I. The Lebanon War

Services delivered, and received

In 1992, British intelligence official Bernard Lewis wrote an article in the fall issue of *Foreign Affairs,* entitled "Rethinking the Mideast," which foretold a dire future for the region. Lewis was the architect of the "Arc of Crisis" policy which guided the Carter administration's overthrow of the Shah of Iran, and the installation of Ayatollah Khomeini in his place. In his new forecast, Lewis said that all of the Mideast would soon be subject to a process he dubbed "Lebanonization."

"Most of the states of the Middle East," he analyzed, "are of recent and artificial construction and are vulnerable to such a process. If the central power is sufficiently weakened, there is no real civil society to hold the polity together, no real sense of common national identity or overriding allegiance to the nation-state. The state then disintegrates—as happened in Lebanon—into a chaos of squabbling, feuding, fighting sects, tribes, regions and parties."

Lebanon was, in fact, destroyed through the process Lewis described. Beginning with a civil war in 1975-76, which claimed 100,000 lives, Lebanon fell victim to a Syrian and an Israeli invasion, and a continuing, orchestrated proxy war of parties and sects, which thoroughly destroyed every major city, and all industry. By 1990, Lebanon was divided between Syria and Israel, and, as a country, had ceased to exist.

But the death of Lebanon was not some sociological phenomenon, expressing the irrational nature of the Arab people, as Lewis, among others, would have it. Nor was it a result of the artificial origins of the Lebanese state in the aftermath of World War I, or the inequities that characterized Lebanese society. Rather, it was a result of an Anglo-French-directed conspiracy, employing agents such as Henry Kissinger, George Bush, Israeli Gen. Ariel Sharon, and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad.

The conspiracy had several objectives besides destroying Lebanon. Chief among them was the destruction of the Palestine Liberation Organization, because the elimination of the PLO would destroy the possibility of a comprehensive peace settlement in the Mideast. Ever since World War I, Britain and France have ruled the Mideast through keeping it in unending conflict. Ethnic and sectarian violence remain their primary instruments.

There were two phases of the Lebanonization process.

The first was "Black September," the 1970 Kissinger-organized slaughter of the Palestinians in Jordan, which forced the PLO to move its forces to Lebanon. The second was the Lebanese civil war itself, and the ensuing Syrian and Israeli invasions, which forced the PLO out of Lebanon, and reduced the country to a Syrian province.

Through this process, the Anglo-French forces behind both Sharon and Assad ensured increasing, debilitating radicalism in the Arab world, in which terrorists on both sides could prevent peace. And through this process, Assad took over Syria, while Kissinger took over U.S. foreign policy.

Black September

On Dec. 9, 1969, U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, in a speech in Washington, announced a dramatic, and workable, plan to settle the Mideast conflict once and for all. In outlining what became known as the "Rogers plan," the secretary of state demanded that Israel withdraw to its pre-1967 borders with Egypt, in exchange for diplomatic recognition from Egypt, and an end to the state of war. He also called for a more broad-based settlement in the region, through negotiations between Israel and Jordan over the West Bank, the future of Jerusalem, and the Palestinian refugee problem.

The Rogers plan caused hysteria in Israel, which had not received any official or even unofficial notification of his speech. The Israeli cabinet met in emergency session the next day, and rejected it. The U.S. Zionist lobby was equally alarmed, and condemned it.

But, most importantly, the Rogers plan provoked a violent response from U.S. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, who denounced the proposal at a National Security Council meeting. After several huddles with President Richard Nixon, Kissinger reportedly succeeded in convincing Nixon to undercut the plan. But by then, it had a life of its own. Egypt, in particular, expressed interest.[1]

Consequently, Kissinger orchestrated the Black September slaughter, to drown any possibility that the plan might succeed. The basis for his counter-initiative was the turbulent situation in Jordan in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

The 1967 war had thrown Jordan into a chaotic situation. It lost the "West Bank," its richest province, to Israel. Large numbers of Palestinians living on the West Bank, fled to Jordan. There, they joined refugees who had been living there since the 1948 Arab-Israel war. By 1970, the PLO had created a virtual state within a state in Jordan. PLO raids into Israel from Jordanian territory, increased tensions between the Jordanian government and the PLO, because the government feared Israeli retaliation. In June, a Palestinian radical tried to assassinate King Hussein.

