of not abandoning U.S. gains in Arab states, like Lebanon. “American prestige [wa]s higher than it ha[d] been for many years. In Lebanon,” he contended, “politicians [we]re competing with each

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other in seeking the favor of the American embassy. This was a far cry from twelve years ago when our Legation was bombed, or nine years ago when anti-American street demonstrations greeted Secretary of State Dulles during his Mideast tour.” In light of the United States’ quiet diplomacy and claim to impartiality, “the Arabs seem[ed] finally to be realizing that Israel [wa]s here to stay.” These gains should not be underestimated, or even wasted, as “These trends c[ould] easily be revered by our supporting short-sighted Israeli requests such as those for a special security guarantee.” After all, Meyer intimated, “it exist[ed] in fact, why stir up public 

emotions.”

Following influx of comments like these and an exhaustive review of its policy toward Israel, the White House was pressed to make a decision on the Israeli request for Hawks. In the end, it opted for an Orientalist course and disregarded Arab views. While there seems to be no record of the official U.S. decision to provide Hawk missiles to Israel, the White House notified British officials on 17 August 1962 of its decision. Foreseeing a disastrous backlash to U.S. behind-the-scenes dealings, the White House opted “to keep the wraps on” the Hawk sale, “ideally, until training or delivery start[ed].” Above all, Komer insisted, it was important to “Bear in mind that whatever noise the Arabs make will be largely smoke, not fire. Talk [wa]s [the] great Arab substitute for action. JFK must be clued on this too.”

44 Meyer to Bundy, 2 July 1962; Papers of President Kennedy; National Security Files, Countries; Box 138A; File, Lebanon General, 7/62-11/63; JFKL.

On 27 September 1962, the Hawk sale became public knowledge across the world, as the story was leaked to the *New York Times*. As Lebanese peoples consumed their newspapers of choice that morning, the floodgates opened. “O Arabs,” read an editorial in *Beirut-Massa*, “President Kennedy, who ha[d] sent a letter to Arab Kings and Presidents urging them to find an honorable solution to the Palestinian question, did not hesitate to supply American rockets to the Jews which will kill Arabs.” The United States, once again, supported empire in the Middle East. The popular Arabist newspaper *Al-Anwar* also highlighted the apparent hypocrisy of U.S. policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, questioning U.S. motives and intentions at a time when the U.S. Sixth Fleet routinely docked at the port of Beirut. “At the time the American Sixth Fleet ‘honour[ed] us’ with its visit, the U.S. announced its missile deal with Israel. To us,” the paper claimed, “American sends fleets on friendly visits, but to Israel, it sends financial assistance and missiles.” If anything, “in this gesture lies the evidence that the U.S. stand on Israel had not changed in the least.” *An-Nida*, along these lines, opined that the United States was once again beginning to display its “imperial” colors, and that the Arabs had clearly been duped, as Washington never intended to improve relations with the Arab world.

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Following the first day of reporting, Lebanese peoples increasingly feared for their security and began drawing clear connections between Israeli militarism and U.S. global power. As Lebanese Army officials reported to the U.S. embassy, local communities grew increasingly apprehensive as they witnessed Israeli planes in Lebanese airspace. Observers throughout Lebanon—whether it was at the Port of Beirut, in Aley, Jezzine, or southern Lebanon—claimed “seeing [a] column of fire in [the] air” which originated from Israel. “The common observation of all who observed at [the] same time [wa]s that [the] phenomenon appeared to be not too far away from them (individually) yet actually… it was observed to be near different locations at the same time.” The Lebanese military also expressed distress over frequent Israeli infractions of Lebanese airspace.48

Coinciding with the Hawk sale, these accounts reveal that Israel—and consequently the United States—was increasingly perceived as an “imperial” threat in Lebanese imaginations. Beirut-Massa went as far as declaring that the Arab world “can expect to be stabbed in the back by the U.S.” and cautioned its readership to “beware of Kennedy.” The mere timing of it with the Johnson plan, it shared, jeopardized the latter and any sort of immediate resolution to the Palestinian refugee problem. “The United States ha[d] proved fifteen years following the Palestine

48 27 September 1962; RG 59; Records of the Israel-Lebanon Affairs Desk, 1954-1965; Box 6; File 1962; NARA.
catastrophe that it [wa]s still naïve and still fail[ed] to understand [the] Arab mentality.”

U.S. conduct both at home and abroad failed to match the high standards of its exceptionalist rhetoric and supported Lebanese perceptions that the United States was indeed an “imperial” power. The United States, assessed An-Nida, was a nation of “faked freedom,” as news of the racial crisis in Mississippi traveled into Lebanese households. The ongoing struggle over civil rights, according to Le Soir, revealed “that the United States, while anti-colonialist abroad, still practice[d] racial discrimination at home.” Finally, an editorial in Sawt al-Uruba highlighted the racialized nature of U.S. democracy, as “the truth of the matter… [wa]s that U.S. claims of protection of freedom [wa]s but a commodity… for exportation and deceiving the smaller nations of the world.” For this reason, Lebanese peoples and the Arab world at large could no longer accept the morality of so-called U.S. impartiality in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This, along with growing cold war tensions in Cuba and the upcoming U.S. elections, engendered, and in turn, revealed general Lebanese consternations toward the U.S. diktats in the world. In Al-Anwar, a cartoon pictured “an Arab hugging Cuba’s Fidel Castro while U.S. President Kennedy hug[ged] a character representing Israel.” The title of a Michel Abou Jawdeh editorial in An-Nahar read: “Kennedy Sells Palestine—Or What’s Left of It—To Jewish Voters.” Separately, Al-Anwar

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49 “U.S. Missiles to Israel ‘Ill-Advised’,” The Daily Star, 29 September 1962, p. 1; Wilson to State, “Joint Weeka No. 40,” 4 October 1962; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1960-1963; Box 2051; File 783A.00(W)/3-1562; NARA; and “Press review,” The Daily Star, 30 September 1962, p. 4.

50 Wilson to State, “Joint Weeka No. 40,” 4 October 1962; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1960-1963; Box 2051; File 783A.00(W)/3-1562; NARA; and “Arab Uproar Over U.S.-Israel Arms Deal,” The Arab World, 3 October 1962, p. 4.
editorialized that “This new arms deal ha[d] unmasked the true goals of the present American Administration. Ever since Kennedy took over as President, the American Administration has been trying to give the impression that it was willing to establish U.S.-Arab relations on a new basis.” Was this genuine, or simply a U.S. maneuver to prepare Arabs for an eventual arms sale to Israel? Washington “shall pay the price for her defiance of the Arabs.” Beirut-Massa, for its part, deemed that it was time for Lebanese peoples to wash their hands of the United States. “In Tel Aviv they [we]re dancing with joy… But we, the Arabs, s[aw] this aggressive American gesture [as] another evidence of U.S. enmity for the Arabs and the Moslems.”

Lebanese critiques of U.S. global power led U.S. officials to contemplate their next step in the Middle East. The United States, many considered, stood “at the crossroads not only of the Johnson Plan but also the Palestinian refugee issue and of [its] relations with the Arabs and Israel.” Should it try to salvage its image of even-handedness, or commit itself fully to Israel by issuing a public security guarantee? One thing was for certain; Israel’s “hard line” was not helping Washington. To abandon outright the Johnson plan and “go along with the present Israeli ploy,” wrote U.S. official Phillips Talbott to Rusk, would “put our over-all Near Eastern policies in jeopardy.” This said, it was important for the U.S. government to stand by the UN initiative—at least in appearance—in order to minimize a lost of face. Besides, U.S. efforts on the issue of refugees made major headways with Arabs, and “If this present

opportunity [wa]s allowed to pass, a similar one [wa]s unlikely in this decade.” Such cultural capital should not go to waste, even if the Johnson plan was “in effect dead.”

According to Lebanese imaginations, the U.S.-supported Johnson plan was far from being even-handed and sought to work out the refugee issue at the expense of the Arabs. While the Lebanese government contemplated its stand on the UN initiative, many of its constituents indeed rendered a resolution to the refugee problem “dead,” thanks to an apparent nascent “special relationship” between the United States and Israel. This perceived connection damaged Lebanese decolonization. According to the conservative *Al-Amal*, the potential repatriation of only a fraction of Palestinians presented Lebanon with major problems. “Lebanon,” it lamented, was “a small, overpopulated country which could in no way absorb the 120,000 Palestinian refugees who came here—the largest figure besides Jordan’s.” Reflecting the sectarian fear that an influx of Palestinians would disrupt the Lebanese constitutional balance, the newspaper added: “It would be better for the refugee affair that responsibility of its settlement should be borne by each Arab state equally,” rather than the portions outlined in the Johnson plan. Elsewhere, Arab and Lebanese nationalist papers framed the Johnson plan as another U.S. conspiracy to dominate the Arabs in favor of Israel. Put bluntly, *Al-Hawadith* defined the United States “as nothing but an Israeli colony.”

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On 4 October, Syria officially rejected the Johnson plan, rendering Arab unanimity and its demise inevitable.53

Despite a sudden explosion of anti-Americanism in Lebanese communities, the U.S. embassy in Beirut judged that locals would continue to cooperate with U.S.-led peace efforts “as there remains an underlying reservoir of goodwill toward the United States and the principles for which it stands.” “People may not be able to manifest this affection as openly as before the missile announcement,” explained Meyer, “but it existed.” Washington should not take this for granted, however, as the patience of many Lebanese appeared to be wearing thin. He advised Washington to “go slow” on Arab-Israeli matters “for this is an important diplomatic tool in an area which originated the ancient saying: this too shall pass away.” Whenever the current “emotional” anti-US “storm subsides,” the Arabs may finally acknowledge that “Israel is here to stay since the U.S. government would not have it otherwise.”54

This indeed appeared to be the case with the Lebanese government. In a meeting with Rusk in New York City, Lebanese foreign minister Phillip Tacla conveyed his sense that “An atmosphere of entente and understanding reigns in [U.S.-Lebanon] relations.” Respective policies toward international issues coincided


54 Meyer to Rusk, 8 October 1962; Papers of President Kennedy; National Security Files, Countries; Box 138A; File, Lebanon General, 7/62-11/63; JFKL.
for the most part, with the sole exception of U.S. military assistance to Israel. Whereas the U.S. secretary of state emphasized “the defensive character of the Hawk missile,” Tacla accused the United States of abandoning its neutrality and sparking a fresh arms race in the Middle East. By equipping Israeli militarism, the United States appeared to lend total support to Tel Aviv’s expansionist schemes. “Israel,” Tacla affirmed, “with its massive immigration program, will one day reach the point where it will be obliged to attempt to conquer more ground from the Arabs.” While hostile to its Jewish neighbor, the Arab world had “no intention of undertaking a war.” More to the point, “history ha[d] shown that Israel has always been the aggressor.” If the United States maintained its military assistance to the Jewish state, it would be processed through a similar frame.

Lebanese concerns over the perceived menace of Israeli expansionism, at this time, skyrocketed as Tel Aviv continued to infringe upon Lebanon’s territorial sovereignty. On a quotidian basis, a Lebanese general complained, Israeli [aircrafts] violate[d] Lebanese territory to [the] depth of one to five kilometers,” adding that “a total of 20 violations” occurred “in the last three weeks or more.” As such infractions continued, they became a frequent topic of Lebanese alarm. Matters worsened a few weeks later and Lebanese military officials complained to the U.S. embassy. Israel appeared to be infringing Lebanese territory by ten kilometers, at the very least, and

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55 Meyer to State, 24 October 1962; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1960-1963; Box 2051; File 783A.00/7-2462; NARA.
these multiplied daily. Lebanese authorities averred to the U.S. embassy that they sent myriad protests to Tel Aviv, which were continuously ignored.\textsuperscript{56}

Washington’s desire to not be associated with such Israeli infractions led it to once again revert to quiet diplomacy, in hopes that Arab anti-Americanism would subside. And for the first few months after the Hawk sale went public, this appeared to be the case. Many Lebanese processed U.S. global power through the lens of the Arab-Israeli conflict and decolonization. As long as the United States publicly remained on the “periphery” of the Palestinian problem, the Lebanese press “strongly supported” U.S. foreign policy concerning Cuba, Berlin, and the nuclear test ban. “Even periodic visits to Beirut by units of the U.S. Navy’s Sixth Fleet, once a favorite whipping boy of the Lebanese press, now occur[ed] without criticism and often, in fact, with a modicum of favorable publicity.”\textsuperscript{57} But Israel’s ongoing lobbying for a public security guarantee would once again place the Kennedy administration in the line of fire.

Back in Washington, U.S. officials noticed that “it ha[d] become increasingly clear that the White House [wa]s under steadily mounting domestic political pressure to adopt a foreign policy in the Near East more consonant with Israeli desires.” Israel and its U.S. supporters seemed bent on utilizing “the period between now and the 1964 Presidential elections to secure a closer, more public security relationship with the United States, notably through a public security guarantee and a cooler, more antagonistic relationship between the United States and the UAR.” Kennedy,

\textsuperscript{56} ? November 1962; RG 59; Records of the Israel-Lebanon Affairs Desk, 1954-1965; Box 6; File 1962; NARA.

\textsuperscript{57} 29 January 1963; RG 306; Subject Files, 1953-1967; Box 47; NARA.
moreover, appeared disposed to entertain such ideas, even after issuing a private
security guarantee to Israeli officials and proclaiming that the United States and Israel
had a “special relationship” in late December 1962.\(^5\)

The prospect of a public security guarantee toward Tel Aviv worried many in
the State Department. In order to prepare for another eventual Arab backlash, Phillips
Talbot explained to Kennedy that he “feel[ed] it [wa]s important to give serious
consideration to Israel’s strong desire for a more specific security guarantee” and that
this was the best way to prevent the IDF from engaging in combat. “He further
believe[d] that such a guarantee would be helpful in removing any margin of error by
the Arabs about US intentions.” Talbot went on to elucidate the White House’s
apparent recognition “of the problem that we face[d] with the Arabs.” If such a
promise was publicly tendered, it acknowledged the consequences that it would raise
U.S. prestige in the Arab world. “However, we hope that after the initial impact, the
Arabs w[ould] settle down to a tacit, if not overt, understanding of what the United
States [wa]s trying to do.”\(^5\)

U.S. officers in the Arab world were quick to denounce such Orientalism and
point out that many Arabs already believed that they clearly understood the tenets U.S.
foreign policy in the Middle East: the protection of Israel. John Badeau, U.S.
ambassador to the UAR, warned the White House not to become the victim of an
Israeli psychic crisis. “It [wa]s arguable that the present ‘crisis’ over Israel [wa]s an

\(^{58}\) Memorandum of Conversation, 27 December 1962, *FRUS* 1961-1963, Vol. 18, Near

Document 253.
artificial one” designed to rally political support both at home and abroad. It would be a tragedy if this were to shift U.S. policy in the Middle East, as “the United States was in an excellent position to maintain and expand its interests in the area.” In Badeau’s opinion, Washington needed to accept the Arab “reality” that “Israel remains an unwanted foreign institutions into the Arab world.” This did not mean that the United States needed to acquiesce to this perception, or that it should buy into Israeli apprehensions and extend a public security guarantee; rather, the U.S. government should reinforce its public commitment to impartiality. “Despite any protestations to the contrary on our part, a United States guarantee to Israel would be taken as an overall formal alliance between the two countries,” Badeau cautioned. If the United States responded to “emotional Arab reaction[s]” with a separate public guarantee to the Arabs, “This could be taken as an endeavor to impose a ‘Pax Americana’ on the entire region.” Fearing public pressures, “Even Arab states who in other circumstances would welcome a security guarantee from the United States—Lebanon and perhaps Jordan—would be compelled to reject it.” “There would likely be widespread public hostility towards the United States in the Arab world with Arab governments doing little to control it.” The United States could not afford to aggravate a process in which Arab peoples would perceive it as an “imperial” power.

Meyer, for his part, also responded to the State Department’s inquiry. As far as U.S. interests in Lebanon were concerned, the tendering of a public security guarantee to Israel would unquestionably bring “Arab hostility. However, like the Hawk missile

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60 Badeau to Talbot, 11 June 1963; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 2435; File POL ARB-ISR; NARA; and Badeau to State; 17 June 1963; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 2435; File POL ARB-ISR; NARA.
affair, its immediate impact may not be as drastic as many might fear.” Perhaps what mattered most were the potential, long-term consequences. How would this act shape the process in which Lebanese peoples imagined U.S. global power? With U.S. prestige at an all time high since the creation of Israel, some “people here sp[oke] not to unhappily of a sort of Pax Americana in the Middle East” as long as Washington kept Tel Aviv in check. The issuance of a public guarantee to Israel would surely change things. While not at the forefront of Lebanese political culture, “The Hawk missile deal [wa]s still not forgotten. More recently,” according to Meyer, “people here ha[d] been reading the plethora of pro-Israel statements by Congressmen in connection with an alleged Israeli security crisis which to observers here [wa]s 100% phoney.” In the event where the United States would yield to Israeli concerns, there would “be a definite diminution in the Arab world’s confidence in [Kennedy] and in us as impartial friends in the Middle East. We w[ould] constantly be reminded that as an ally of Israel our motives [we]re suspect.” Meyer, nonetheless, acknowledged the inevitability of a public U.S.-Israeli alliance; “I realize the die is virtually cast.”

