Chapter V

ISRAEL'S FIRST INVASION OF LEBANON: THE LITANI OPERATION
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(i) The Likud Government's Lebanon Policy

The victory of the Likud bloc in the parliamentary elections of May 1977 was a momentous event in the history of Israel. For the first time since the establishment of the Jewish State, the Labour Party was defeated at the polls and the right wing Likud coalition under the leadership of Menachem Begin came to power. The changeover brought with it a very assertive Israeli policy than hitherto pursued by the Rabin government towards Lebanon. In order to understand the Likud government's Lebanon policy it is essential at this point to briefly dwell on the history and ideology of the Israeli Right – particularly that of the Herut, the core component of the Likud.

(a) The Israeli Right: Its History and Ideology

The ideological framework of the Israeli Right was originally proposed largely by Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, an important Zionist leader and founder of the Revisionist Party. Emerging in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Jabotinsky's thoughts were strongly influenced by national romanticism, particularly that of Italy. Inspired by the heroes of Italian nationalism, Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi, Jabotinsky came to see nationalism itself as a positive social and political force. For him, nationalism became a supreme value, a legacy that Begin and his associates fully absorbed. The evolving Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine further radicalized Jabotinsky's thought and his approach to the conflict came to be
dominated by popular ideas of "blood and soil", a Jewish version of Social Darwinism. Instead of the farmer and the worker who were the heroes of the Labour camp, the heroes for Jabotinsky and the Revisionists were the soldier and the fighter, dedicated to conquering the entire land. The Revisionist movement celebrated the martial ethos and values—physical courage, military education, discipline, organization and the like. The final goal of Jabotinsky was the establishment of Malchut Israel, the Kingdom of Israel, and while he was indifferent to the socio-economic institutions of the newly established state, its physical boundaries and political institutions were central to his platform. He demanded an Eretz Israel inclusive of all the territories controlled in the past by Jews and his position did not leave the possibility of compromise with the Arabs.\(^1\) The Revisionists represented the extreme, radical right not only in their goals, but in their tactics: they rejected Haganah's policy of self-restraint; they carried out an active military campaign against the British authorities in the midst of World War II despite the decision of the elected leadership of the Jewish Community in Palestine to not do so; and they committed acts of violence against Arabs with little or no restraint.

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Jabotinsky's ideology had relatively little impact in Mandatory Palestine when his party remained a small faction within the Zionist movement and organizationally separated from the main body. After Jabotinsky's death in the summer of 1940, the task of carrying forward his ideas fell on one of his most ardent disciples Menachem Begin.

Begin was born in the Russian city of Brest-Litovsk in 1913. Attracted by the personality and ideology of Jabotinsky he had joined Betar, the youth organization started by the latter, at the early age of sixteen. Begin arrived in Palestine in 1942 and the following year took over as the commander of the Irgun Zvai Leumi (IZL).  

The British withdrawal from Palestine and the birth of the State of Israel brought an end to the Irgun. Begin and his associates emerged from the underground, established

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2. The IZL had come into being in the 1930s. It was composed of those who opposed the self-restraint policy of the organized Jewish community in Palestine and its paramilitary organization, the Haganah. This policy implied a conscious effort on the part of the Jewish community to react moderately to Arab attacks. Some people saw self-restraint as defeatist and counter-productive. They first established Haganah B and then the IZL. The leadership of the IZL was Revisionist in philosophy and considered Jabotinsky to be its spiritual father. Under the leadership of Begin, the IZL carried out some of the most violent acts of terror. Among these were the bombing of King David Hotel in Jerusalem and the massacre of 250 Arab civilians in the village of Deir Yassin, west of Jerusalem. For an indepth study of the IZL, see Boyer Bell, Terror Out of Zion: Irgun Zvai Leumi, Lehi and the Palestine Underground, 1929-1949 (New York, 1977).
a political movement and named it Herut (Freedom). Herut's ideological baggage was based on the concepts offered originally by Jabotinsky in the 1920s. Post-Jabotinsky events such as the Holocaust, however, gave it an emotional intensity which made it even more radical than the original Revisionist credo.³

Herut's foreign policy in the first thirty years of Israel's independence and before the movement's leadership took over as the duly installed government of Israel was activist, supportive of frequent and extensive use of force as an instrument for dealing with Israel's political and military problems. While within MAPAI, the ruling party, there were two opposing approaches, a dovish and a hawkish one, Herut's policy remained monolithically what Harkabi calls "hawkish-hawkish".⁴ When, for instance, the reprisal policy was initiated in the early 1980s, it found in Herut an enthusiastic supporter. In fact, Herut demanded even more extensive reprisals than Ben-Gurion or Dayan were willing to approve. During the 1950s and afterwards Begin often spoke of preventive war as a solution for Israel's security problems. Even though the "security problems" of Israel were relatively minor, Begin was always looking for a


pretext to initiate a total war in order to "liberate" the occupied homeland.