1. On Kissinger's efforts to sabotage the Rogers plan, see Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power; Kissinger in the Nixon White House,* (New York: Summit books, 1983), pp. 213-34.

MAP 1
The Mideast region today
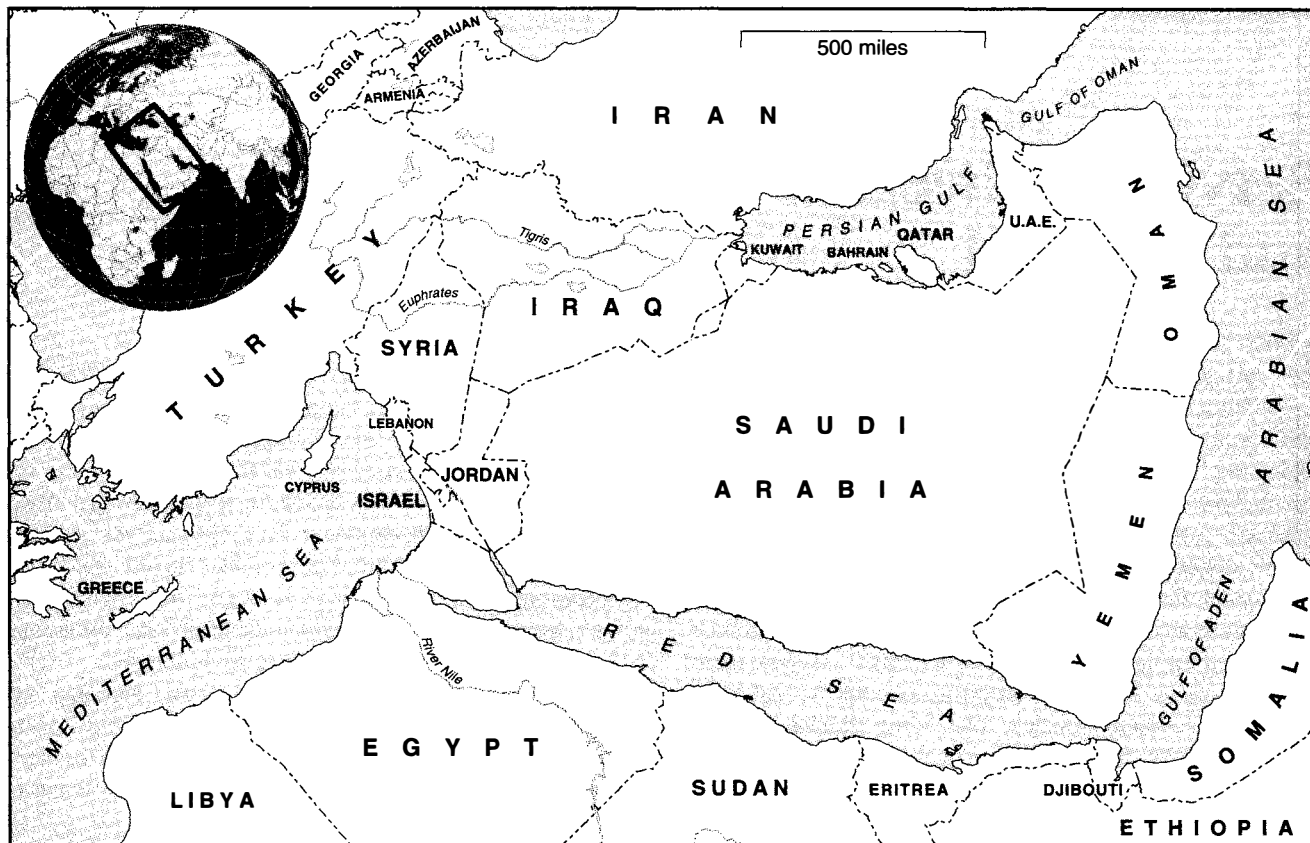
This created the context for Kissinger to move. He employed the services of Hafez al-Assad, then Syria's defense minister, who in turn called on George Habash, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). As a first step in the destabilization, the PFLP hijacked one Swiss and two American passenger planes on Sept. 6, 1970. Three days later, it seized a British airliner. Nearly 500 passengers from the latter plane were flown to an airport outside of Amman. The PFLP declared that they would be held hostage until their comrades in Swiss, German, British, and Israeli prisons were freed.