One could only hope that the United States could avoid as much as possible being entangled in another Arab-Israeli war, which the current Israeli security crisis was increasingly rendering inescapable.

For the time being, the White House appeared to take note of these observations and decided to refrain from forming a public partnership with Israel. For a few months, the Arab-Israeli conflict remained, at least in popular Lebanese

61 Meyer to Talbot, 12 June 1963; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 2435; File POL ARB-ISR; NARA.
imaginations, in the icebox. Yet tensions in the Middle East once again rose in anticipation of Israel’s scheduled project to divert a substantial quantity of the Jordan River in order to vitalize Israeli agricultural communities in the Negev. In retaliation to the Israeli agenda, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon formed their own plans to divert the headwaters of this precious resource. The Litani River project, a headwater of the Jordan River, would facilitate “the generation of electric power, flood control, irrigation and Beirut drinking water.” This modernization project, which attracted noteworthy attention with some Americans, was a centerpiece of the Shihab regime, as he used the issue to forge a stronger sense of Lebanese national unity and allay the perceptions of Shia Muslims, the largest sect in Lebanon, that “the Christian-led” and Beirut-centered “central government neglect[ed] it.”

Lebanese and Arab nationalists also took note of the Jordan River problem and made it a matter of Arab human rights and decolonization. Lebanon, at this time, feared above all an increase in Israeli immigration, and an eventual Israeli desire to further expand its territorial confines. This would augment the possibility of war, something that the United States knew that Arab states, like the UAR and Lebanon, did not want.

Yet, despite its awareness of growing Arab apprehensions, the United States offered its support to Israeli plans to divert “an equitable portion” of Jordan River

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waters. According to a U.S. report, the “First test of Israel’s withdrawal system w[ould] begin early in 1964.” In November 1963, as the Israeli plans neared realization, the Lebanese foreign minister conveyed to Meyer his “grave concern for [the] future of U.S.-Arab relations.” Alongside the memory of the Hawk sale, U.S. support of Israeli diversion gave him the impression that the United States and the Arab world “were on [a] collision course.” Lebanese peoples, for instance, increasingly perceived a fixed, “unfriendly” shift in U.S. attitude toward the Arab-Israeli conflict and Arab decolonization. Moderate “voices of reason [were] fast losing control” of such matters, explained Tacla, as a “sparking new wave of Arab super-patriotism” vis-à-vis Israeli “aggression” was rapidly gaining much ground in the Lebanese public sphere. In fact, Arab states were starting to talk about joining rank and implementing a potential Arab League plan to divert the headwaters of the Jordan River, which pass through Arab states, in order to stymie the likelihood of Israeli expansionism.

Upon being sworn into the Oval Office following Kennedy’s assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson was briefed on urgent national security affairs and the Arab-Israeli conflict was on the agenda. Israel was expected to continue its push for a public security guarantee,” Talbot informed the new U.S. president, whereas “The Arab states w[ould] be likely to fear a pro-Israeli swing in American policy. Consequent agitation, unless tamped down, could lead to more strident anti-Israeli actions (e.g., Jordan water

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diversion) and increased interest in links with the USSR.” It was therefore important that Johnson declare his intentions to follow in his predecessors’ footsteps and maintain U.S. even-handedness. Johnson’s presidential address to Congress did just that, as “all persuasions” of the Lebanese press reportedly regarded his intent “to carry on Kennedy’s policies” as being “highly favorable.” An-Nahar, for instance, stated that the “New Frontier… did not die with [the] assassination.” Johnson’s speech, added Beirut-Massa, signified that “humanitarian ideals cannot be assassinated.” Yet some Lebanese observers cautioned giving Johnson a carte blanche in the Middle East. “In exception to the general editorial trend,” the U.S. embassy in Beirut reported, Al-Moharrer foresaw the U.S. president’s commitment as a “‘gentle’ way [of] stating [the] continuance [of] US domination [in their] half [of] the world.”

Even in such times of remembrance, Lebanese peoples refused to forget the Hawk sale, let alone the traces of empire.

As Washington witnessed an unexpected transition in leadership, the Arab world continued attempts to forestall an Israeli diversion of the Jordan River. Komer, as a result, conveyed to Bundy his “increasingly grim feeling that we’re in for a time of trouble throughout the Middle East.” The upcoming Arab League summit meeting in Cairo engendered many Lebanese papers to be “most vocal in [their] call for [a] unified patriotic effort against Israel.” In a separate set of correspondence, Komer confided to Bundy: “My guess is that we are in the opening stages of another of those mercurial turnabouts in the Arab world. Under the magic rubric of uniting against

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64 Meyer to State, 3 December 1963; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 2435; File POL ARB-ISR; NARA.
Israel,” the Arab states would overcome existing disputes. “The hell of it [was] that this Arab ‘unity’ w[ould] be at [the] expense of Israel, which w[ould] put us on the spot.” While he thought an “overt Arab military response” as “unlikely,” it was imperative that the United States engage in some “preventive diplomacy before the Arab summit,” scheduled for 13-17 January 1964.65

Indeed, leading up to the Cairo meeting, much speculation took place in Lebanon over U.S. identity and its foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict and decolonization. Al-Hayat and the Daily Star, for example, carried stories outlining Washington’s position concerning the Jordan River issue. Citing “American sources,” they reported that the United States informed Arab governments that it “did not consider Israeli plans to pump” water out of the Jordan River as an “aggressive act.” Drawing their own conclusions, the papers concurred that Washington appeared to be “backing [the] Israeli project ‘more and more officially,’” as it reiterated that Israeli initiatives did not infringe upon Arab sovereignty and that Israel would only divert a reasonable quantity agreed upon by the “UN-approved” plan of 1955.66

Commenting on such currents in the Arab world and to news that a Cairo summit declaration favored the liquidation of Israel, if need be, Rusk conveyed to

65 Komer to Bunday, 3 December 1963, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. 18, Near East, 1962-1963, Document 377; Meyer to State, 1 January 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 1854; File POL 33-1, 1/1/64; NARA; Komer to Bundy, 2 January 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files; Files of Robert W. Komer; Box 12; Arab Nations 1964-1965-1966; Lyndon B. Johnson Library [LBJL]; and Komer to Bundy, 2 January 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files; Files of Robert W. Komer; Box 12; Arab Nations 1964-1965-1966; LBJL.

66 Meyer to State, 8 January 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 1854; File POL 33-1, 1/1/64; NARA.
Johnson his sense that “We face a difficult and challenging year in the Near East.” Myriad issues—such as the Israeli plans to divert the Jordan River, which Rusk deemed “the toughest of all”—could force the U.S. hand to officially abandon neutrality in favor of Israel, thus sending U.S. prestige in Arab imaginations in a permanent freefall. Since the creation of the Jewish state, “impartiality” had been the United States’ greatest asset in Middle East. Yet peace was once again endangered by Israel’s perceived security crisis. Evidenced by a latest request for five hundred U.S. tanks, Tel Aviv “s[ought] a close military identification with us to serve as a deterrent to the Arabs.” This said, it was clear that “its appetite exceed[ed] its needs.” If the United States chose to embrace Israeli desires, it would surrender whatever power it had to peacefully deter an Arab assault and “throw the Arabs closer into the arms of the Soviets.” If it chose to maintain its current stand, the U.S. secretary of state recommended in part that “We make clear on appropriate public occasions that we w[ould] defend the independence of all Near East states and w[ould] resist aggression in any form.”67 Such an occasion soon emerged.

On 20 January 1964, Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Alexis Johnson addressed a crowd at a meeting in Washington sponsored by the U.S. Citizens Committee on American Policy in the Middle East. At this time, Johnson Jr.—as many Lebanese would later call him—innocently caused quite a stir, as he reified the notion that the United States was an “impartial” actor in the Middle East. The United States, he emphasized, incorporated the perspectives of Arabs when

formulating its approach to the region. After surveying the issues of regional peace, Soviet influence, and the importance of petroleum, the Deputy Undersecretary turned to the United States’ self-constructed role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Washington, he declared, could not stand idly by if either party committed aggression. The United States was well aware of popular Arab views that Israel was a creation of Western imperialism, the perceived threat of Israeli expansionism and militarism, as well as the belief that Washington was in the process of forming a “special relationship” with Tel Aviv. In these cases, traces of empire loomed large in various communities, as “Arab nationalism contain[ed] the strains of resentment and suspicion engendered by the colonial past and by the frustration of the mid-twentieth century.” Yet, from a U.S. perspective, Arab leaders and citizens needed to understand that the age of empire was over and that White House was not trying to build its own imperium in the Middle East —or support an Israeli one for that matter. “The historical gap in social, cultural, and political understanding pose[d] serious difficulties of communication between us and the peoples and governments of the area. Bridging this gap,” he insisted, was “in itself a continuing major challenge to our government, for without a bridge our efforts to be helpful” and bring peace to the Middle East “may be misunderstood and stultified.” For the sake of a prospective peace, it was imperative that the United States “maintain constructive and balanced relationships with the area as a whole” and that everyone involved comprehend this point. “But in the final analysis,” as the situation unfolded, “there [wa]s no incompatibility between our interests and those of the
peoples of the Neat East.” As a result, the U.S. government “shall pursue [its] policies in the full confidence that they [we]re right and fair for all concerned.”

The Lebanese press wasted little time in rejecting Johnson Jr.’s speech, as the latter was heavily reported and disseminated to all corners of Lebanon the following day. In light of a resurgent Arabist spirit, many Lebanese were quick to reject the notion that the Untied States would come to the defense of the Arab world if Israel were ever to attack it. In an Al-Hayat column, Jibran Shamiyah avowed that the latest U.S. speech was purposely conceived to “embarrass us (Arabs) and reassure Israel. For there was nothing more embarrassing than to” treat someone like a child and “tell them he w[ould] be punished if he did a certain thing.” Al-Shaab’s Mohammed Naccash, for his part, deduced that “This spokesperson of the U.S. government seem[ed] to think that the Middle East [wa]s one of America’s electoral constituencies,” adding that “His only interest [wa]s to satisfy the Zionists in his own country.” A headline in An-Nada read: “America Threatens the Arabs.” Al-Anwar followed a similar line, equating the speech to a formal declaration of U.S. support vis-à-vis Israeli expansionism through the diversion of the Jordan River. Washington, “for the sake of Israel, [wa]s challenging international law and infringing on UN prerequisites by appointing herself an international policeman.” Finally, As-Safa questioned the sincerity of the U.S. quest for peace seeing that the statement “d[id] not encourage the creation of the ideal

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atmosphere of finding positive resolutions based on justice concerning the expected Israeli aggression on Arab waters.”

Meanwhile, U.S. officials prepared the official reaction to the Arab onslaught. In a dispatch to Arab posts, Dean Rusk instructed U.S. embassies to promote the idea that the Deputy Undersecretary’s statement was not a forewarning “to Arabs against taking actions hostile to Israel and as [an] official U.S. reaction to [the] recent Arab Chief of State conference [in] Cairo.” Besides Alexis Johnson’s views did not reflect those of the State Department. The White House, for its part, reevaluated its impartiality in the Arab-Israeli conflict. “The real problem,” as Komer saw it, was “not whether we’ll do enough for Israel but whether we can avoid seeming to lean so far in its direction as to undermine our painfully developed relations with the Arabs.” More than likely, the course of events would dictate the Arab position as the United States refused to relinquish its support for Israeli diversion of the Jordan River. While Komer reiterated his belief that Washington should fully support Tel Aviv, he felt “bound to point out that” this would surely “entail a strong Arab reaction, to cope with which w[ould] require some mighty skillful footwork on our part.” This said, were “the Arabs worth” spending such energy? Why not abandon impartiality outright and issue a

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70 Rusk to Certain Posts, 21 January 1964; RG 59; Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Political & Defense; Box 2502; File POL 1 Gen. Policy, 1/1/64; NARA; and Komer to Jenkins and Moyers, 21 January 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files; Files of Robert W. Komer; Box 12; Arab-Israeli 1964-1965-1966 (1 of 2); LBJL.
public security guarantee to Israel? Such questions loomed large on the minds of U.S. officials.

The Lebanese media continued its frenzy over the U.S. speech and Washington’s perceived blatant disregard for the Arab world. “The United States and its policy in the Middle East [we]re currently [the] target to one of the heaviest attacks by the Arabs against an international power in a long time,” deduced The Arab World, an Arab League daily digest published in Beirut. While Johnson Jr.’s statement failed to symbolize a departure from U.S. policy, Al-Anwar articulated that “this time,” Washington “ha[d] gone too far in challenging the Arabs and siding with their enemies.” Did the White House understand Arab points of view, asked Al-Jarida’s Tawfic Makdisi? More than likely, it did not. Druze chieftain Kemal Jumblatt succumbed to the idea that a third Arab-Israeli war over water was now inevitable and that the United States was in large part to blame. The “general tone” of the U.S. declaration, explained the Beirut version of Al-Ahram, sounded very “imperial,” as it intimated that the United States “consider[ed] herself God’s shadow on earth, and want[ed], in [an] imitation of the famous Pax Romana which was imposed by the Roman Empire, to impose a new Pax Americana.”

As time went on, the United States increasingly became an “imperial” power in many Lebanese imaginations. The notion of a Pax Americana in the Middle East gained insurmountable credence in Lebanon, leading French officials to comment that such allegations were in fact “anachronistic” as the age of the empire was over. Lebanese animosities toward U.S. global power exacerbated. The Knesset did not

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make matters easier on the United Stats, as Israeli prime minister Levi Eshkol made “bombastic statements on his country’s diversion scheme while charging the Arab with a ‘policy of reckless adventurism’.” An As-Siyassah’s headline read: “Strong Arab Reaction Against America. Arabs Not Ready to Accept American Trusteeship.” According to Lebanese Deputy Moshen Slim, Alexis Johnson’s speech was a new Balfour Declaration, referencing the November 1917 British commitment to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The Phalangist Party’s Maurice Gemayel proclaimed that the U.S. statement “ha[d] come to reveal the U.S. outright alignment with Israel.” Al-Ahram elaborated on this point, accusing Washington “of still thinking ‘in the mentality of the 19th century’.” The United States, it argued, had clearly abandoned its position of impartiality and opted to completely ignore Arab opinions. For this reason, Lebanese peoples needed to resist U.S. global power and the threat of empire. “Arab nationalism” was “first and last the genuine product of land and language and [wa]s a force mobilizing all the Arab resources against imperialism, Zionism, and socio-political backwardness, and today [wa]s standing in the face of Zionism as being part of the imperialist movement.”

As Lebanese peoples feared, U.S. officials succumbed to Orientalism’s imperial culture and ignored local messages; instead rendering overwhelming responses to Alexis Johnson’s address a product of timing, diversionary tactics, and an

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emotional outlet for Arab frustrations. The statement’s coincidence with the Cairo summit led many Arabs to supposedly “to throw a publicity smoke screen over the summit communiqué, the mildness of which was almost unique among Arab public pronouncements.” The Arab inability to prevent an Israeli diversion of the Jordan River, furthermore, did not help matters, as the Arab world unleashed its “emotions” on an “impartial” United States. In a separate explanation to Alexis Johnson, who appeared puzzled over the turn of events, a U.S. official explained: “Your January 20 address afforded the Arabs an opportunity to vent their resentment and to arouse public opinion… or propitiate it.” This, Tacla shared with Meyer, was “the drama of Lebanon.” Yet it was not something to be taken likely. Subject to dominant Arabist currents as well their consequences on sectarian politics, the Lebanese government considered Israel as a “natural enemy.” Besides, Tel Aviv’s “ambition and arrogance” continuously aggravated Lebanon’s order of things. “The Israelis,” said Tacla, “made no bones about coveting the southern part of Lebanon, to be occupied in arrogance with an Israeli-master plan which also envisaged the occupation of Jerusalem, the West Bank or Jordan and Sinai.”73 The U.S. failure to publicly condemn Israeli expansionism and militarism led Lebanese peoples to draw their own conclusion, that the United States and Israel were in the process of forming a “special relationship” bent on preventing Arabs from reaching its complete independence from foreign forces. The United States appeared increasingly at odds with Lebanese decolonization.