Herut's foreign policy with its pronounced emphasis on power, particularly in its military form, as a sole instrument in the relations between nations was of limited importance as long as the party was in the opposition or served as a relatively small component within a larger coalition led by Labour. This policy became very important once Menachem Begin assumed the position of Israel's Prime Minister in 1977.

(b) Begin's Militant Posture Vis-a-Vis Lebanon

Begin's ascendance and the formation of the Likud government led to important changes in Israel's Lebanese policy. Soon after he became the Prime Minister in May 1977, Begin openly acknowledged Israel's role in Lebanon, both in the north and in Southern Lebanon. He publicly sympathised with the Christians of Lebanon and said that Israel was duty-bound to defend the Christians from "annihilation". He likened the plight of the Lebanese Christians to those Jews killed by the Nazis during the Second World War and upon his insistence the Israeli cabinet repeatedly voted to

5. Herut had participated for a brief period in the National Unity Government formed in 1967. It left the government in August 1970 when Prime Minister Golda Meir decided to accept an American diplomatic initiative calling for Israeli-Arab discussions through Ambassador Jarring.
support the Christian community in times of crisis. The new Prime Minister falsely defined the Lebanese situation as "genocide" against the Christians, a situation which Israel could not and would not allow. On 21 July at a press conference in New York, the Israeli Prime Minister declared that Israel would not "acquiesce in the destruction of the Christian minority in Lebanon" and would guarantee its survival at any cost.

Shortly thereafter on 2 August the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee of the Knesset decided to set up a special sub-committee for Southern Lebanese affairs before which Lebanese Christians were permitted to appear.

On 7 August Begin arrived in Metulla, his first official visit as the Prime Minister to inspect the 'Good Fence' where he was mobbed by the enthusiastic Lebanese. In a press conference he officially told the journalists gathered there that Israel was militarily helping the Lebanese Christians and that Israel would under no circumstances abandon the Christian minority across the border. Later in the day Begin was introduced to Haddad and he


promised to provide all possible support to the latter's militia in future.⁹

An immediate consequence of this vigourously assertive strategy was an intensification of the war by proxy in the South. In June, fierce fighting took place between Haddad's militia and the Palestinians. The town of Nabatiya where the Palestinian headquarters for the South was situated came under heavy Israeli artillery attack.¹⁰ This new Israeli-backed Christian offensive prompted the Lebanese premier Salim Hoss to seek US intervention in order to restrain Israel. Hoss asked the US ambassador in Beirut, Richard Parker, for US pressure on Israel to end artillery attacks and incursions into Lebanese territory, to stop the construction of roads from Israel into Lebanon and to end the "water war" in which Israel was carrying out raids into Lebanese territory to destroy water pipes and installations.¹¹

During the following two months Israel kept up the pressure on Lebanon, and in mid-September, Haddad's forces along with IDF troops launched a major offensive, code-named 'Operation Cooperative'. The target of this offensive was Tel Sreife, a PLO stronghold north-west of El-Khiam. The

¹¹. Ibid., 16-30 June 1977, no.12, p.491.
Palestinians put up a stiff resistance but in the end had to withdraw from Tel Sreife in the face of superior Israeli fire power. One Israeli tank brigade, the Bolani infantry brigade as well as units of the Nahal Battalion (part of the Territorial Brigade) took part in this battle. The Israeli government had promised the Christians that the IDF would intervene on the side of its allies in the enclaves. The Begin government had followed up on its promise. 'Operation Cooperative' was the first instance of open and large-scale Israeli involvement. 12

During the days following the flare-up, there were constant US-Lebanese and US-Israeli contacts and the US repeatedly appealed to Israel to withdraw its troops. Under intense pressure from Washington, Israel ultimately agreed to a ceasefire which came into effect on 26 September following which there was a partial pullout of the IDF from the Lebanese territory. 13