The PLO Cental Committee moved quickly against the PFLP, and, on Sept. 12, suspended its membership in the PLO. It condemned the PFLP actions as ones "that could affect the safety and security of the Palestinian resistance."[2]

As international tensions mounted over the PFLP hijackings and hostage taking, King Hussein formed a military government, and ordered the Palestinians to disarm. On Sept. 15, Jordanian artillery and tank units suddenly attacked Palestinian camps around Amman, beginning what has been called the Black September massacre.[3]

Egyptian President Gamal Nasser sent a delegation to Jordan to take stock of the situation. The delegation returned "shaken by what they had seen," Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammad Heikal later reported, because the size and scope of the massacre indicated that it was planned far in advance. "By then," Heikal noted, "Nasser had information that the operation had been planned in cooperation with the CIA and some Jordanians, including [Jordanian Prime Minister] Wasfi Tel." Nasser soon died of a heart attack.[4]

Syrian strongman Salah Jadid was also upset. Responding to Palestinian pleas for assistance, Jadid ordered 200 Syrian tanks, commanded by his brother, to invade Jordan to support the Palestinians. But Assad, who was then Syrian defense minister, refused to provide air cover for the tanks. As a result,

2. *Ibid.,* pp. 234-250.

3. For background on Black September: Hersh, *ibid.;* Mahmoud Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East* (London: Quartet Books, 1981), pp. 158-170; Umar F. Abd-Allah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria* (Berkeley, California: Mizan Press, 1983), pp. 57-63; Patrick Seale, *Assad: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 154-165.

4. Hersh, *op. cit.,* p. 241.

MAP 2
Syria today

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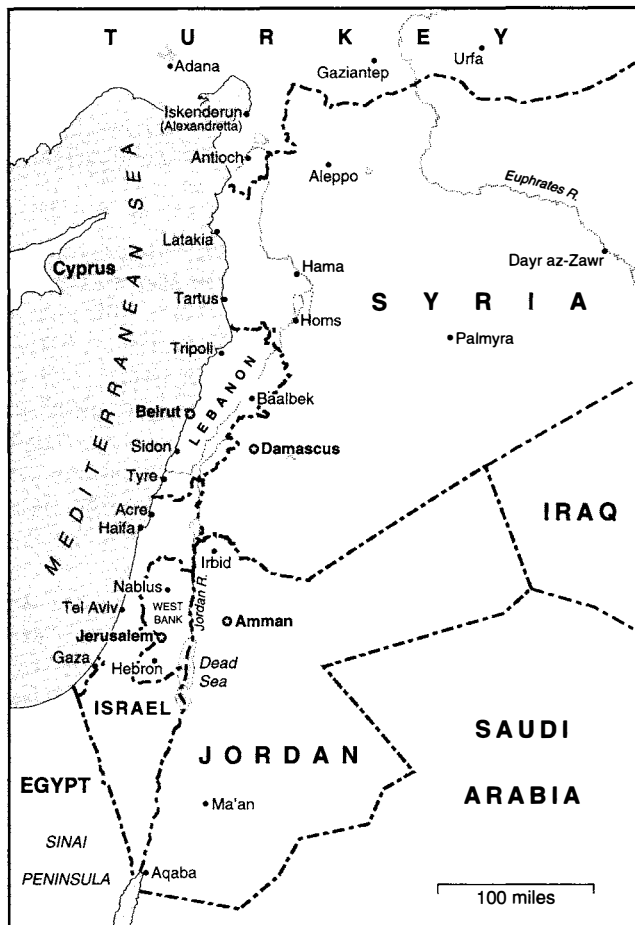
the Jordanian Air Force and armored brigades inflicted devastating losses on the tanks, forcing their return to Syria on Sept. 23-24, in total disgrace.

On Nov. 23, within two months of this humiliation, Assad overthrew Jadid, and took power in a military coup.