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73 Jernegan to Alexis Johnson, 1 February 1964; RG 59; Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Political & Defense; Box 2502; File POL 1 Gen. Policy, 1/1/64; NARA; and Meyer to State, 29 January 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 1889; File POL ARAB-L; NARA.
Whereas Washington sought clarifications, the U.S. embassy in Beirut quickly released a statement to the Lebanese press in an attempt to defuse the situation. The message outlined that “the address was a routine one, scheduled many weeks ago, and unrelated to any particular developments in the Middle East or elsewhere,” referring principally to the recent Arab summit in Cairo. “A careful reading of Johnson’s remarks concerning the US opposition to aggression would show they contain nothing new and were not directed against any particular parties.” The press release failed to “tame down local emotions,” however. Al-Anwar responded to the U.S. message by declaring: “Whether the speech was a routine one or not was irrelevant to us.” The U.S. statement brought nothing new “if we consider that the United States was always hostile to the Arabs and a supporter of Zionism.” According to Beirut-Massa, “for 15 years the United States actually stood idly by while aggression was being committed by Israel against the 100 million Arabs.” It was now time for the Arab world to say something new to the United States. “It is about time the White House understood that the drop in U.S. popularity in the Arab world and the rise of the Soviet popularity are due to the stand these two countries take on Israel—and not due to any ideological conflict. The Arabs hate[d] America only because of her stand in support of Israel.” The United States, in the process, betrayed its own anti-imperialist principles, as well as the global struggle for freedom and decolonization. Such comments, the U.S. embassy reported, were “not confined to [the] press but were also] quite evident in [the] remarks and activities [of] our local contacts.”

74 Meyer to State, 25 January 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files, Files of Robert W. Kommer; Box 12; Middle East-December 1963-March 1966 (4 of 4); LBJL; cited in “US Policy,” *The Arab World*, 27 January 1964, p. 9; cited in
Lebanese peoples—along with the entire Arab world—now anxiously awaited the U.S. president’s 6 February scheduled speech on Middle Eastern politics to be delivered at the Weizmann Institute of Science in New York City. Many wondered about how Johnson’s would react in light of the events of the last week or so. Noting his relative absence from major U.S. foreign policy announcements, Salim Nasser, editor of *As-Safa*, commented that “Strange things ha[d] begun to appear in the horizon of international policy, things that clearly indicate[d] that” U.S. policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, “following Kennedy’s death, [wa]s no longer in U.S. hands. So far, we ha[d] not heard from Johnson.” Lebanese deputy Kazem Solh couldn’t resist the urge to speculate that a presidential declaration outlining a security guarantee to Israel was on the way. The choice of location, above all, served up “enough evidence of U.S. support for Israel.”

Johnson’s upcoming address at the Weizmann Institute presented the United States with an opportunity to fix its image in Arab imaginations and reiterate the current administration’s determination to uphold its predecessor’s approach of “impartiality.” As U.S. officials worked countless drafts, Komer and Bundy speculated on its consequences. “The fulsome praise of Weizmann and Israel should please the [Jewish] community; while it w[ould] annoy Arabs, they’ll at least note that we [we]ren’t making tough noise.” The Johnson administration, at this time, decided to

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throw its lot behind Israel and its diversion plan, thus willingly accepting the consequences that it would bring to U.S.-Arab relations. The popular Arab response to Alexis Johnson’s statement, “which we carefully designed as a non-speech,” led it to conclude that that it had to abandon impartiality. “The Arabs [we]re all watching like hawks,” Komer wrote to Bundy. “No matter what we say they’ll react, and the veiled references in the speech go just about as far as we out to go!” Given the inevitability of Israeli diversion of the Jordan River, there was “no point in deliberately flouting Arab sensibilities for [a] transitory applause.”76

For those advocating Israeli interests, Johnson’s Weizmann address did not disappoint. From the onset, the U.S. presidents lauded the many accomplishments of the Israel and its supporters in the United States. The Weizmann Institute and the peoples of Israel defied all odds in overcoming “monumental problems” and served as living proof of the success of social engineering. The Jewish state, for instance, constructively addressed the “scientific problem” of water—“water for irrigation, water for consumption, water for industry, water for recreation, water for all its other uses.” The United States, Johnson announced, was committed to assist Israel in this endeavor and revealed that his government “ha[d] begun discussions with representatives of Israel on cooperative research in using nuclear energy to turn salt water into fresh water.” Water after all, “mean[t] life, and water mean[t] opportunity, and water mean[t] prosperity for those who never knew the meaning of those words.”

76 Komer to Bundy, 4 February 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files; Files of Robert W. Komer; Box 12; Arab-Israeli 1964-1965-1966 (1 of 2); LBJL.
The U.S. president quickly shifted his address to his policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the current water crisis. “Water should never be a cause of war; it should be a force for peace. And peace [was first on our agenda.” Contrary to popular perceptions, the United States did not want an empire in the Middle East; rather it sought a just settlement to the Arab-Israeli imbroglio. Notwithstanding its power in the region, it did not “court territories.” It “covet[ed] to dominate no people.” It sought “no satellites.” This said, it would not hesitate “to preserve and protect peace.” After repeating this sequence once more, Johnson loosely reiterated the U.S. commitment to come to the defense of those subjected to aggression in the Middle East.77

This speech, coming directly from the U.S. president, delivered the coup de grâce to the popular Lebanese perception of a U.S.-Israeli “special relationship.” Washington, once again, openly supported empire in the Middle East. “The Beirut Press,” according to a U.S. report, “reacting with uncommon unanimity and virulence to” Johnson’s speech, “devoted its editorial columns to this matter for several days to the exclusion of almost everything else.” In Beirut, a headline revealed: “Violent Reactions to L. Johnson’s Pro-Israel Speech Felt Here.” An-Nahar, which steered clear of past attacks on U.S. foreign policy, lamented “an alliance between America and Israel.” Abou Jawdeh editorialized that the presidential address was “serious because it ha[d] officially revealed the American-Israeli cooperation in nuclear research at the Rehovoth Nuclear Centre, a matter which ha[d] been evoking Arab fears over the possibility that Israel may develop the atomic bomb.” Johnson’s speech, he concluded,

went “beyond recognition of the border of Israel to Israel’s future—as if Israel [wa]s America’s 51st state.” Yom qualified Johnson’s speech as “a new American challenge to the Arabs.” For Saut-Outouba, Al-Horriya, and An-Nahda, it brought back memories of Truman’s recognition of Israel in May 1948. Lebanese officials followed suit and affirmed that the presidential declarations served as “evidence of a US tendency to ally with Israel even if it [wa]s the aggressor.”

Such resentment trickled down to daily encounters. A week or so later, a local driver hired by the U.S. embassy “was delayed longer than usual with [a] customs check point in Chtaura,” along the Syrian border. According to the driver, the Lebanese border guard told him “that he would get through quicker if President Johnson changed his attitude toward the Arabs.” The innocent driver reportedly attempted “to explain that he had nothing to do with American policy but was told to move before he received a kick for his troubles.” In their annual ‘Id al-Fitr declarations, Sheikh Muhammard Alaya, Mufti of Lebanon, and Shafiq Yamut, President of the Beirut Shari’a Court, referenced U.S. moral and material assistance toward Israel.

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78 Parker to State, 14 February 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 2432; File Joint Weekas LEB 1/1/64; NARA; “Violent Reactions to L. Johnson’s Pro-Israel Speech Felt Here,” Beirut, 7 February 1964, p. 2; cited in “Johnson’s Policy Speech Target of Attack,” Beirut, 8 February 1964, p. 5; “Revue de la presse libanaise arabe,” 8 Février 1964, Beyrouth, Ambassade; 91 PO/D; Boîte 12; MAE, Nantes; and The Arab World, 10 February 1964, p. 6.

79 Meyer to State, 4 March 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 1889; File POL ARAB-L; NARA; and Parker to State, 19 February 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 2435; File LEB-US 1/1/64; NARA.
The United States, in many Lebanese imaginations, was now considered an empire by association by declaring itself the sole protector of Israel. Both Washington and Tel Aviv were at odds with Lebanese decolonization. This, as a matter of fact, was deemed to be the only reason why Israel continued to exist. The growing sense in Lebanon was that Washington modified its policy of impartiality in lieu of imperialism. The Lebanese press, in the following weeks, refused to relent on its critique of U.S. foreign policy and began specifically targeting the U.S. president, “accusing him of harboring Zionist inclinations and Mrs. Johnson of membership in a Zionist organization.” According to Usbu-Arabi, Johnson was “one of Zionism’s greatest friends, never missing a gathering organized by the Zionists for the purpose of collecting funds for Israel.” Perhaps most importantly, many wondered what would come next. Al-Liwa, for instance, hypothesized that the U.S. president “was preparing a nasty surprise for the Arabs.”

In light of relentless Arab critiques similar to those being conducted in Lebanon, U.S. officials acknowledged that U.S.-Arab relations had taken a dangerous turn for the worse. The United States’ ongoing inheritance of the imperial mantle in Arab imaginations would bring serious consequence to U.S. national security and its quest to win the global cold war. In a message to a “disturbed” Johnson, Komer acknowledged that “Our Arab policy “[w]as in deep trouble.” The United States, as a result, could not risk “a real falling out” with the Arabs. “Several friendly moves” were required to patch things up. Yet absent among Komer’s suggestions, which

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80 Parker to State, 20 February 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 2432; File Joint Weekas LEB 1/1/64; NARA; and Parker to State, 19 February 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 2435; File LEB-US 1/1/64; NARA.
Johnson later approved, was any sign of reversing a U.S. public security guarantee to Israel. In fact, at this time, the United States contemplated selling tanks to the Jewish state. Komer, in particular, doubted “that tanks w[ould] be that much worse than [the] HAWK deal,” which he considered the United States “slid past rather neatly.” U.S.-Arab relations, Rusk optimistically wrote to Arab posts, “could be far worse.” It was now up to the U.S. diplomatic corps in the Arab world to regain the United States’ lost prestige. According to a National Intelligence Estimate, “the Arabs [we]re so sensitive regarding US-Israeli relations that even quite innocuous US statements and actions [we]re taken as proof of their fears for the worst.”

The worst, for both Lebanese peoples and the U.S. government, would come with the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

81 Komer to Bundy, 14 February 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files, Name File; Box 6 (1 of 2); Komer Memos, Volume 1 (3 of 3); LBJL; Komer to President, 18 February 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files, Name File; Box 6 (1 of 2); Komer Memos, Volume 1 (3 of 3); LBJL; Komer to President, 26 February 1964, FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. 18, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1964-1967, Document 19; Komer to Bundy, 27 February 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files, Files of Robert W. Komer; Box 12; Arab-Israeli 1964-1965-1966 (1 of 2); LBJL; Rusk to Certain Posts, 28 February 1964; RG 59; Central Decimal File, 1964-1966; Box 1854; File POL 33-1, 2/1/64; NARA; and National Intelligence Estimate, 8 April 1964; Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security Files, National Intelligence Estimates; Box 6; File 36. Arab World; LBJL.
CHAPTER VI
THE POINT OF NO RETURN

Following the end of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Harold Saunders, staff member of the National Security Council (NSC), assembled what he deemed “a comprehensive documentary record” of events in order to facilitate historical reproductions of U.S. diplomacy during this watershed moment in Middle Eastern and U.S. diplomatic history. “My main sin in this direction—if it is a sin—,” he warns, “has been to organize” the collection “around what I consider to be the major decisions taken.” Notably absent from Saunders’ record are myriad official and popular Arab expressions of opposition toward U.S. foreign policy, the outpouring of warnings from U.S. diplomatic posts in the Arab world, or any sign of extensive White House discussions over improving the U.S. image in Arab imaginations. Instead, Saunders’ account overwhelmingly focuses on U.S. dealings with Israel. “As far as I can tell,” he explains, “our position if discussed in detail at all, was taken more by instinct than by decision. It is understandable that many big ‘decisions’ are made this way because
they involve fundamental philosophies… that are not easily put aside and are often not even questioned.”

Accordingly, if one were to accept Saunders’ “insider” rendition, the Johnson administration’s “instinct” was to disregard Arab views outright and turn a blind eye to deteriorating local perceptions of the United States in the Middle East. This “philosophy” of not taking Arabs seriously, in the end, proved to be the United States’ greatest “sin.” Existing scholarship follows Saunders’ lead. The historiographical rainbow that is the tale of U.S.-Middle East relations during the Six Day War started with official accounts that the United States tried its hardest to prevent an Israeli attack on Arab forces, thus displaying a “red light.” A second wave countered this line by arguing that the Johnson administration privately gave Tel Aviv a “green light” by conspiring to topple its arch nemesis, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Finally, an alternative

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1 Harold Saunders, “The Middle East Crisis,” Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson; National Security File; National Security Council Histories; Middle East Crisis May 12-June 19, 1967; Box 17; LBJL.
interpretation contends that while U.S. president Lyndon B. Johnson sought to avoid a confrontation in the Middle East at first, he eventually gave up. This “yellow light” informed Israel that the United States would not stand in its way in the event of war.⁴

This discussion over “what color was the light?” ignores, for the most part, how Arabs perceived and experienced U.S. global power leading up to, during, and immediately following the Arab-Israeli war of 1967.⁵ In the case of Lebanon, many peoples perceived the U.S. reluctance to condemn Israeli aggression as a “green light,” symbolizing a tacit U.S.-Israeli conspiratorial alliance bent on expanding the confines of U.S. “imperial” power in the Middle East. This popular belief was perhaps best typified by the proclamation and overwhelming Lebanese support for the “Big Lie.” Following the first day of fighting, Nasser delivered a speech to the Arab world, accusing the United States of colluding with Israel against the Arab nation. Despite fervent U.S. efforts denying belligerency, many Lebanese embraced this false rumor and pressured Beirut to recall its ambassador in Washington and ask for the departure of the U.S. ambassador in Lebanon. The popular embracing of the “Big Lie” finalized the cultural process in which the United States became an “imperial” power in


⁵ This is the subtitle of William Quandt’s much-debated article.
Lebanese imaginations. While relations between governments were reestablished three months later, Washington’s rapport with Arab peoples continues to seek repair.

While historians continue to debate the origins of the Arab-Israeli crisis of 1967, Saunders’ official account contends that the U.S. government considered that it was triggered by Israel. The weekend of 11-13 May saw multiple occasions where Israeli officials publicly threatened to overthrow the Syrian government, in light of the latter’s support for Palestinian activities against Israel along the Syrian border. Unable to publicly remain aloof, Nasser sought to bolster his prestige in the Arab world by deploying a significant quantity of UAR troops to the Sinaï desert. Four days later, to the surprise of the Johnson administration, Nasser asked UN secretary general U Thant to withdraw United Nations Emergency Forced (UNEF) from the Sinaï. U.S. officials quickly understood the gravity of the situation in the Middle East, but opted to remain on the sidelines and urge caution.6

As the crisis unfolded, the Lebanese public sphere grew increasingly convinced that Johnson firmly chose the Israeli side, thus “compromis[ing] his own creed of justice by bowing to ‘Zionist pressure’ and failing to force Israel to meet its obligations” toward the Palestinian refugees and Arab territorial sovereignty. According to an earlier National Intelligence Estimate, “the Arabs seem[ed] unlikely for many years to come to accept Israel as a legitimate state” since “They view[ed] it as a creation and outpost of the Western imperialism which should be expelled from

6 Wm. Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim, eds. The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences (New York; Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Report by Saunders, “The President in the Middle East Crisis,” 19 December 1968; Papers of LBJ; NSF, National Security Council Histories; Middle East Crisis May 12-June 19, 1967; Box 17; LBJL.
the Arab world.” An imagined U.S.-Israeli “special relationship” manifested itself, as political cartoons showcasing this perception rapidly became common currency in the Lebanese press. The Pan-Arabist Lebanese daily *Al-Anwar*, for instance, published a cartoon of Uncle Sam tending to a distraught Israeli soldier, named Cohen, and asking him: “Why are you crying man!?!?” Cohen replies: “I’m crying for losing Sharm el Sheikh,” a port city overlooking the Straits of Tiran at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba. The following day, *Al-Anwar* printed another political cartoon along these lines. In this depiction, the Israeli soldier is seen with a satchel over his shoulder, walking out of the frame, in response to a U.S. and British call for the retreat of all their nationals from the Middle East. An alarmed Uncle Sam asks Cohen, “Where are you going with all your stuff?” and Cohen responds: “I am part of the nationals, Uncle!” But while Arabs “generally resented the US relationship to Israel,” many of those living in areas bordering the Jewish state, like Lebanon, continued to convey hope in Washington by turning to it “to prevent Israeli aggression.”

Tensions in the Middle East quickly rose on 22 May 1967, following Nasser’s announcement of the closure of the Straits of Tiran, thus preventing Israeli access to this strategic waterway. Israel immediately labeled this act a “casus belli,” as “it canceled the main achievement of the Sinaï Campaign” of the 1956 Suez Crisis.

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7 Memorandum for Rostow, “The President’s Stake in the ME,” 16 May 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Name File; Box 7; LBJL; and National Intelligence Estimate, “The Arab Israeli Dispute: Current Phase,” 13 April 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; National Intelligence Estimates; Box 6; LBJL.