On 27 September Haddad and his deputy Sami Shidiak came to the IDF headquarters in Metulla where they had been invited to meet the Israeli Defence Minister, Ezer Weizmann. Also present were deputy minister of defence, Mordechai Zippori, Chief of Staff, Motta Gur and a host of high ranking officials. Weizmann presented Haddad and Shidiak with IDF decorations, Ot ha Mofet, the Exemplary Conduct

12. Hamizrachi, n.9, pp.147-52.
Medal, the lowest among the three Israeli military decorations. This was the first time in the history of the Israeli army that the IDF had awarded decorations to foreign military officers. In his speech Weizmann declared:

In Tel Sreife we gave for the first time active military assistance.... We promise you that if the situation deteriorates once more, we shall return to fight shoulder to shoulder with you.... The Israeli government has instructed me to congratulate you both for your courage and valour. 14

The Lebanese Front which was in an exultant mood because of the military outcome of the Civil War also became very bold and assertive following the installation of the Likud government in Israel. By early 1977, Bashir Jumayil had emerged as the most important personality within the Lebanese Front. He had been nominated commander of the Lebanese Forces 15 in July 1976 after the death of William Hawi during the battle of Tall al-Zatar. By virtue of this position he was then invited to join the Front's political leadership as well. Unusually ambitious and possessing great determination, Bashir quickly made his way


15. The militias of the various organization constituting the Lebanese Front were collectively known as the Lebanese Forces. For the origins and growth of the Lebanese Forces see Lewis W.Snider, "The Lebanese Forces: Wartime Origins and Political Significance," in Edward E.Azar, ed., The Emergence of a New Lebanon: Fantasy or Reality? (New York, 1984), pp.117-64.
up the national leadership hierarchy to emerge as the most powerful figure in the Maronite community. An ardent advocate of close relationship with Israel, Bashir was implacably hostile towards Syria and the PLO and believed in relieving Lebanon of Syrian occupation at the earliest.\footnote{16. Itamar Rabinovich, \textit{The War for Lebanon} (Ithaca, 1984), p.97.}

Even before the Civil War had formally come to an end, the Lebanese Front had established a network of social institutions inside the Maronite-held enclave. These included a consumer cooperative, subsidized clinics and a bus service linking East Beirut to the mountain hinterland.\footnote{17. Helena Cobban, \textit{The Making of Modern Lebanon} (London, 1985), p.153.} Thus in the heat of the war, a state within-a-state was established. In November 1976, the Syrian troops of the ADF rolled down the mountain to try to extend the Sarkis government's writ into East Beirut. Bashir and his allies were in no mood to give up the total social control they had established in the Maronite enclaves. The Lebanese Front had wished to obtain Syrian help against their common enemy (the NM and Palestinians) and to see the departure of Syrians from Lebanon as soon as the mission was accomplished. However, in November 1976 Bashir Jumayil's Lebanese Forces were not strong enough to prevent the ADF deployment. It was, therefore, compelled to give its consent to the deployment of the Syrian dominated ADF in the Maronite-held enclaves.
In March 1977, as part of the plan to re-build the national army, Sarkis named a new army commander. He needed some one who would be totally loyal to him and who was acceptable to major Muslim leaders. The choice fell on Brigadier Victor Khoury who had maintained a politically neutral stand throughout the Civil War. The move by President Sarkis to appoint a neutral officer in place of the outrightly partisan Hanna Saeed was vehemently opposed by the Lebanese Front who feared that the establishment of a new command would block Christian plans for dividing Lebanon into a number of autonomous regions.18 Bashir Jumayil called for a strike in the Maronite-held enclave to protest the government's move. On 28 March, the day of the announcement of the new Army Commander, a bomb blast rocked the apartment of the Defence Minister, Fuad Butros in the Christian suburb of Ashrafiyeh in East Beirut.19

With the Likud victory in Israel in May 1977, the Lebanese Front became bolder. On 27 May, the leaders of the Front announced that they considered the 1969 Cairo Agreement that regulated Palestinian activity in Lebanon as null and void and Palestinian presence as illegal. The Palestinian cause was an Arab, and not a Lebanese cause and the Palestinian in Lebanon should be redistributed in all Arab


countries. The Lebanese Front then proceeded to issue a strongly worded communique which rejected all Arab or Syrian efforts to impose a measure of control on Lebanon. It declared that the future of Lebanon could not be determined so long as there is an anarchic Palestinian presence on its soil and a military presence - even peace-keepers of any kind and for any reason. In August after a two-day meeting of the Lebanese Front in Ehden, Maronite leaders once again repeated their call for the expulsion of the Palestinians from Lebanon and their relocation in other Arab countries. Expressing their disenchantment with the Syrian peace-keeping force they warned that they would reconsider their support for President Sarkis if the security conditions in the country did not improve.