It was only much later, that it emerged that Assad had been in secret contact with Prime Minister Wasfi Tel in Jordan all along, and that Tel had been reporting back to Kissinger. Assad had reassured King Hussein, in advance of the Syrian tank invasion, that the Syrian Air Force would not retaliate, if the Jordanian Air Force attacked the tanks.[5]

Speaking of these events in his *White House Years,* Kissinger reports his satisfaction at the rise of Assad: "Another less noticed significant result of the autumn crises [of 1970] was the accession of Hafez al-Assad to power in Syria in November 1970. Less visionary than [Egyptian President] Sadat, he nevertheless gave Syria unprecedented stability and, against the background of the turbulent history of his

people, emerged as a leader of courage and relative moderation."

Kissinger had reason to be very happy with the combined effects of the massacre and Assad's accession to power. Rogers was thoroughly discredited in Nixon's eyes. Within a year, Kissinger was named secretary of state in his place, while still maintaining control over the National Security Council.

How Kissinger gave Assad Lebanon

The wiping out of the Palestinian movement in Jordan, its expulsion to Lebanon, and Assad's takeover of Syria, prepared the ground for the destruction of Lebanon. This began in April 1975, when Kissinger, the British, and the French, triggered a civil war between the Phalange militia of the Roman Catholic Maronites, and the PLO-aligned Lebanese National Front, which represented the Muslim majority. The civil war claimed 100,000 lives that year.

A primary reason for the manipulated conflict, was to create the conditions for the Syrian takeover of Lebanon, and, in the process, the elimination of the PLO.

This was already known to many in the region.

On May 31, 1976, Raimun Iddah, an important Lebanese-Christian leader, told a Lebanese press conference, that he had heard in Washington that Kissinger believed that "peace would not come to the Middle East until Syria had taken administrative control of Lebanon." The next day, Syria invaded Lebanon with 20,000 troops. The invasion was necessary, Assad said, in order "to protect the Palestinian resistance, and to renew Lebanese unity, and keep the country from becoming divided."

A joint French-Syrian declaration on June 19, 1976 said that the Syrian intervention had the purpose of "facilitating the return to peace, order, and security," that would make a "political solution" of the conflict possible.

Although Assad said he was acting in support of the Palestinian cause, his immediate concern was to protect the Maronite militias (which he was later to annihilate). Syrian forces brought an end to the Muslim siege of Zahlah, a Maronite stronghold on the verge of falling, and aided the Phalangist siege of the Palestinian camp of Tall az-Zatar, which fell Aug. 12. The intervention led to an uneasy cease-fire in the civil war in October 1976.

In order to defray the cost of the Syrian intervention—which was about $1 million a day—the United States government, together with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, pledged sizable increases in their annual aid to the Syrian regime. On June 6, Kissinger announced full U.S. support of Assad's intervention, at his meeting with UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim.

But Assad did not only require U.S. and French support, in order to launch the invasion. He also needed Israeli guarantees, because the deployment of Syrian troops into Lebanon, left Damascus—only a short drive from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights—highly vulnerable to Israeli attack.

5. Hersh, *op. cit.,* pp. 242, 247.
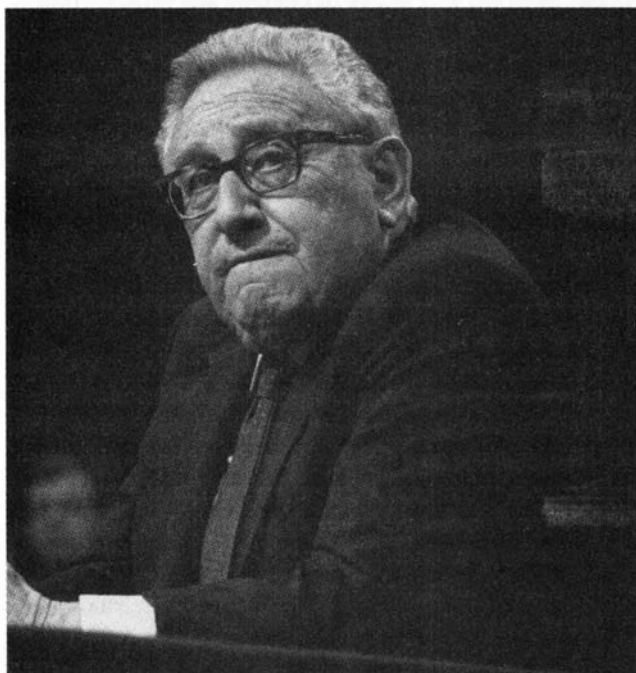
Henry Kissinger triggered the civil war in Lebanon in 1975, and handed that nation over to Syria and Israel.