8 *Al-Anwar*, 21 May 1967, p. 4; *Al-Anwar*, 22 May 1967, p. 4; and National Intelligence Estimate, “The Arab Israeli Dispute: Current Phase,” 13 April 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; National Intelligence Estimates; Box 6; LBJL.
Despite the prospect of war, many Lebanese of all socio-political ranks openly supported Nasser’s decision to violate international law. Ghassan Kanafani, editor of *Al-Muharrer*, acclaimed the move as “a teacher’s blow… throwing the glove in [Israel’s] face.” Lebanese foreign minister Georges Hakim, for his part, declared that Lebanon unequivocally stood by Nasser’s side. “There [wa]s no doubt that all Arabs now fe[lt] as one man in the fight against Israel,” avowed Lebanese deputy Albert Mokhelber.⁹

Given Israel’s reaction to the closure of Tiran and Aqaba, many Lebanese predicted an unfavorable U.S. position, while others were astonished by Washington’s perceived lack of interest in the Arab-Israeli crisis in spite of the U.S. war in Vietnam. “The United States’ position over the current Middle East crisis [wa]s both surprising and puzzling,” a *Daily Star* editorial opined. “It even sound[ed] lukewarm,” as U.S. officials “ha[d] not bothered to make any earth-shaken pronouncement, unlike their British and Canadian counterparts.” Yet by failing to condemn Israeli hawkishness, *An-Nahar* columnist Michel Abou Jawdeh explained, “the United States and Britain seem[ed] to be insisting on repeating their blunders in their policy towards the Arabs.” Their apparent refusal to confront Israeli militarism and extend a half-hearted overture to the Soviet Union to bring peace to the Middle East without including the Arabs “g[a]ve the impression that both Washington and London [we]re still controlling the area and that the fate of the Arabs [wa]s in their hands.” To the dismay of Washington,

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much of the content generated by Nasser’s *Voice of the Arabs* painted Israel and the United States with the same brush and led the translation staff at the U.S. embassy in Cairo to report that radio messages were “viciously anti-American to [a] degree unprecedented even in comparison to [the] treatment of Britain and France in [the] Suez crisis.”¹⁰

These anti-American messages, indeed, profoundly impacted Lebanese peoples and their communities, framing perceptions of U.S. global power. This became increasingly evident to U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, Dwight Porter, following his conversation with leaders of the Lebanese *Najjadeh* party. At this time, Porter expressed the U.S. objection to “any aggression across the Arab-Israeli frontier.” *Najjadeh* members, in turn, explained to Porter that “the Arabs could not continue to appease the Israelis in the face of ever-mounting Israeli threats against Arab states.”

“We would rather die standing up on our feet rather than continue to be humiliated on our knees in subservience to the enemy,” stated Rafiq Bey Naja. Lebanon had no other choice but to stand up to Israel and declare war if necessary. “If this were not done,” they added, “other Arab states would consider Lebanon to be a Fifth Column in the very heart of the Arab world.” Nasser, in their opinion, exercised his sovereign right and defended Arab decolonization when he closed the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping. This territory was Egyptian, not an international waterway, in spite of superpower politics. The United States had no business interfering in an

Arab land. *Najjadeh* members were astounded by the apparent “fact that the United States back[ed] 2 million-odd Israelis and guarantee[d] the existence of this state against 80 million Arabs.” It was in “the United States’ national interest to support and maintain good political and economic relations with the Arab world,” but “for domestic-political considerations and interests,” they opined, “the United States’ leadership ha[d] consistently chosen to support Israel to the detriment of its other area interests.” Lebanese peoples grew disenchanted by Washington’s failure to condemn “Israeli threats and aggressive acts against the Arab states” and its tendency to strictly reprimand “Arab actions against Israel.” This, accordingly, went against the U.S. position of impartiality vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict and led one member to plead, “Mr. Ambassador, you must help us despite ourselves.”

The Johnson administration, on the evening of 23 May 1967, finally released a public statement on the mounting Arab-Israeli crisis and reiterated that the United States “ha[d] actively supported efforts to maintain peace in the Middle East.” Bypassing any sort of denunciation of Israeli antagonisms, the U.S. president went on to criticize three Arab events that engendered the crisis: attacks against Israel from Syria, Nasser’s appeal to withdraw UNEF forces, and the increase deployment of UAR forces to the Sinai Desert. Thereafter, Johnson condemned Nasser’s blockade as “illegal and potentially disastrous to the cause of peace. The right of free, innocent passage of the international waterway [wa]s a vital interest of the international

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11 Porter later deemed this conversation as “an accurate assessment of the present Lebanese state of mind.” Porter to Rusk, “Lebanese Muslim Opinion on the Arab-Israeli Crisis,” 2 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL ARB-ISR 6/1/67 to ARB-ISR 6/4/67; Box 1790; File POLITICAL AFFAIRS & REL. 6/1/67; NARA.
community.” This said, he reiterated “that the United States [wa]s firmly committed to the support of the political independence and territorial integrity of all the nations of the area. The United States strongly oppose[d] aggression by anyone in the area, in any form, overt or clandestine.” Johnson would later comment on the nature of this statement in his memoirs, confirming that “I believed we had an obligation to state clearly the continuity of our position on Aqaba and to give as much assurance to the Israelis as we legitimately could.”

U.S. Orientalism devalued Arab views. There appears to be no trace of U.S. considerations of such in the formation of the statement or discussion of potential reactions and impact on U.S. global power in the Arab world in either the short or long term.

While Johnson’s words may have reassured Israelis, various Lebanese communities unearthed connections between past French and British colonial conduct and contemporary U.S. diplomacy. Orientalism’s “imperial” culture, many Lebanese deduced, shaped U.S. foreign policy. In his popular daily column, An-Nahar’s Abou Jawdeh warned the United States against “beating the drums of war and getting involved in another Vietnam.” Johnson’s tune, he added, had been heard before. Had Washington learned anything from the Anglo-French debacle during the Suez crisis of 1956? At that time, London and Paris declared the Suez canal an international zone, deeming its nationalization “illegal” and using the latter as justification for intervention in Arab affairs. History once again repeated itself, this time with the United States as the culprit of Western imperialism in the Middle East. “What [wa]s

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required now of the United States,” Abou Jawdeh contended, “is to leave Israel and the Arabs alone.” Following myriad discussions with Lebanese leaders “of all complexions,” U.S. officers soon informed the State Department that they “f[ou]nd [a] general belief that U.S. unilateral support [for the] Israeli position on [the] Aqaba issue w[ould] be highly resented by practically all Arabs and that [the] outcome c[ould] only be [a] substantial loss [of] U.S. friendship of [the] Arabs and [the] inevitable reduction of U.S. political and commercial influence in [the] area.” Above all, they explained, the Lebanese public feared “that U.S. strong support for [the] Israeli position w[ould] contribute to [the] inevitability of [a] major Arab-Israeli clash from which all parties, including Lebanon, will emerge greatly weakened and left with bitterness toward Israel and [the] United States.”

In the following days, much discussion in Lebanon centered on the prospects of “peace” in the Middle East. In the minds of many Lebanese, the United States abandoned the Arabs and relinquished its self-proclaimed position as an “even-handed” mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Hakim described to Porter, the “Israelis could take Damascus, destroy Baghdad, maybe [even] Cairo—all to no avail.” The “Arabs would never again accept [a] ceasefire or [an] armistice. They had learned their lesson.” In fact, any peace settlement brokered by an outside force, most notably the United States, would only be feasible via the use of force. While Hakim sincerely believed that “Nasser d[id] not want war,” Israel and the United States may

give him—and the Arab world—no other alternative. “The United States,” he pled, “must restrain Israel in [the] interests” of all. “Legalisms on [the] internationalization of [the] Gulf of Aqaba ha[d] no meaning to Arabs and w[ould] not be accepted as [a] basis for negotiation.” In any case, the “Arabs now believed” that the United States “had abdicated as [a] force for peace in [the] area,” ignoring Arab “rights and aspirations” and becoming a “one-sided exponent of Israel.” The choice, an editorial in L’Orient outlined, was the United States: a policy based on fear or a policy based on confidence. An opinion piece in The Daily Star, for its part, added, “Western powers say they want peace, but what some are actually resorting to is gunboat diplomacy in alerting their fleets… Peace should not mean big power trusteeship nor a U.N. occupying force. Peace c[ould not] be imposed by one side and neglected by the other, which [wa]s allowed to do as it please[d]. Peace cannot be accepted at any such price.” Finally, in the right-wing Al-Jarida, Bassem Jisr condemned the United States and claimed that Washington was “not free to interpret international law, or draw [its] own map of the world, to decide the destinies of straits and peoples according to” its particular objectives, the so-called security of Israel, “or in order to please the international Zionist movement to get their backing for the next election campaign.”

Lebanese popular opposition against the Johnson administration’s chosen path in the Arab-Israeli conflict reached new peaks, engendering an intense anti-American campaign throughout the country. In Beirut, roughly one thousand students rallied one

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afternoon to show support for the Arab cause and to denounce U.S. global power. According to a newspaper article, “Demonstrators came from the [AUB], the Arab University of Beirut (a branch of the Alexandria University in Egypt), the state-run Lebanese University and a number of secondary educational institutes.” Marching through the main streets of Beirut, they cheered in favor of Nasser and Lebanon’s supportive stand. Once the demonstrators arrived on the campus of Lebanese University, scheduled speeches attacked Israel, “U.S. imperialism,” and Johnson. The protesters also displayed myriad signs in Arabic that read: “We shall raze the ground under the feet of imperialism,” “we shall destroy the U.S. and its allies,” and “No Fleet, no Zionists, we want to strengthen the borders.” Eventually, Lebanese authorities abated the demonstrations by firing hot-water water hoses against protesters. Elsewhere, the U.S. embassy was the victim of a bomb explosion, shattering “windows on four floors on one side of the building.”

The United States, despite multiple events like these all over the Arab world, refused to reconsider its position and reaffirmed its claim that the Gulf of Aqaba was an international waterway and it was seeking to defend the territorial integrity of all states in the Middle East. This firm posture, alongside ongoing speculation over U.S. private talks with Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban in Washington, did nothing but further frustrate many in the Lebanese public sphere. Pundits of all political shades continued to frame U.S. policy as being “mad” and resembling “the role of the

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colonialist powers of the nineteenth century.” The United States, many insisted, had no reason to exert its power and interfere on the side of Israel in the current crisis, leading Abou Jawdeh to ask the following array of questions:

Have the Straits of Tiran been shut in the face of the United States? No.
Have the Straits of Tiran been shut in the face of American trade? No.
Is Egypt's action of shutting the Straits of Tiran in the face of Israeli navigation and Israeli goods a threat to America's safety and security? No.
Is shutting the Straits of Tiran in the face of Israel and its strategic resources a sign of firing things up between the United States and the Soviet Union? No.
Is shutting the Straits of Tiran in the face of Israel and its strategic resources in any way a threat to American oil interests in the region? No.
Does shutting the Straits of Tiran in the face of Israel and its strategic resources lead to the international victory of communism? No.
Does shutting the Straits of Tiran in the face of Israel and its strategic resources weaken America's power in Vietnam? No.

Jubran Hayek, publisher of *Lissan Ul-Hal*, urged the Johnson administration to practice what it preached and act “more justly and more humanely toward the Arab world where it [wa]s committing a mistake” by openly associating itself with Israel and ignoring Arab public opinion. “U.S. policymakers will need the magic of Aladdin’s lamp to escape unscathed from this crisis if they continue this shortsighted course,” added a *Daily Star* editorial. “This [wa]s a good time as any for a deep-rooted review of American policy, a policy which ha[d] earned more enemies than friends for the United States at a time when this part of the world was looking up to American leadership.” Washington’s refusal to take the Arabs seriously “ha[d] been overriding error of the United States here. One point worth remembering [wa]s that there [wa]s nothing congenital about current Arab hostility toward the U.S. The two sides d[id] not have a common dispute besides American favoritism toward Israel.”

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As Lebanon fumed over perceived U.S. inactivity against Israeli militarism, Nasser sought to further solidify his place as undisputed leader of the Arab world and sway regional public opinion in his favor. In a 28 May press conference that rapidly found its way into Lebanese neighborhoods, Nasser “seized every possible opportunity to belabor American partiality for Israel. As [the] biggest and strongest power in the world,” he declared, the United States was required to “be impartial in international disputes,” which it clearly had not been in this case. The United Arab Republic “had no quarrel with” Washington “or with [the] American people,” leading him to ask: “What did Americans have against Arabs?” In its report to the State Department, the U.S. embassy in Cairo conveyed the impression that “Nasser left no doubt that he regard[ed] [the United States] as enemy number one in [the] present confrontation, but also left the door open … by saying that we should take [a] neutral stand… We would expect these words to have some effect in other Arab capitals, both at governmental and popular levels.”

Nasser did indeed influence Lebanese imaginations of U.S. global power. But one must be careful not to grant him too much power. Many Lebanese peoples, after all, did choose to oppose U.S. foreign policy. Public sentiment in Lebanon also reflected its traditional order of things. As Arab nationalists openly supported Nasser, others supported the Arab cause primarily in order to preserve Lebanese unity and


17 Nolte to Rusk, “NASSER PRESS CONFERENCE,” 28 May 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL ARB-ISR 5/20/67 to ARB-ISR 5/26/67; Box 1788; NARA.
avoid a repeat of the 1958 civil war. “Lebanon [wa]s to [a] degree caught up in [the] same emotional surge which Nasser ha[d] created in [the] rest of the Arab world,” Porter explained in a series of cables to U.S. secretary of state Dean Rusk. “Even most Christian leaders despite deep private reservations must now appear as fervent and emotional as the Muslims,” joining “in verbal attacks” against the United States. The Lebanese “press [was] burning with war fever.” While “Many Christians d[id] in fact share the Muslim view on the elimination of Israel,” they “continue[d] to fear that one day they w[ould] lose their power” within Lebanon’s sectarian system and fall prey to Nasser’s ambition to unite the Arab world under one flag, that of the United Arab Republic. Even so, the “Lebanese find themselves as usual powerless [to] avoid pressure from [the] surrounding Muslim world” and continued to beg the United States to impose restraint on Israeli aggression. An editorial in the right-wing Al-Amal, for instance, implored the United States to change its attitude, “if not for the Arabs, at least for its own policy’s sake in the face of the emerging communism in the area. And for that purpose, it may not be too late.”

Although many used hostile means in their protests against U.S. global power, not all peoples in Lebanon resorted to violence. Edmund Khayyar, a forty-year-old Lebanese, attracted much attention as he staged a peaceful, two kilometer march from the Al-Cazar Hotel to the U.S. embassy, carrying a forty kilo, five meter-long “Cross

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18 Porter to Rusk, 29 May 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box 115; LBJL; Porter to Rusk, 31 May 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL ARB-ISR 5/27/67 to ARB-ISR 5/31/67; Box 1789; File POLITICAL AFFAIRS & REL. 5/31/67; NARA; Porter to Rusk, 29 May 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box 115; LBJL; “Restraint? Who?” The Daily Star, 1 June 1967, p. 4; and cited in “Not Too Late for U.S.,” The Daily Star, 1 June 1967, p. 4.
of Suffering Humanity” on his back. “Car horns blew and traffic jammed” as the “Peace Crusader” slowly marched toward the U.S. embassy and displayed a sign that read: “Why all that great power of the United States if not… to promote, achieve and maintain a just and everlasting peace?” According to an ex post facto interview, Khayyar organized this one-man demonstration after being convinced that the U.S. government could play a larger role in bringing about world peace through “its ability to exert strong influence on Israel to accept the status quo in the Arab world following the closing to it of the Gulf of Aqaba.” Once he arrived at his destination, the “Peace Crusader” presented a five-page petition to U.S. press officer David Roberts, waiting for him at the embassy entrance. After receiving Khayyar’s message and promising him to bring it to the attention of his superiors, Roberts told the Lebanese man that the U.S. government “was doing its best to bring about peace and tranquility to the world.”19 The “fever” of anti-Americanism reached the AUB, as “senior Christian Arab faculty members such as Charles Malik, Constantine Zurayk, Nabih Faris and Vice President Fuad Sarruf” vehemently voiced their opposition to U.S. foreign policy on countless occasions. They even sent petitions to key members of the Johnson administration and Congress, conveying their “hope that U.S. policy would not overlook the rights and aspirations of the Arabs.” Such an oversight in U.S. diplomacy during the current crisis would “alienate the Arabs further from the United States and in the end drive the United States out of the Arab world altogether.”20


20 Petition, No Date, Papers of Charles H. Malik; Box 111; Folder 7; LOC.
Lebanese peoples were not the only ones who opposed the U.S. position concerning the 1967 crisis. U.S. citizens residing in Beirut also displayed their opposition, joining ranks with their Lebanese neighbors. In a note bearing the names of ninety Americans “who ma[d]e their homes in Lebanon,” the latter implored the Johnson administration to exercise “restraint and impartiality” toward the Arab-Israeli dispute. Moreover, they asked the U.S. government “and news media to do their utmost to inform the public fully that it [wa]s not in American interests politically, economically, or morally to intervene on the side of Israel.” In response to anti-U.S. student and faculty activities, AUB President Samuel Kirkwood also addressed a letter to Porter, explaining his hope that Washington consider Arab opinions. “The letter, which ha[d] been reported widely in the local press,” was “mild in tone” and “in no way offensive” to the U.S. government or its peoples.21

In light of all these public expressions against U.S. foreign policy, U.S. officers in the Arab world quickly began contemplating their government’s actions in the Middle East. Porter was one of the first to express a need to change course, basing his thoughts on his experiences in Lebanon and reports from the other posts in the Arab world. In his opinion, “any attempt on our part to support unequivocally Israel’s position regarding the Tiran Straits w[ould] be viewed as [a] hostile act by [the] Arabs and if carried to [the] point of providing military support for [the] Israeli position (even under a UN flag) [wa]s likely [to] result in drastic and perhaps irretrievable loss

21 “Americans Living Here Urge U.S. Impartiality,” The Daily Star, 1 June 1967, p. 1; and Porter to Rusk, “AUB Attempts to Avoid Criticism in Arab-Israeli Crisis,” 2 June 1967; RG 59; Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969; Culture and Information; EDU 9-3 LA to EDU MEX; Box 348; File EDU LEB 1/1/67; NARA.
of US political and commercial advantages (including oil facilities) in [the] Arab Middle East.” Rather than blatantly appear in Israel’s favor, the United States had “to avoid taking sides in [the] present dispute and urge restraint on both [the] Israelis and [the] Arabs to avoid conflict which might have [a] near disastrous consequences for both,” let alone what it might do to U.S. global power in the Middle East. All in all, Porter deduced, “If our decision [wa]s based on its effect on U.S. interest in [the] area, we c[ould not] be in real or apparent opposition to [the] Arab position. Neither,” he added, “can Israel’s interest be served.”