Taking the lead from Israel, the Lebanese Front began to equate the situation of Lebanese Christians with that of the Warsaw Ghetto in World War, casting the Syrians in the role of the dreaded Nazis. It was becoming increasingly apparent that the Lebanese Front was preparing for a showdown with the Syrian army and it was just a matter of time for this inevitable conflict to take place.

(ii) Syria's Rapprochement with the NM and Palestinians

Throughout 1977, the Assad regime persisted in its attempt to enforce a "Syrian peace" in Lebanon - a peace that would not only have consolidated the Syrian hold over Lebanon but also endorsed its pre-eminent position there. The power of the NM, the anti-establishment coalition headed by Kamal Junblatt, had been weakened by the Civil War and clashes with Syria. The NM suffered a further critical blow with the assassination of Junblatt in March 1974.24 Junblatt's assassination blunted the NM's opposition to Syria and facilitated its subordination to Syrian authority. Junblatt was succeeded as head of the Druze community the PSP and the NM by his son, Walid Junblatt. His assumption of power had a moderating effect on the NM, particularly on its attitude towards Syria.

The weakening of the NM and its resultant moderation also affected its principal ally, the PLO in Lebanon. In July 1977, the PLO agreed to a time-table for the implementation of the 1969 Cairo Agreement within the framework of the Riyadh and Cairo summits. This agreement which was signed between Syria, Lebanon, Palestinians and the ADF in the Lebanese town of Shtura was to be implemented in three stages. The first two stages envisaged the

24. Critics of Syria's policy in Lebanon pointed the finger at Syria, which they claimed had a clear interest in removing Junblatt from the Lebanese scene.
collection of heavy arms from the Palestinian camps and depots, the surveillance of these camps and the restriction of Palestinian armed presence to specified areas in the South away from the border. The third stage concerned the South from which all combatants with the exception of a token number of Palestinian commandos, were to be withdrawn. Once demilitarized zones were established, Lebanese army troops would be stationed in the area; both sides would withdraw coincident with an effective ceasefire and the arrival of Lebanese army regulars. These stipulations met Israel's longstanding demand for the removal of the Palestinian military presence from its border.

The first two stages of the Shtura Agreement was completed according to schedule and without any incident. The Syrian authorities, the UN and the Lebanese government all praised the Palestinian leadership for their cooperation.

The implementation of the third stage of the Shtura Agreement, however, could not take place due to opposition from Israel and the Lebanese Front. Hardly was the agreement signed when Begin made his promise to "save the Christians of Lebanon from genocide" and multiplied the


Israeli military operations in the South. The Lebanese Front then promptly rejected the formula for "balanced withdrawal" by both sides.\footnote{Petran, n.23, p.237.} Israel took a negative attitude because it was opposed to the institutionalization of the Palestinian presence even along a very limited section of the border. More important, Israel felt that ultimately the Shtura Agreement would lead to an extension of Syrian influence into Southern Lebanon and to a closure of the 'Good Fence'.\footnote{Itamar Robinovich and Hanna Zamir, "Lebanon" in Legum, ed., n.25, p.522.} Thus as the Sarkis administration prepared to send units of the reconstituted Lebanese Army to the South to re-establish governmental authority, Haddad launched his second major offensive against the Palestinians in September. On 22 September Sarkis declared that the fighting in the South had disrupted his plans to send army units there.\footnote{New York Times, 23 September 1977.} Under intense American pressure Israel agreed to a temporary ceasefire in the South. However, it turned down all proposals for the deployment of the Lebanese Army on the border, the disarming of the Haddad militia and a dismantling of the autonomous Christian enclaves adjoining Israel.
The intrasigence of the Lebanese Front, its unwillingness to give any concessions to the Palestinians or the NM and its growing ties with Israel, soon frustrated the Syrians. By October 1977, the alliance between the two had come under heavy strain. Syria's renewed cooperation with the NM and Palestinians following the assassination of Kamal Junblatt, had already come under severe criticism by the Maronite leaders. The Lebanese Front was becoming increasingly convinced that the Syrians had outlived their utility in Lebanon and should be made to leave at the earliest. The turning point in Syrian-Lebanese Front relationship finally came in November 1977 with Sadat's trip to Jerusalem.