Because of these concerns, Kissinger brokered a Syria-Israel "red-line" agreement, prior to the invasion. Syria would not enter the region between the Litani and Zahrani rivers; would not attack the Phalange in Beirut; and would not introduce anti-aircraft missiles into the theater, which might threaten Israeli aircraft flying over Lebanon. In return, Israel gave its blessing to the Syrian takeover. Soon, Syria occupied most of the country.

Israel gets a cut

The understanding also allowed Israel to invade southern Lebanon on March 15, 1978, with 10,000 men and 300 tanks, in order to "save its Christians." There was no resistance from Syria. The Israeli government announced that Israel would "never withdraw until the existence of the Palestinian commandos had been eliminated," which was also Assad's objective. The region was turned over to Phalangist leader "Major" Haddad, an Israeli partner in the hashish trade. In May, two months after the Israeli invasion, U.S. State Department official Harold Saunders praised Syria for "its positive, although hidden role, in solving the problem of southern Lebanon."[6]

The same deal allowed the Israeli Army, under the command of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, to launch a massive invasion of Lebanon on June 4, 1982, with only token Syrian resistence. The day before, a member of Syria's Abu Nidal gang supplied the pretext, by shooting an Israeli diplomat in London. By the end of August, the Israelis had killed 19,000

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6. Abd-Allah, *op. cit.*

people, mostly civilians.

On Aug. 21, the PLO began evacuating Beirut, after a 10-week Israeli siege, because, PLO officials said, "the destruction of Beirut over the heads of a half a million Muslims is not a mere possibility, but has become a reality." The first of 16,000 Palestinians left Lebanon for good, under a U.S.-sponsored cease-fire accepted by the Israelis, since one of their main aims had been achieved.

But on Sept. 15, Israel broke the cease-fire, invaded West Beirut, and encircled the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. Sharon sent units of the Phalange militia into the camps on Sept. 16, with orders to "purify them." The militia remained there until Sept. 18, with the backup of the Israeli Army, and killed 1,500 men, women, and children.

The creation of the Hezbollah, to fill the vacuum left by the PLO's expulsion, was Israel's other major success. Hezbollah carried out suicide-bombings against U.S. targets, and fought any Muslim group which advocated allying with Christians to expel the Israelis from Lebanon. It soon became Syria's major narco-terrorist group there.

Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir was quite explicit that the invasion was intended to radicalize the Palestinians. He told Israeli television in June 1983: "It is good for Israel that there are domestic quarrels, breakups, and divisions within the organization of the PLO. This is one of the results of Operation Peace for Galilee [Israel's name for the invasion]. I am not afraid of the radicalization of the entire organization. The differences within the PLO, to the extent that they are connected with political problems, are merely tactical. Tactically speaking, it may be that Arafat's tactics are sometimes more dangerous for us."

The Israeli invasion also went a long way toward creating the basis for Lebanon's "final solution," its 1990 division between Syria and Israel. In the interim, both Syria and Israel had abandoned their former Maronite allies, and moved to eliminate them.

The countdown began with the October 1989 Taif Accords, which were drafted in the Saudi Arabian town of that name, with the blessings of George Bush. The accords declared the Lebanese government of Gen. Michel Aoun, which still ruled a portion of the Maronite region of the country, illegitimate. The accords recognized a Syrian puppet government, in its place.

The main reason for the move, was Aoun's spring 1989 declaration of a "war of liberation" against Syria, which began with closing the ports that Syria used to ship drugs to the U.S. and European market.

On Sept. 12, 1990, Bush met with Assad in Geneva, and gave the go-ahead to the Syrian takeover of all of Lebanon not already occupied by Israel. The pretext was Assad joining the "Gulf coalition" against Iraq. On Oct. 13, Syrian troops stormed Aoun's headquarters, and massacred 700 of his followers. Aoun was expelled to France, where he remains to this day, under house-arrest.