The challenge at hand for Washington was how to come off as impartial—and therefore non-imperial—in the Arab public sphere, while committing itself to Israeli security in private. In order to achieve this goal, a U.S. official opined to undersecretary of state Walt W. Rostow, “We must not act in such a way as to further consolidate the Arab world.” The dominant U.S. “habit of looking on the Middle East through Israeli eyes” engendered unprecedented damage to its prestige and interests. Ignoring Arab views and publicly standing by Tel Aviv was “not good enough” in the “long run and [a] balanced U.S. foreign policy… The dilemma here [wa]s that tough talk from Israel and unambiguous U.S. support for Israel [wa]s best calculated to consolidate the Arabs. We must therefore continue to balance our statements on the Middle East.”

In an ensuing message to all U.S. embassies in the Arab world, Rusk insisted that all diplomatic staff urgently pass on to their respective assignments that

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22 Porter to Rusk, 29 May 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box 114; LBJL.

23 Wiggins to Rostow, “The President’s Saturday Speech,” 1 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Name File; Box 8; LBJL.
the United States, standing by the U.S. president’s May 23 statement, maintained its
intention to “support the territorial integrity and political independence of all countries
of the Middle East” and defend “the basic interest of the world community in
upholding [the] freedom of the seas, and the right to free and innocent passage through
straits of international character,” such as the Gulf of Aqaba. The U.S. government
was in no position to renege on its commitment to Israel of preserving open passage,
an assurance that led “the Israelis to evacuate Sharm el-Sheikh and allow the UN
forces to be stationed there as observers.” It was their duty as sworn U.S. officials to
stand by this policy and endlessly try to get Arab governments and peoples “to
understand this fact.” U.S. embassies, above all, must continue to restrain the Arab
world.24

As Washington bureaucrats contemplated issuing another public statement,
designed this time to abate Arab populism, more distraught cables rained in from U.S.
posts in the Arab world. In one virulent communication, the U.S. ambassador to Syria
complained that the “shape [of] U.S. policy tak[en] in [the] present crisis [was] sharply
divergent from [the] views reported [by] area posts,” as myriad messages regarding
Arab public opinion and rising anti-Americanism, not to mention diplomatic analyses,
“ha[d] played no r[ea]peat no role in policy formulation.” The Johnson
administration’s open disregard for the Arab world, he lamented, was charting “a
collision course with [a] monolithic Nasser-led Arab nation.” Over the previous couple
of weeks, the image of the United States corroded so rapidly “that I believe we [are]

24 Rusk to All Posts, 1 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES,
1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL ARB-ISR 6/1/67 to ARB-ISR 6/4/67; Box
1790; File POLITICAL AFFAIRS & REL. 6/1/67; NARA.
faced with few alternatives beside mounting [a] salvage mission.” The official U.S. foreign policy of so-called impartiality was failing, leading many Arabs to frame U.S. diplomacy as a “fraud.” All U.S. gambits to re-open Tiran and Aqaba to Israeli shipping must be abandoned at once. “My view of the situation, perhaps oversimplified,” he added, “[wa]s that” the United States was “reaping [the] full harvest of [a] 20 year policy which has regarded Israel as the fulcrum… This ha[d] rankled [the] Arabs who now feel strong enough to challenge [the] U[nnited] S[ates], hoping [to] jar it into [the] full realization [that] its total position” was “now in jeopardy unless it revise[d] its priorities in light [of] overall US national interest.” A continued failure to abandon an overt pro-Israeli slant may prove disastrous for U.S. national security. “The folly” of the current U.S. position in the Middle East was “obvious without further elaboration.”

Yet despite all these internal pronouncements against the United States’ position toward the 1967 crisis, the Johnson administration opted to hold firm on its 23 May statement and stay on the sidelines. In his response to the U.S. posts in the Arab world, Rusk politely insisted that “The considerations which” U.S. officers “ha[d] advanced [we]re being taken fully into account in a situation which [wa]s complex and as dangerous as any we ha[d] faced” in the Middle East. The United States, it was important to remember, was no puppet-master, leading him to warn, “You should not assume that the [we] c[ould] order Israel not to fight for what it consider[ed] to be its most vital interests.” Failing to acknowledge U.S. reluctance to publicly oppose Israeli

25 Smythe to Rusk, 1 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF, National Security Council Histories; Middle East Crisis May 12-June 19, 1967; Box 17; LBJL.
actions, Rusk added, “We ha[d] used the utmost restraint and, thus far, ha[d] been able to hold Israel back.” Contrary to public sentiments in the Arab world, Israel was not the sole belligerent, “But the ‘Holy War’ psychology of the Arab world [wa]s matched by an apocalyptic psychology within Israel.” Rusk was convinced, after all, “that we ha[d] a strong case for the idea that we ha[d] been even-handed with respect to the political independence and the territorial integrity of Near Eastern countries,” despite countless reports outlining the popular Arab view that Tiran and Aqaba were Arab territories. Their safeguarding, therefore, was a matter of Arab sovereignty. The United States, he repeated, had committed itself and could not “abandon, in principle, the right of Israeli flagships to transit the Strait… It w[ould] do us no good to ask Israel simply to accept the present status quo in the Strait because Israel w[ould] fight and we could not restrain her.” The United States could not “throw up” its “hands and say that, in the event, let them fight while we try to remain neutral.”

In the meantime, as tensions continued to rise in Lebanon, Porter relayed Rusk’s message to Lebanese prime minister Rashid Karame. The United States’ reiteration “made little progress” and did nothing but further aggravate Karame, whose reaction Porter deemed “ominous and deeply disappointing” and lead him to speculate that “Perhaps his emotions intensified since he had just returned from Friday prayers.” The United States, the Lebanese prime minister argued, must stymie its alienation of the Arab world. “Speaking for himself and most Arabs, he said [the] United States was wanted and needed in the Middle East.” Yet its steadfast, full support of Israel, “along

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26 Rusk to All Posts, 3 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box 114; LBJL.
with the seeming total indifference to Arab rights and aspirations, was leading to [a] very rapid eclipse of U.S. presence and influence.” Porter, in response, accused Karame of falling into Nasser’s “propaganda trap.” Since the United States was the leading Western power, Arabs wrongly supposed that it “had Israel under [its] wing.” The Johnson administration refused to abandon Israel outright as per Arab demands. “What would [the United States] do if Israel attacked [the] Arabs to reopen Aqaba?” Karame asked. “Nothing if Israel was winning.” Yet he was convinced that Washington “would actively intervene if [the] tide turned in favor [of the] Arabs.” The “unshakable Arab view” was that “Israel could always find [a] basis for proving it [as a] non-aggressor so [the] U.S. could always arrange [to] be in [a] position where it [was] supporting Israel against ‘Arab menace.’” In order to invalidate this common train of thought, Washington urgently needed to adopt a fresh public stance in favor of a just and equitable peace. “Even if the Arabs [were] not ready, a U.S. effort aimed at [a] peaceful solution (perhaps on basis of UN resolution starting with refugees) would reverse Arab anti-US attitude.” “Even a fruitless effort, if it took into account certain Arab views” Karame clarified, “would be a great asset to the U.S. and would help restore our prestige and image in Arab eyes as [a] power interested in justice.”

On this latter point, Porter reported back to the State Department that Karame was “dead right.”27 The United States had not tried to fully understand the majority’s perspective, thus dehumanizing the Arab world and reminding its peoples of colonial times. In As-Safa, Lebanese columnist Hilmi Maalouf eloquently made a similar point.

27 Porter to Rusk, 2 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box 114; LBJL.
“The United States,” Maalouf complained, “should not only emphasize that [it] would not use force to open the Gulf of Aqaba, but [it] should also take [a] positive step to indicate its understandings of the viewpoint of the Arab states in order to deprive those who seek to exploit U.S. support to Israel to spoil the potential of wide cooperation between the United States and the Arabs.” U.S. leaders, according to Abou Jawdeh, must understand that “the United States [wa]s not Israel, and that if [the] Arabs [we]re against Israel, it d[id] not mean therefore that they [we]re against the United States.” Porter, however, realized the slim chances that Washington’s would willingly shift its policy and actually listen to Arab voices and respect their human rights, let alone Lebanese ones. “Whether [a] war occur[ed] or not,” he grimly concluded, the United States “w[ould] bear [the] stigma of supporting Israel against [the] Arabs.”

Around 8 a.m. Beirut time on 5 June 1967, Radio Cairo interrupted its scheduled programming to announce that Israel launched pre-meditated “attacks” against the Arab world. Israel calculatingly engendered a third Arab-Israeli war. Whereas Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim convincingly argue that the 1967 war “was not the result of deliberate planning, and was still less a grand design on the part of any of the participants, but was rather the result of a crisis slide, of a process that no one was able to control,” many Lebanese believed otherwise as it complemented dominant fears of Israeli expansionism and empire in the Middle East. Israel’s culpability therefore framed Lebanese perceptions of ensuing U.S. foreign policy. Both the

Lebanese government and its population immediately rallied behind Nasser and his warning about an imperial conspiracy against Arab decolonization. Immediately following the UAR broadcast, Radio Liban, the official station of the Lebanese government, publicized its full support toward the Arab cause. “Lebanon [wa]s the country most threatened by the danger and ambitions of the Zionists; there [wa]s no life for Lebanon and the sons of Lebanon as long as… Israel exist[ed] on Arab soil. The Lebanese Army,” it made known, “[wa]s in the thick of the battle, and the people of Lebanon st[oo]d as one man in the battle of destiny.” Shortly thereafter, it announced that “Lebanese fighter planes shot down an Israeli plane which violated Lebanese airspace.” Radio Beirut, for its part, began playing martial music and songs. Lebanese leaders, such as Karame, former president Camille Chamoun, and Druze chieftain Kamal Jumblatt, were quick to join in as well. Maronite Cardinal Paul Meouchi, for instance, proclaimed: “Today we have victory, and let the West hear Lebanon’s voice.”

Word that war broke out in the Middle East quickly engendered an early start to Johnson’s day. The U.S. president was immediately informed that “the signs point[ed] to this as an Israeli initiative” and that the UAR suffered a major setback as “at least five of its airfields in Sinai and the Canal area ha[d] suddenly become

‘unserviceable’.” He expressed regret at the outbreak of hostilities and a need to share this position with the world. Rostow had already been hard at work, preparing a press statement, which was released to the press “shortly after 7 a.m.” Hours later, behind closed doors, Johnson asserted his belief that “there should [not] be anything more than this statement on the record,” thus refusing to publicly condemn Israel for starting the war.30

But while this meeting was in session, a State Department spokesperson inadvertently deviated from Johnson’s strategy. During a twelve o’clock press briefing, a reporter asked Robert McCloskey if the United States considered itself a neutral actor in the Arab-Israeli conflict. McCloskey’s initial response was: “I am in no position to speak specifically beyond the President’s statement of May 23.” When pressed to elaborate, he created much controversy by affirming, “We have tried to steer an even-handed course through this. Our position is neutral in thought, word, and deed.” When asked if he felt that the Johnson administration could indeed remain neutral, “no matter what happen[ed] in the Middle East?” the State Department spokesperson answered, “That will be our effort.” In a conversation with Rusk a few hours later, Special Assistant to the President Joseph Caliafano revealed that the mishap was “killing us with the Jews in this country.” The U.S. President, as he explained later on in his memoirs, speculated that McCloskey must have been “speaking in the context of anti-American riots in Arab countries and of the danger to

American citizens… Perhaps the remark “of neutrality” was designed to reassure the
Arabs that we were not engaged in the hostilities, but within minutes those words were
carried out in radio bulletins to an unbelieving nation” and “stirred unnecessary
resentment among many Americans.”

Washington’s refusal to condemn Israeli aggression before 5 June led many
Arabs to distrust U.S. foreign policy and immediately denounce U.S. claims to
neutrality. As Rusk rushed to prepare a statement to redress the U.S. image in the
public eye, officials discussed the problems surrounding the claim of neutrality.
According to one White House staffer, a presidential proclamation along such lines
“would be ‘unthinkable’.” This mistake was everyone’s fault, explained Lloyd Hackler
to George Christian, White House Press Secretary. “It was obvious that we were going
to get the question, from queries we had already received.” The Johnston
administration “would have come off much better” and “our purpose (as I understand
it)” would have “been better served… if we had prepared a little better.” Rusk called
another press conference, clarifying that the United States was “not a belligerent… But
this traditional word of international law ‘neutrality’ d[id] not involve indifference.”

Johnson and his administration “ha[d] been deeply concerned” and “ha[d] worked
incessantly to try to stabilize the peace out there.” A reporter then went on to ask the
U.S. secretary of state, “are we neutral in thought, word, and deed?” “I have in a good
many words told you what our attitude is,” replied Rusk. “I don’t, I think, need to get

31 Editorial Note, FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 19, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1967,
Document 164; and Johnson, Vantage Point, 298-299.
into particular phraseology that goes beyond what the President has said and what I have said.”

Leaders and citizens across the Arab world uncompromisingly attacked the idea of U.S. neutrality, as well as Washington’s efforts to bring about a cease-fire in the Middle East. Sensing an overall Arab distrust toward the United States and a need to explain why the Arab forces fell behind against the Israelis, Nasser unleashed a blow that continues to haunt the United States today. In a broadcast that reached Lebanese communities at approximately 7:45 a.m. local time, the UAR raïs announced “that it had been clearly proven” to the High Command of the UAR armed forces “that the United States of America and Britain [we]re accomplices in the Israeli military aggression.” U.S. and British aircraft, he insisted, “[we]re being used to aid Israel.” Jordanian radar systems confirmed that they were serving as “an aerial umbrella” against UAR and Jordanian forces, reportedly leading King Hussein to call Nasser to inform him that an “American aircraft yesterday hit my house with rockets.” Together, the UAR and Jordanian heads of state “agreed that this information was very important and that it should be made public to the entire Arab nation and should be dealt with as soon as possible.”

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32 Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. 19, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1967, Document 164; Hackler to Christian; 5 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF, National Security Council Histories; Middle East Crisis May 12-June 19, 1967; Box 17; LBJL; and Statement by Rusk, 5 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF, National Security Council Histories; Middle East Crisis May 12-June 19, 1967; Box 17; LBJL.

33 Porter to Rusk, 6 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/6/67; NARA; cited in “The War,” *The Arab World*, 6 June 1967, p. 2; and Statement of the High Commanding Wing of the Armed Forces in the United Arab Republic Accusing the United States and Britain of Their Collusion with
Though the charges were false, they solidified the idea in Lebanese imaginations that the United States had given Israel a green light to attack the Arab world and fully embraced empire in the Middle East like others before it. *Radio Cairo* enacted a virulent anti-American campaign, claiming that the United States took on the same role as that of Britain during the Suez crisis. “We shall not forget the enemy,” asserted one anti-US slogan. “American arms and bullets and arms in the hands of Zionists [we]re to kill the Arabs… We shall not forgive those who ha[d] made out of Israel an arsenal in the heart of the Arab homeland. WE SHALL RETURN ISRAEL TO AMERICA A DEAD BODY.” The U.S. embassy in Beirut, subsequently, urged the Lebanese government to reject Nasser’s charge of U.S. military involvement alongside Israel in the Arab-Israeli war and suggested that Washington issue a “categorica[ll] denial immediately.”

Awakened by this allegation, U.S. officials contacted the UAR Ambassador to the United States at 3:45 a.m. in order to forcefully contest “false and provocative Cairo broadcasts charging US involvement in Israeli air operations against [the] UAR and Jordan.” The “Big Lie,” as Washington came to label the accusation, was “totally and demonstratively false.” The Sixth Fleet was “hundred of miles to [the] west… No

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34 The following day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff received a report from the Commander of the Sixth Fleet revealing that “on 5 and 6 June no SIXTHFLT aircraft overflew Israel, Syria, or Egypt and no communications were established by SIXTHFLT pilots with any radio stations controlled or utilized by any of these countries.” Martin to Joint Chiefs of Staff, 7 June 1967, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. 19, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1967, Document 192; “The War,” *The Arab World*, 6 June 1967, p. 2; and Porter to Rusk, 6 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/6/67; NARA.
US aircraft or naval units [were] involved in military operations.” The U.S. government, they concluded, took “these false charges and [the] subsequent propaganda campaign calling for action against American interests” very seriously and “Requested [an] immediate action [to] terminate these hostile broadcasts.” By 4 a.m. Washington time, both the State and Defense departments issued press releases denying a U.S. intervention. Rusk also cabled all embassies in Arab states, ordering them to “categorically deny charges at [the] highest level and issue public denial.” It was imperative, the U.S. ambassador to Cairo relayed to all, that the Voice of America “in Arabic and English continuously repeat continuously broadcast detailed denials [of] our military aircraft involvement in hostilities.” Until further notice, this must be the “lead story, each time broadcasting first [a] summary and then [the] details of [the] denial.” Immediately upon hearing news, the U.S. embassy in Beirut fervently rebuffed the “Big Lie.” U.S. press officer David Roberts, in a statement to the Lebanese media, asserted that, “The report that American planes [were] actively engaged in the conflict [was] absolutely false. It [was] not true. The United States continue[d] to remain neutral and reports to the contrary [were] untrue.”

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Around 9:05 a.m., the U.S. secretary of state “left the Situation Room and went into the West Lobby of the White House, where reporters were assembled, to label” Nasser’s “charge a lie.” “Early this morning,” Rusk declared to the U.S. and international media, “I heard a charge made by Cairo that U.S. carrier-based planes had taken part in attacks on Egypt. These charges [were] utterly and wholly false… We know that they and some of their friends know where our carriers [are],” he added. “We can only conclude that this was a malicious charge, known to be false, and, therefore, obviously was invented for [a] purpose not fully disclosed.” Rusk then went on to repeat, “that the United States [was] not a belligerent in this situation.” Shortly thereafter, Voice of America and the wireless file were “now repeat now carrying [the] statement by the Secretary describing” Nasser’s allegation of U.S.-Israeli collusion as “utterly and wholly false.” Rusk, in another message to all posts in the Arab world, ordered diplomatic officers to “inform host governments urgently at [the] highest appropriate level that [the] UAR charges [were] absolutely false.”

According to a USIA report, the U.S. government, throughout the day of 6 July 1967, issued a grand total of twelve separate denials against the “Big Lie.”

Following Nasser’s wake-up call, the White House finally decided to earnestly attend to its image in the Arab world. Yet despite all burning efforts to reverse
Washington’s “imperial” image, in the eyes of Lebanese peoples and the Arab world, it was too late for the United States to start taking the Arab public sphere seriously. The damage had been done, as the seeds of distrust were planted during the first weeks of 1967 crisis and continuously fed by the United States’ refusal to directly condemn—or even acknowledge—perceived Israeli aggression against them. Back in Beirut, the situation became “tense” as local peoples mobilized against the perception that the United States officially sided with Israel and attacked Arab forces, leading “Armored cars and security vehicles” to cordon “off [the] street.” Around 11:30 a.m., an estimated mob of six hundred AUB students vigorously protested in front of the U.S. embassy, throwing rocks at windows and Lebanese security forces guarding the premise. Other demonstrations simultaneously took place on the AUB campus where “some gasoline bombs” were “thrown” and the police were summoned. The U.S. embassy also caught wind that “mobs w[ould] attack [American] installations in Saida and Tyre tonight.”

As the Lebanese population rapidly expressed their opposition, U.S. officers visited Lebanese leaders and government officials in order to improve the U.S. image. If the perception of a U.S.-Israeli conspiracy “[wa]s fixed in Arab minds,” a State Department report concluded, “the United States st[oo]d to be its heaviest loser, bearing virtually the entire stigma” of a probable Arab defeat. “Without a U.S. propaganda coup to explode these charges, denials w[ould] merely confirm our

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37 Porter to Rusk, 6 June 1967; RG 59; Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969; Culture and Information; EDU 9-3 LA to EDU MEX; Box 348; File EDU LEB 1/1/67; NARA; and Hughes to Rusk, 6 June 1967; RG 59; Middle East Crisis Files, 1967; Statements by Arab and Israeli Leaders to United States Statements on Israel; Lot File 68D135; Box 2; NARA.
participation to the many Arabs who want to believe it. The greater their loss, the
greater their predisposition to accept this version that relieve[d] the sting of defeat.”
Despite fervent U.S. insistence that the Lebanese government play the official U.S.
denial of collusion with Israel, Lebanese minister of information Michel Eddé, “who”
seemed “in a very agitated mood,” “insisted it would be disastrous” for his government
“to broadcast” any “item” that was “contrary to [the] line put out by Nasser.”
Washington and Beirut concurred that the “Big Lie” offered Nasser a “suitable alibi”
since he could not “admit that the Arabs under UAR leadership were defeated single-
headedly by Israel.” But, according to Eddé, “Something must be done to stop [the]
Israeli[s] from slaughtering Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian armies.” At this point, this
was the only way the United States’ could preserve whatever was left of its prestige in
Lebanon and the Arab world. Many Lebanese peoples sincerely wanted the United
States not to be involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict and anxiously hoped that it proved
Nasser wrong. Eventually, after strenuous U.S. demands, Eddé “agreed [to] broadcast
[a] brief US denial” on official Lebanese radio.38

U.S. public diplomacy efforts to counter the “Big Lie” in the short term were to
no avail, as in the evening of 6 June, the UAR announced that it was openly severing
diplomatic relations with the United States over the charge. Nasser, in his
announcement, concluded that the United States conducted “an act of aggression
against the entire Arab nation, and against the Arab nation’s security and its territorial

38 Rusk to Porter, 7 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box
114; LBJL; and Porter to Rusk, 6 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY
FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-
ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/6/67; NARA.
sovereignty.” Following the UAR’s lead, Algeria, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Yemen also cut diplomatic ties with Washington. Fearing a U.S. free fall in the Arab Middle East, U.S. officials rapidly tried to get a grip on the status of official U.S.-Lebanon relations. That night, Porter met with Lebanese president Charles Hélou. While Hélou accepted the U.S. denial of involvement in the Arab-Israeli war, he insisted that the view of Lebanese government was “not important at [the] moment.” The Lebanese peoples were “listening [to] Radio Cairo” and his government was nothing but a “captive of [the] situation. Nasser call[ed] the tune,” Hélou revealed, and he was “powerless [to] resist.” His government was a “slave of events and c[ould not] stop [the] effects of ‘Cairo’s Voice,’ which reache[d] the streets in Lebanon, and pressure[d] from within like those of 200,000 Palestinian refugees and Arab nationalists.” An official Lebanese stand against Nasser and the Arab nation, in his opinion, could only engender a “civil war and anarchy, with [a] probable loss [of] Lebanese sovereignty.” Hélou’s main concerns were to keep Lebanon officially out of the 1967 war, while simultaneously maintaining national unity and avoiding another 1958 crisis. Feeling powerless himself, Porter avowed to Washington that he had “no suggestions on protecting [U.S.] power [and] represent[ing] our interest.” Given the political climate in Lebanon, he and his staff began “destroying all classified material in anticipation” of a “break [in] relations.” In the end, wrote Porter, Hélou intimated to “anticipate the worst.”

As Lebanese officials discussed in private the ramifications of current events, the Lebanese press did not hold back in their comments on the “Big Lie” and Nasser’s decision to rupture ties with the United States. In An-Nahar, Abou Jawdeh labeled Western support toward Israel as clear imperialism. “The West will continue to try to impose Israel’s existence on the Arabs, and impose its existence alongside Israel. And the Arabs,” he wrote, “shall continue, no matter how many successful or unsuccessful wars they have to fight, to rid themselves of Israel’s existence, even if this means ending the West’s existence at the same time.” Nasser’s revelation led many to deduce that “what they [we]re through now, even if it turn[ed] out to be a second Suez, [wa]s a means of neo-colonialism, namely, secret and covert aggression.” Al-Anwar also offered a clear ultimatum to the United States: “It is either us or Israel.” Al-Jarida columnist Bassim Jisr, for his part, refused to accept the U.S. denial of collusion with Tel Aviv and questioned its public position of neutrality. “True neutrality [wa]s not pretending to be neutral during battle; it [wa]s in discouraging Israel in its aggression” and abandoning long-standing moral and material support. “What [wa]s [the] neutrality that America refer[ed] to especially at a time when it supplie[d] Israel with hundreds of tanks, aircrafts, and missiles? Those weapons would be in the name of what exactly?” While Lebanese peoples sincerely wanted to believe in U.S. non-belligerency, the fact that U.S. military supplies were harming the Arab world
prevented it. As a result, many Lebanese were convinced that Washington wanted “Israel to defeat us because that would enable them to invade the Middle East militarily, politically, and economically.”

Countering the “Big Lie” and tending to the Arab public sphere were now matters of U.S. national security. The Arab unwillingness to allow Washington to proliferate its denial through influential media sources signified that it needed to find other means to restore U.S. prestige in the Arab world. The United Nations proved to be one of the only avenues to undertake this daunting task, as U.S. initiatives there would more than likely be relayed to local communities. In a UN Security Council debate, Goldberg responded to Iraqi and Syrian finger pointing by once again categorically denying Nasser’s accusation “without ifs, ands, or buts,” adding that they were “made up out of whole cloth.” Goldberg, at this time, raised the U.S. denial a couple of notches with a surprise offer to the United Nations. It was time to “put up or shut up.” “The United States,” he disclosed, “[wa]s prepared, first, to cooperate in an immediate impartial investigation of these charges by the UN, and to offer its facilities to the UN in this investigation.” His government was willing to invite UN personnel aboard U.S. vessels in the Mediterranean “to serve as impartial observers of the activities of our planes in the area and to verify the past activities of our planes from official records and from the log of each ship carriers.” U.S. aircrews, moreover,

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would be made readily available for interviews. If anything, a UN investigation should clear the United States of any wrongdoing in the current Arab-Israeli crisis.

Yet circumstances in the field of fire curtailed U.S. public diplomacy. In the morning of 7 June, U.S. intelligence reports uncovered more Arab setbacks. “The Israelis appear[ed] to hold substantial portions of the Sinai Peninsula, and Cairo [wa]s ordering the Egyptian force at Sharm ash-Shaykh on the Straits of Tiran to withdraw,” leading to speculation that the Egyptians “may be withdrawing most, if not all, of their forces from the Sinai.” And Jordanian forces were reportedly being “hammered” outside of Jerusalem. These turns of events rendered a UN investigation inadequate in repairing popular perceptions of U.S. global power, demurred a U.S. official. Given New York’s past failure to check empire and facilitate decolonization in the Middle East, “The Arab world consider[ed] that the United Nations [wa]s not very helpful to them.”

The inevitability of an Israeli victory led the Johnson administration to turn to a peace policy in hopes of salvaging what was left of U.S.-Arab relations and limiting further Israeli spoils. To achieve a “stable and definitive a peace as possible,” Rusk avowed to Johnson, it was in the United States’ best interest to quietly motivate Middle Eastern actors toward peace, while “not appearing to dominate or dictate the

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42 President’s Daily Brief, 7 June 1967, FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 19, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1967, Document 186; and Battle to Rostow, “Countering the ‘Big Lie’,” 7 June 1967; RG 59; Middle East Crisis Files, 1967; Congressional Comments on Misc Reports; Lot File 68D135; Box 15; NARA.
solution.” In this instance, Washington thought it had no other choice but to work within the confines of the United Nations. Ensuing discussions showed increasing U.S. concern for its rapport with Israel and the Soviet Union, leaving the impression that popular Arab perceptions of U.S. global power were nothing short of an afterthought to the White House. “If we do not make ourselves ‘attorneys for Israel,’” said Rusk, “we cannot recoup our loses.” As for superpower politics, Johnson “was not sure we were out of our troubles” as the Soviet Union still had much to gain in the Middle East. The U.S. intent “should be to ‘develop as few heroes and as few heels as we can.’” The U.S. president clearly took for granted that, in eyes of the Arab world, the United States became the biggest heel. “By the time we get through with all these festering problems,” he reasoned, “we are going to wish that the war had not happened.”

Whereas the Johnson administration contemplated its next steps, the Lebanese government remained locked behind closed doors in a daylong meeting to discuss the fate of U.S.-Lebanon relations. By night’s end, Radio Beirut announced that the Lebanese council of ministers made the controversial decision to recall its ambassador from Washington and request the recall of the U.S. ambassador in Lebanon, thus opting to “meet Nasser only half-way” and leave the U.S. embassy intact. Hélou did

43 Rusk to President, 7 June 1967; RG 59; Middle East Crisis Files, 1967; Statements by Arab and Israeli Leaders to United States Statements on Israel; Lot File 68D135; Box 2; NARA.


45 Porter to Rusk, 7 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box 114; LBJL; and Rusk to All Posts, “MIDDLE EAST SITEREP AS OF JUNE 7,” 8
not want to repeat Chamoun’s 1956 mistake. In the morning of 8 June, Karame officially rendered this decision to Porter. In light of U.S. policies toward Israel and the 1967 crisis, he reckoned it “impossible” for “Lebanon not [to] take some act of condemnation.” His government, however, “wished to continue relations with [the] United States,” explaining that the “current action [was] designed [to] maintain such relations as long as possible.” Porter, in turn, expressed regret over Lebanon’s internalization of a blatant lie, but quickly understood that “Karame was prepared to believe [the] worst.” According to the Lebanese prime minister, “Facts [we]re not important,” as “all Arabs believe[d] Israel exist[ed] only through [the] support of [the] United States and any charges of U.S. military action on behalf of Israel simply” came off as a “logical extension” of Washington’s unshakeable allegiance to the Jewish state.

Thereafter, Karame pleaded with Porter “to explain [the] current Arab state of mind in Washington” and the latter’s apparent disregard to understand or even engage with Arab public opinion. Lebanese society did not want Washington to internalize “imperial” habits. As long as it maintained full support for Israel, the United States “w[ould] continue [to] suffer greatly in terms of prestige, influence, and access to Arab oil.” U.S. efforts to engender peace would be tarnished by this fact. Porter, after explaining that his government was beginning to comprehend the “Arab point of view,” reiterated that the United States regretted that a war broke out in the Middle East and tried its best to bring about a permanent solution deemed suitable by all.

June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/8/67; NARA.
parties. Karame hoped that the United States would genuinely start taking Arabs seriously and urged it to “take [a] public position as soon as possible which could be translated by Arabs as something other than all-out support of Israel.” such as a demand for an Israeli withdrawal behind 5 June borders. After this lengthy discussion, Porter thought it was “quite clear that Lebanon w[ould] not reverse [its] decision in [the] near future.”

In the interim, many Lebanese rejected the UN Security Council cease-fire that had been agreed upon in the late hours of 7 June and openly embraced Beirut’s decision to recall ambassadors. “There shall be no retreat,” proclaimed the right wing *Nida al-Watan*. The Arabs may have lost the battle, but the war was far from over, adding that “This [wa]s war, and wars last for generations.” Separately, political commentator Said Freiha also swore that the Arabs would not stop fighting. “The Security Council’s decision only mean[t] that the Arabs [we]re giving up to colonialism.” The UN-brokered ceasefire served as a Western method of protecting Israel from a deadly Arab onslaught. Yet, Freiha assured, “There w[ould] be no peace” and “no stability in the entire Middle East as long as Israel exist[ed] as a colonial base and a revengeful germ.” Reflecting this *zeitgeist*, Beirut port workers and the Port Workers Trade Unions Federation single-handedly imposed a boycott on all ships carrying U.S. flags.

46 Porter to Rusk, 8 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box 114; LBJL.

Upon hearing news of the virtual collapse of UAR and Jordanian forces and that Israel captured Sharm ash Sheikh, putting it in control of the Straits of Tiran, many Lebanese prepared for the worst: official defeat. The West Bank, notably Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho, was also now in large part under Israeli control. Contrary to its past pronouncements, it appeared that Tel Aviv concocted a fresh expansionist strategy in light of its surprising military gains. This said, Lebanese peoples grew increasingly apprehensive and deplored the Arab decision to accept a cease-fire at the request of the UN Security Council. News of Israeli attacks on Muslim and Christian holy places in Old Jerusalem particularly served as a sore point in the Lebanese press. Reuters reported that Israeli tank fire destroyed the gate of the ancient al-Aqsa mosque and that “Stephen’s Gate, site of the stoning to death of Christianity’s first martyr… was shattered and barely holding together.” Lebanese television allegedly repeated statements condemning this “barbaric act by the Israelis,” adding, “May God strike with paralysis the Israeli hand which committed this abominable deed.”

With episodes like these, the United States just could not shake off the “Big Lie.” An An-Nahar’s cartoon echoed the general Lebanese sentiment toward the

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48 Rusk to All Posts, “MIDDLE EAST SITEREP AS OF JUNE 7,” 8 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/8/67; NARA.


50 Rusk to All Posts, 8 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/7/67; NARA.
United States at this time. The picture featured a tearful Johnson and British prime minister Harold Wilson sitting on suitcases outside a barbed-wire fence marking the perimeter of the Arab world, thus symbolizing the popular view that the United States and Britain were now on the outside looking in. According to a 8 June U.S. report, “Beirut remain[ed] tense with predominantly Moslem demonstrators appearing in various numbers in various parts of [the] city… Moslem quarters,” it informed, were “still seething with anti-Americanism and remain[ed] [a] source [of] potential danger.” Furthermore, U.S. officers anticipated that “tomorrow June 9 and [the] weekend to be particularly tense days in Beirut with [the] strong likelihood [of] attacks against [the] Embassy and its personnel, and against American installations in Lebanon.”

U.S. image was at an all time low in Lebanese imaginations. This “reality” became increasingly apparent to U.S. officers in Beirut following Lebanese Mufti Sheikh Hassan Khaled’s speech to the Lebanese public. At this time, Khaled blamed the United States and Britain for the ongoing Palestinian plight and Arab military losses. In his opinion, the United States not only supplied “Zionists with weapons and armies,” but was also more than happy to fight “along with them, killing the weak and innocent in the West Bank, Gaza, and everywhere around there.” U.S. aircraft “covered the entire sky over the occupied land.” It was in large part Washington’s assistance that “led to the destruction of both Muslim and Christian sanctuaries and


52 Porter to Rusk, 8 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/7/67; NARA; and Middleton to Rusk, 8 June 1967; RG 59; Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969; Culture and Information; PPB KOR to PPB 9 MALTA; Box 388; File PPB LEB; NARA.
peoples” in Jerusalem and elsewhere. The Arabs, in turn, were left no other alternative but to “stand as one against the aggression and not allow the enemy to divide us internally.” Muslims, the U.S. embassy in Beirut reported, “were really getting whipped out.” As a result, the embassy was “battening [the] hatches” and would “keep only minimum forces for internal security,” as it anticipated a fresh wave of demonstrations outside its premise. Much depended on Nasser’s much-anticipated speech later that night, “which most expect[ed] w[ould] be mainly anti-American and calling for revenge.”

Nasser’s 9 June late-night speech did indeed live up to expectations, but for partially unexpected reasons. To the dismay and shock of many in the Arab world, the UAR raïs announced his resignation. He, and only he, could claim responsibility for the Arab defeat at the hands of Israel and the West. Empire prevented Arab decolonization. The United States and Britain’s involvement, Nasser opined, proved to be the difference-maker. Arab forces, as a result, “were faced with a decisive superiority of enemy forces” that exceeded “three times its normal strength… The conspiracy,” as he framed the perception of U.S.-Israeli collusion, “was bigger and stronger.” Yet this Arab defeat was merely a setback, or Naksa. Arab decolonization and the struggle against Israel and Western imperialism continued. “The forces of

imperialism imagine that Nasser is their enemy,” he proclaimed. “I want it to be clear to them that it is the entire Arab nation and not just Gamal Abdel Nasser.”

Nasser’s resignation “generated an unprecedented degree of emotion among Arab people and leaders” as Arabs from Casablanca to Baghdad said “No!” to his decision to step down as leader of the Arab world. Merely half an hour after the speech, large mobs formed around Beirut, crying “Nasser, Nasser.” The UAR president’s decision even led Hélou to supposedly shed tears. Karame, for his part, immediately rejected the resignation, declaring that Nasser “belonged to the Arab nation and not to himself.” The following day, leaders from the Najjadeh party and right-wing Phalangist Party called for a one-day general strike as a sign of respect for Nasser. Myriad Lebanese newspapers like Al-Anwar showcased full-page pictures of Nasser and decried the Arab Naksa. “There [w]as no doubt that the Egyptians and the Arabs refuse[d] that their leaders resign under foreign pressure, let alone Israeli aggression,” commented Abou Jawdeh in An-Nahar. Nasser’s resignation would not change anything. In fact, it would only amplified the opposition’s perception of victory in a war that was far from over.

Lebanese anxieties were quickly transformed into aggressive expressions of anti-Americanism, leading the Lebanese government to impose censorship in order to stymie “inflammatory or anti-West[ern] articles and editorials.” After all, it was Nasser

54 Memorandum for President, “The 6:30 Meeting,” 9 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF, National Security Council Histories; Middle East Crisis May 12-June 19, 1967; Box 19; LBJL.

who qualified the United States’ as a major culprit in the Arab Naksa. On 10 June, a reported 50,000 Lebanese rallied in Beirut in support of the Arab leader and in protest against U.S. global power, as well as empire in the Middle East. Americans in Lebanon joined in, handing a petition to the U.S. embassy signed by forty-five nationals, like Candace Armstrong, Jane Louise Cass, Herbert R. Swanson, and Donald J. Hall, urging Washington to exert “restraint and impartiality in order to keep the crisis localized.” That morning, a Daily Star editorial that somehow slipped though censorship read: “The West or the East would be mistaken to believe that this was an opportune time to force any settlement on the Arabs. To the Arab people, the past few days were only the first round in the battle with Zionism and imperialism which may take decades to settle.” Shortly after noon local time, the Lebanese government ordered a curfew throughout Beirut and authorized the Lebanese Army “to shoot on sight anyone moving in the streets.” The imposition of a curfew deeply relieved one U.S. officer, whose reaction was: “Whew!” According to a U.S. report, “Moslems [we]re confused, angry and frustrated. Christians [we]re furious at Moslems over today’s orgy and most [we]re frightened over what [the] future may bring.” Memories of the Lebanese civil war of 1958 loomed “in many minds.” At the end of the day, the U.S. embassy in Beirut concluded, “Our program of military assistance, small though it may be, today paid real dividends.”

56 Middleton to Rusk, 10 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/10/67; NARA; Middleton to Rusk, “Tour d’Horizon with Chief Lebanese Army,” 12 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/10/67; NARA; Petition, 10 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; National Security—Defense; Box 195; File ND 19/ C0 1-6 (6/10/67-6/11/67);
Following the Arab-Israeli cease-fire a mere six days after the start of the war, U.S. officials rapidly prepared themselves for postwar diplomacy. As Rusk later admitted, “The problems for us were rendered easier with an Israeli victory than an Arab victory.” Israel grew stronger, while Nasser’s prestige and Arabist morale were at an all time low. This brought consequences to U.S. global power. “The Israeli tactical victory eased certain short-run problems for the United States,” Rostow confided, “but Johnson’s view of the long-term prospects remained somber.” Somber it was indeed, as the Arab Naksa solidified the cultural process in which Washington became an “imperial” power in Lebanon, not to mention the greater Arab world. In the minds of many, the United States officially became public enemy number one as it clearly abandoned “a role of non-alignment” and favored Israel. Johnson was “aware of the deep resentment” of many Arabs, but he “was convinced that there could be no satisfactory future for the Middle East until the leaders and the peoples of the area turned away from the past, accepted Israel as a reality, and began working together to build modern societies, unhampered by old quarrels, bitterness, and enmity.”

LBJL; “No Peace,” *The Daily Star*, 10 June 1967, p. 4; Middleton to Rusk, 10 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/10/67; NARA; and Rusk to All Posts, 10 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/10/67; NARA. 57

Yet Arabs needed time to accept the fact that Israel was there to stay. And in order to pave the road toward a permanent peace, the United States was required to address the situation. Certain State Department officials advocated for a new presidential policy statement that defended Arab sovereignty and condemned Israeli occupations of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Sinaï Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. This would serve as a first step in redressing the U.S. image and U.S.-Arab relations. “The United States ha[d] a glorious opportunity to show her impartiality, her respect for the Arabs (who now were really down and nearly out) and to win back some of their confidence,” Goldberg relayed to Rusk following many conversations with Arab representatives, including Lebanon’s, at the United Nations. “American prestige ha[d] gone steadily down in Arab eyes since we helped found Israel. The Arabs, in their present mood, say that they ha[d] ‘had it’ as far as the United States [wa]s concerned.” But a small window remained opened because many “fe[lt] with a few words the United States would have a golden opportunity to win back some of our pre-Israel prestige in the Arab world.” It was now up to the Johnson administration to do so, “if it want[ed] to.” Executive Secretary of the Special Committee of the NSC McGeorge Bundy did not, rejecting the idea of re-asserting “the territorial integrity clause of the May 23 statement.” Such a statement, after all, would render the 1967 war and the Israeli victory trivial. “Old boundaries cannot be restored,” declared Bundy.58 In the end, the Johnson administration opted to hold off for a couple days.

58 Goldberg to Rusk, “ME Crisis: ARB Thinking,” 10 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; File POL 27 6/10/67; NARA; and
Lebanese peoples did not relent on their critiques of U.S. global power. In a public statement, a coalition of Lebanese figures defined the 1967 war as “the climax of a Zionist conspiracy that was planned by the United States and executed by Israel with all the aid it could ask for free of charge.” The imperial “occupation” did not symbolize the end of the Arab struggle, however. It was “only the result of the first round of the war against colonialism and all its tools.” The *Voice of the Arabs*, for its part, broadcasted a special program dedicated to the Arab loss of the old city of Jerusalem, which continuously repeated: “The Americans have turned Moslem and Christian shrines over to the Jews.” Abou Jawdeh offered what seemed like a simple solution to U.S. problems: condemn Israel and force a retreat to the pre-war borders. Israel was now officially an expansionist force, controlling “old Palestine” as well as parts of UAR and Syrian territories. If the United States did not want to continuously be labeled in this way, it had to adopt a public stance against the Jewish state. For the time being, only this would facilitate the “resumption of political contacts” between the Arab world and the United States. It was Washington’s duty to force an Israeli retreat, added Jisr. “This, we doubt, although we do not rule out the possibility that it might happen.”

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Many Lebanese condemned Israel as a matter of national unity and as a means to avoid another civil war. Washington could not thwart such verbal attacks or overturn popular sentiment. Adnan Hakim, an “extremist leader” of “the Muslim street in Beirut,” explained to U.S. officers that Israel was the “aggressor” in the war. The “time ha[d] come for [the] United States to act in its national interests vis-à-vis [the] Middle East and not in [the] interest of [a] small American Zionist pressure group.” Anti-Americanism would re-emerge “if [the] United States fail[ed] [to] condemn Israeli aggression and demand [a] withdrawal from [the] occupied territories.” “After what ha[d] happened,” complained a Daily Star editorial, “for President Johnson to go on talking about protecting territorial integrity [wa]s unblushing hypocrisy. As far as America [wa]s concerned Israel [wa]s not only helped in various ways to commit aggression but [wa]s allowed to do so with impunity.” According to Ghassan Tueni, influential editor of An-Nahar, “What the West must know and understand [wa]s that any dialogue based on the legitimacy of Israel’s” right to exist “w[ould] end nothing. Who sa[id] it? Lebanon sa[id] it, and want[ed] the West to hear it.”

Official U.S. Orientalism refused to hear what Lebanese peoples had to say, as they were more preoccupied with normalizing relations with the Lebanese government than restoring its lost prestige amid the greater population. Such a culture made things difficult for Beirut. Hélou appeared to “be working hard to avoid confessional strife”

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and could not afford at that time to sacrifice national unity for U.S. friendship. In a private conversation with a U.S. officer, Georges Hakim conveyed that his government’s “decision to recall Ambassadors should not be interpreted too seriously.” Beirut’s intention was to re-establish formal ties once the contemporary internal situation rectified itself. Yet the United States had “lost its credibility” in Lebanon and “did nothing against Israel.” Something had to be done in Washington to reverse the popular perception that the “U.S. commitment to territorial integrity” was “merely words.” Otherwise, normalization seemed like a distant reality. The Lebanese now expected U.S. deeds “and only in the latter case will American credibility be restored.”

A significant U.S opportunity to counter its “imperial” image came 19 June 1967, nine days after the end of the 1967 war. In front of an international televised audience, the U.S. president publicly outlined his plan for a permanent peace in the Middle East. Johnson charted what he considered to be the five fundamental principles for peace: “the recognized right of national life; justice for refugees; innocent maritime passage; limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race; and political independence and territorial integrity for all.” The fifth principle gained the most attention, as the international community prepared to debate a settlement to the 1967 war at the United Nations. In Johnson’s opinion, the sovereignty of all Middle Eastern states needed to

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61 Middleton to Rusk, 15 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/6/67 to POL 27 ARB-ISR 6/9/67; Box 1793; NARA.

62 Middleton to Rusk, 16 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF; Country File; Middle East; Box 108; LBJL.
be respected. “What they now need[ed] [we]re recognized boundaries and other arrangements that w[ould] give them security against terror, destruction and war.” The United States, he confided, was committed to this road map. Shortly thereafter, the U.S. president received myriad congratulatory remarks from White House officials. Abe Feinberg called the speech “wonderful.” Rostow, for his part, told Johnson that “it was great, and, as I well know, it was yours as I’ve rarely seen a presidential address.”

While many Americans lauded their president’s initiative, Lebanese peoples grew increasingly distrustful toward U.S. global power. This was surely aggravated by Tel Aviv’s affirmation that it would hold on to the occupied territories for the time being, as it deemed them “an asset for political bargaining in peace negotiations.” Washington, in the minds of many, turned its back on Arab human rights by not forcing Israel to retreat from its occupied territories. The U.S. embassy in Beirut reported that “the Lebanese public, particularly Moslems, consider[ed]” Johnson’s “proposals [as] basically pro-Israeli.” For the time being, Johnson’s statement rendered its objective of a so-called permanent peace less likely since “no Arab leader c[ould]… publicly say he [wa]s ready to sit down with Israel to negotiate [a] final peace settlement or that his government [wa]s prepared to recognize Israel’s right to exist.”

63 Remarks of the President at the National Foreign Policy Conference for Educators, State Dept, 19 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF, National Security Council Histories; Middle East Crisis May 12-June 19, 1967; Box 17; LBJL; and Rostow to Johnson, 19 June 1967; Papers of LBJ; NSF, National Security Council Histories; Middle East Crisis May 12-June 19, 1967; Box 17; LBJL.

64 Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar, Lords of the Land: The War Over Israel’s Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007 (New York: Nation Books, 2007), 6; and Middleton to Rusk, “President’s Speech,” 21 June 1967; RG 59; Middle East Crisis 378
As the UN General Assembly worked tirelessly to set up a framework for peace in the Middle East, the U.S. embassy in Beirut informed Washington that “a profound and disturbing change appear[ed] to be occurring in [the] attitude of many Lebanese toward the United States.” A little over a week earlier, U.S. supporters in Lebanon “were privately jubilant over [the] defeat of Nasser.” Circumstances, however, shifted these perceptions as a majority seemed frustrated “to the core” at “what they consider[ed] to be [an] American utter failure to take one step or say one word either to condemn Israeli past and present actions or to indicate [any] support whatsoever for [the] Arab position or sensibilities.” They did not expect Washington to abandon Israel, as Farid el Khoury, a thirty-five year-old attorney explained to a U.S. officer, but hoped that it would use its power to force an instantaneous Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories, most notably Jerusalem.65

In a letter that found its way into the hands of a young Illinois Republican Congressman by the name of Donald Rumsfeld, Nancy Abu Haidar revealed the chaos that the Israeli occupation brought to the Arab inhabitants of the old city of Jerusalem. According to this Lebanese woman on vacation with her husband and two children, “Today Jerusalem is an occupied city, ruled over by an enemy determined to irrevocably change its physical appearance and break the spirit of the people.” Israeli

65 Middleton to Rusk, 28 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 27 ARAB-US to POL 2-1 ARG; Box 1845; NARA; and Middleton to Rusk, “Lebanese Youth in Re-examining Lebanese National Policy,” 26 June 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL LOAS-USSR to POL 12 LEB; Box 2304; File POL LEB 2; NARA.
forces ethnically cleansed Arab Jerusalemites as “the homes of approximately 250 families were bulldozed down in the Morrocan Quarter of the Old City to make way for a paved square in front of the Wailing Wall.” As a result, approximately 30,000 peoples were left homeless and in starvation. “This pathetic situation,” she continued, “ha[d] been deliberately contrived, I feel, as a means of forcing these people to leave.”

Stories like this one intimated that if the United States did not prevent them from continuing, it would equally be held responsible for their grievances.

U.S. actions during the special UN General Assembly meeting on the Arab-Israeli conflict proved to be the last U.S. opportunity to counteract the Arab Naksa and the consolidation of U.S. “imperial” power in Lebanese imaginations. This international public forum would be an ideal setting for the United States to finally offer an open denunciation of Israeli militarism and expansionism, if it chose to do so. But, according to U.S. records, such an overture designed to restore U.S.-Arab relations was far from being a priority on the White House agenda. While different shades of a resolution requiring an immediate withdrawal failed to break through UN General Assembly debates, an Arab-Muslim sponsored resolution on Jerusalem, declaring Israeli measures to incorporate the Old City as “invalid,” “was likely to be pushed through a quick vote.” Such a resolution, which U.S. officials concluded was “likely to pass overwhelmingly in any case,” would place Washington in a difficult

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66 Macomber to Rumsfeld, 17 August 1967; RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL ARB-ISR 6/5/67 to ARB-ISR 1/1/69; Box 1791; File POL—POLITICAL AFFAIRS & REL. 7/1/67; NARA.
predicament, as it would be obliged to go on the UN record and take an official stand on the Arab-Israeli conflict.  

The upcoming UN vote on a Jerusalem resolution received much attention in the Lebanese public sphere. Prior to casting its vote, U.S. officers in Beirut consulted the Lebanese government. In a private conversation, they explained to Hélou that the U.S. positions at the UN General Assembly on the issues of Jerusalem and an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories were “based on [a] framework of [an] Arab commitment to [the] state of peace in [the] area.” While deeming this approach a “realistic” one, Hélou went on to disclose “that realism as claimed [by the] U.S. position [in the] Middle East [could not] be based on logic but must also comprehend the emotional feelings of the parties of the dispute.” No one could afford or was willing to “come to terms with Israel.” “This would be political suicide. Unfortunately,” said Hélou, “the psychological factor in the Arab world [was] playing a dominant role and inhibit[ed] a purely rational approach as sponsored by [the] United States.” Washington, for its part, committed political suicide in the Arab world by not taking the Arab demand for a withdrawal to prewar borders seriously. For this reason, it was “considered to be [an] enemy of [the] Arabs.”

Once again, the United States was informed of a way to begin the rehabilitation of its image. According to Hélou, Washington needed to endorse a settlement within

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68 Middleton to Rusk, “LEBANESE PRESS REACTION TO MIDEAST DEVELOPMENT,” 30 June 1967; RG 59; Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969; Culture and Information; PPB KOR to PPB 9 MALTA; Box 338; File PPB LEB; NARA.
the framework of the UN General Assembly “which would be acceptable to [the] Arabs.” In popular Lebanese imaginations, there was “little probability of [a] positive result emanating from [a] UN Security Council consideration [on the] Middle East crisis.” These circumstances, moreover, complicated efforts to restore official U.S.-Lebanon relations. While sharing “that it was most painful for him to ask [for the] recall of Ambassadors,” the Lebanese president emphasized that normalization would have to wait as “such as decision would be premature at this point but added that [the] situation could change really quickly.” In light of the current political climate, the re-establishment of full diplomatic relations “would only make Lebanon more susceptible to [the] irresponsible attacks by Arab extremists and could cause political difficulties domestically.”

Back at the UN General Assembly, the Pakistani delegation presented a strongly worded resolution “declaring that measures by the Israelis on Jerusalem [we]re invalid and calling upon Israel to rescind these measures and desist from action which would alter the status of Jerusalem.” “Construed literally,” commented a U.S. official, “this would require sealing up the wall, turning off the water, disconnecting the electricity, and reversing all other steps taken to unify Jerusalem.” The U.S. delegation diligently worked to water down the resolution, but to no avail. In the likely event that the Pakistani resolution went to a vote, it intimated, “we shall need a high level decision.” “Our record would be badly tangled from a legal point of view if we

69 Middleton to State, “US and Lebanese Positions on Arab-Israeli Crisis,” 14 July 1967; NSF; Files of the Special Committee of the NSC; “Lebanon;” Box 5; LBJL; and Middleton to State, “Return of US Ambassadors,” 14 July 1967; NSF; Files of the Special Committee of the NSC; “Lebanon;” Box 5; LBJL.
were to vote for the current Pakistani draft,” advised Bundy. “The situation [wa]s highly tactical and the decision to vote for the resolution or to abstain w[ould] have to be made on the basis of the fine print as the hours roll[ed] along.” The U.S. delegation, for its part, recommended that if unable to alter the Pakistani resolution, the United States “must abstain” and offer an elaborate explanation.70

On 4 July 1967, the UN General Assembly voted on the Pakistani resolution, passing it with 99 for, none against, and twenty abstentions. The United Stated was one of the latter. Shortly thereafter, the Johnson administration explained its decision to abstain. In its opinion, the demands of the resolution “were unrealistic and appeared unlikely to produce any constructive results.” The U.S. abstention, it explained, “should be interpreted as indicative of our own concern,” which seemed to exclude the interests of the Arab public sphere. According to Rusk, “We will continue to stress our opposition to any unilateral efforts to change the permanent position in Jerusalem or elsewhere, and to insist that any such change be accomplished only by internationally effective action, taking full account of international interests.” While publicly refusing to recognize Israeli endeavors to alter the formal status of Jerusalem, the U.S. government declared that “Israeli action to establish a unified municipal administration of Jerusalem cannot be regarded and will not be recognized as a valid annexation, or a permanent change in [the] legal status of Jerusalem in any sense.” In other words,

Washington refused to label Israeli efforts in all of Jerusalem as expansionist since Tel Aviv publicly proclaimed its control of the Holy City as being temporary.\textsuperscript{71}

As expected, the UN General Assembly vote on the Pakistani resolution was widely acclaimed by Lebanese peoples. Such elation, however, quickly morphed into popular anti-Americanism as they perceived that the United States maintained its support toward Israel expansionism and militarism by acquiescing to the Jewish state’s annexations of Arab lands. Without question, Washington was integral to empire in the Middle East and the prevention of Arab decolonization. The United States, in the imaginations of many Lebanese, finally crossed the Arab Rubicon, as “most of the blame for [the] failure of Arabs to get what they consider[ed] [a] ‘just resolution’ [wa]s placed on us, whose tactics they fe[lt]” caused the failure of an Arab-Muslim resolution condemning Israel as “an aggressor.” “The Old City of Jerusalem” in particular, was “capable of stirring the mobs in the streets to the point to the point where the fate of our most moderate friends in the Middle East w[ould] be in jeopardy and the basis laid for a later holy war.”\textsuperscript{72} This became readily apparent throughout Lebanon. In a public address, Karame was very critical of the United States and “called for the diminution” of its interests in the Arab world, serving as “a distressing indication of the state of mind of an important element of the Lebanese leadership.”

“The majority of local Arab editorial commentary,” reported the U.S. embassy,


“speculate[d] that American actions in the UN General Assembly [we]re only a prelude to the partisan role the United States w[ould] play in the Security Council,” which was also slated to debate a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.  

In a last ditch effort to save official U.S.-Lebanon relations, U.S. officers in Beirut worked with the Lebanese government and the press to clarify the U.S. position on Jerusalem. The United States Information Service (USIS) aggressively distributed a “run-down” of the U.S. position vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict to as many media sources as possible. Yet the U.S. press statement engendered much tempered criticism. Al-Jarida expressed the apparent U.S. unwillingness to accept the prevalent Arab view. “With all insolence, [the] United States call[ed] on Arabs to abandon [the] idea of fighting… American stupidity d[id] not want to understand that [the] Arabs ha[d] become more determined than ever to fight and liberate the usurped Arab land.” “It was obvious to anyone with sound thinking that supporting the Zionist enemy in staying on Arab land would certainly mean that the Arabs will return to armament in preparation for the vendetta,” argued As-Shams. Finally, As-Shaab chimed in by saying that the “United States [was] worried now because [the] Arabs [were] getting ready for a second round[,] but she was not worried when [the] Arabs lost [the] first round.”

Lebanon, at this time, served as a microcosm for the remainder of the Arab world. While popular support for Nasser waxed and waned following the Arab Naksa,  

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73 Middleton to State, “Prime Minister Karame’s Reaction to UNGA Session,” 10 July 1967; NSF; Files of the Special Committee of the NSC; “Lebanon;” Box 5; LBJL. 

74 Middleton to Rusk, “Middle East Media Reaction,” 13 July 1967; NSF; Files of the Special Committee of the NSC; “Lebanon;” Box 5; LBJL.
local anti-Americanism remained constant. Many officials in Washington recognized this and began to re-evaluate U.S. strategy in the Middle East. In order to keep the Soviet Union out as much as possible and mollify Arab anti-Americanism, it was crucial for the United States to lessen its public role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The onslaught of UN debates following the 1967 war served as nothing but a reminder to many of their tragic defeat at the hands of their nemesis. While there was no doubt that the U.S. government and its peoples would support Israel “in [a] time of crisis,” Washington “should adopt a less obvious and direct role in Arab-Israeli affairs to ease the impact on daily U.S.-Arab relations and reduce the extent to which the USSR profits.” This kind of change in U.S. public policy could only “strengthen U.S. support of the conservatives states,” like Lebanon.\textsuperscript{75}

This new strategy quickly succeeded, as the U.S. embassy in Beirut noted that there had been an improvement concerning popular perceptions of U.S. global power and that U.S. press releases “were gradually getting better play in the local press.”\textsuperscript{76} Although there remained much public misunderstanding vis-à-vis the U.S. policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States decreasingly bore the brunt of Lebanese discontent. During the summer of 1967, the idea a rapprochement with the United States gained considerable ground throughout the Arab world. In fact, a turning point in the overall Arab approach to Washington came in early August, following the


\textsuperscript{76} Middleton to State, “GOL’s Tactics for Restoration Normal US/Lebanese Relationship and Other Middle Eastern Matters,” 21 July 1967, NSF; Files of the Special Committee of the NSC; “Lebanon;” Box 5, LBJL.
publication of an influential editorial by UAR editor Mohammed Heikal. Initially published in his *Al-Ahram*, Heikal called for the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Arab world and the United States. Arabs, he opined, “should act a [the] ‘matador’ toward [the] American ‘bull.’ In order to succeed in its fight against Israel, the Arab world had to improve its image in U.S. imaginations and work with Washington as much as possible, rather than always being polemically against it. This proved to be the best way to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Heikal’s column, which was highly debated in Lebanese circles, reportedly “shocked ordinary Arab citizens.” The UAR, former uncontested leader of the Arab nation, relinquished its role as forerunner of the transnational anti-American campaign, leading many Lebanese to revisit their position on official U.S.-Lebanon relations. The best way to tame the American “bull,” many began to think, was to get it on your side as much as possible.

With Nasser now seemingly out of the way, the Lebanese government announced on 14 September 1967 its decision to re-establish full diplomatic ties with the United States. As Hélou personally revealed his decision to go ahead with normalization to a U.S. officer, he shared his utmost satisfaction “that his government took this decision on [a] unanimous basis, which represented both Christian and Muslim communities in Lebanon.” But while political and economic relations between the United States and Lebanon became normalized, the intercultural relationship between Washington and many Lebanese peoples remained in dire straits as the former proved itself more than deserving of the “imperial” label. As it turned

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77 Middleton to Rusk, “U.S.-Lebanese Relations,” 15 September 1967, RG 59; CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILES, 1967-1969; Political and Defense; POL 23 LEB to POL 23-8 LEB; Box 2306; File POL 23-8 LEB 1/1/67; NARA.
out, the United States and Lebanese peoples collectively lost the third Arab-Israeli war.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

From roughly 1947 to 1967, a dynamic debate took place in Lebanon over whether or nor the United States was an “imperial” power. Lebanese men, women, and children of all political and sectarian shades unearthed the traces of empire in the United States’ outlook, conduct, and foreign policy toward their country and the greater Arab world. By the end of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Lebanese society reached a consensus: Washington fully embraced the “imperial” way much like its European allies, Britain and France, had done and continued to do. But they were not the only ones to reach this damming conclusion. Many Americans living in Lebanon felt the same way and sided with their Lebanese neighbors, rather than their own government. From the internationalization of the question of Palestine after World War II onward, U.S. expatriates extended profound complaints to U.S. officers in Lebanon regarding U.S. foreign policy and its standing in the Middle East. In the end, they were equally as distraught as the Lebanese about the United States’ “imperial” turn.

As the debate over U.S. empire in Lebanon came to a close by the end of the third Arab-Israeli war, many Americans in Beirut formed a volunteer group, called the
Americans for Justice in the Middle East (AJME), to protest what Edward Said would later define as the imperial culture of Orientalism, which they claimed was the root of U.S. problems in Arab-Muslim world. AJME members, many of whom were either associated with the AUB or U.S. missionary societies in Lebanon, immediately took it upon themselves to inform U.S. society about “the Arab side of the story” of the 1967 war and U.S.-Middle East relations more broadly, which they felt had “been inadequately presented.” An imperial mindset toward the Middle East, they claimed, betrayed “the American democratic system.” Arab-Muslim peoples were entitled to have their voices heard and their fundamental human rights respected. “The worldwide responsibility, respect, and goodwill which the United States has enjoyed until recently depend on our demanding facts and acting on them with a sense of justice and compassion,” wrote AJME’s steering committee in the September 1967 inaugural issue of its newsletter. “Only through the dissemination of facts and the formation of reasonable opinion based on those facts can we hope to regain for America the confidence and goodwill of this part of the world.”

U.S. foreign policy toward Lebanon, AJME reasoned, had one outstanding and fundamental problem; more often than not, it chose not listen to Lebanese peoples. This decision, in turn, facilitated the production of consent at home for unlawful interventions in the Middle East, which went against the wishes and rights of Lebanese society and fomented Arab anti-Americanism, which jeopardized U.S. national security interests. In late July, six weeks after the Naksa, an AJME member visited with many Lebanese “children, refugees, students, business men, and civil servants.”

The visit “helped [him] realize how puzzled and bitter Arabs are about Western attitudes and particularly about that of the United States. To understand the depth of the Arab feeling about the occupation of Palestine and the recent Arab-Israeli war,” he insisted, “you must talk to them and you must be willing to listen.” Many Lebanese felt that the U.S. government openly disregarded and objectified them. For this reason, Washington lost their trust and became an “imperial” power in popular imaginations. “They are a disappointed people,” he added. “I think they are truly saddened by their disillusionment with the United States.”

In spite of AJME’s efforts to dismantle U.S. Orientalism and re-direct U.S. foreign policy toward the promise of “America” that initially led Lebanese to construct a special relationship between them and Washington, the latter’s outlook toward Arab-Muslim peoples remained in large part unchanged. A culture of imperial denial obfuscated U.S. relations with the Arab-Muslim world and prevented genuine mutual understandings, as the U.S. government sought to reinforce and extend its global power, as well as safeguard its perceived national security interests. Post-independent Lebanese peoples, in turn, imagined themselves in a simultaneous state of empire and decolonization. And the United States—whether it was conscience of it or not—was caught in the middle.

The story of empire in Lebanon, therefore, exceeds that of political independence, just like the narrative of Lebanese decolonization preceeds and outlasts that of nation-state formation. For this reason, debates concerning U.S. imperial

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identity reveal ongoing Lebanese struggles to understand a rapidly shifting post-1945 world that was in a constant state of push and pull between international systems policed by nation-states on the one hand and empires on the other. Lebanese uses of the term “imperial” to define U.S. global power therefore reflect not only this sentiment, but also the desire to modify U.S. foreign policy, re-establish a special relationship with Washington, and achieve greater independence. Such an occurrence, many Lebanese thought, would help eliminate the traces of empire in Lebanon and further clear the path toward an end, once and for all, to the age of imperialism.

Just like AJME members and numerous U.S. officials in the Middle East and the State Department, this dissertation listens to—and engages with—Lebanese perspectives in order to overcome the power of Orientalism and the politics of U.S. exceptionalism. In the process, it contributes to a growing body of scholarship that delimits U.S. history from its nation-state border and situates it in a global context.\(^3\) Lebanese peoples, just like all foreign peoples, are integral members of U.S. history, as they actively shaped the story of the United States in the world by constantly negotiating U.S. national identity. By telling the story of how the United States

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became an “imperial” power in post-independent Lebanese imaginations, it is my hope that *Traces of Empire* plays a small part in ongoing, transnational and global efforts to overturn the tragedy of U.S. diplomacy in Lebanon and the greater Arab-Muslim world.
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