The Egyptian move came as a shock for Syria. It was again left isolated. The regional developments once again affected its behaviour in Lebanon. Assad hoped that its handpicked Lebanese President would back the Syrian position. However, Sarkis was hesitant, even though his very survival was dependent on Syrian power. Indeed many important Maronite leaders came out in open support of the Egyptian initiative. It was only the PLO and NM which gave unqualified support to Syria's strong rejection of Cairo's move. These developments led to a rapprochement with the PLO and the NM and a final break with the Lebanese Front.

The first clash between Syria and the Lebanese Front took place in December 1977 when the Phalanges clashed with units of the ADF in Beirut. The conflict followed a series of strikes and demonstrations which the Lebanese Front had organized as a protest against the three-day suspension of the newspaper *Le Reveil* edited by Amin Jumayil. The December clash was a comparatively minor event that foreshadowed the far more serious conflicts of 1978. Syrian units of the ADF clashed in East Beirut with elements of the Lebanese army headed by Colonel Antoine Barakat, Commander of the Fayadiya Barracks in February 1978. Barakat had fought on the side of the Lebanese Front in the Civil War and was considered to be close to Shamun's NLP. The incident quickly developed into what was described as the most serious armed conflict since the end of the Civil War. The Syrian army brought in reinforcements from the Biqa and engaged the Fayadiya troops and the NLP militia. In the course of the fighting the ADF shelled the Christian quarter of Ashrafiyya and stormed the headquarter of the NLP. By the time a ceasefire was negotiated on 11 February, dozens had died. The Syrians demanded that the Lebanese officers responsible for the incident be extradited to Damascus, but had to agree instead to the formation of a joint Syrian-Lebanese military court.

31. Arab Report and Record, 1-31 December 1977, no.23/24, p.091. The paper was suspended for publishing an article that incensed the Syrian Government.

(iii) Israel's March 1978 Invasion

Barely a month after the clash between Syrian troops and Shamun's militia at the Fayadiya Barracks, Israel invaded Lebanon. The American-sponsored ceasefire concluded between Israel and Lebanon in September 1977 had held for only a few weeks. By early November Israel had once again started its raids and artillery bombardments against targets in Southern Lebanon. On 9 November an Israeli air-raid wiped out the Lebanese hamlet of Izziyeh in the hinterland of Tyre. Sixty-five Lebanese were killed and sixty-eight wounded. By 10 November the civilian death toll had risen to above 100. Commenting on these developments, the Israeli Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur affirmed that the raids had been "purely against terrorist bases". Simultaneously President Carter indicated that "some retaliation" by Israel was called for.

In the month of November, Sadat made his historic visit to Jerusalem and this major development absorbed the attention of both Israel and Palestinians. After Sadat's Jerusalem visit the PLO began to come closer to Syria. This was manifested by the participation of Saiqa in the low intensity warfare that was going on between Haddad's

34. Ibid., 11 November 1977.
35. Ibid.
militia and the PLO in the South. On 2 March 1978, Haddad's militia made a strong effort and seized the village of Marun al-Ras located in the central sector of the Lebanese-Israeli boundary. The significance of Marun al-Ras lay in its elevated position overlooking the town of Bint Jubayl, a major commando stronghold. The PLO, backed this time by Syria, counterattacked a few days later and expelled Haddad's militia from Marun al-Ras. The engagement demonstrated to Israel that Haddad would not be able on his own to crack the enemy stronghold and extend his control beyond the three Christian border enclaves. The pressure in Israel to relieve the Christians increased and some kind of military operation seemed to be imminent.

On 11 March 1978, a group of Palestinian commandos from Damour landed on the Israeli coast, thirty kilometers south of Haifa. They hijacked a bus full of weekend travellers on the nearby Tel Aviv-Haifa highway and drove it to the suburbs of Tel Aviv where in the ensuing battle with Israeli security forces thirty-four Israelis were killed and seventy-four wounded. The incident of 11 March sent a wave of outrage throughout Israel. A massive Israeli response was inevitable. Although the entire world recognized the inevitability of a super-retaliation against

37. Ibid.
Lebanon, the scope and intensity of the Israeli operation which commenced three days later took everyone by surprise.

Just before dawn on 14 March, Israeli artillery opened up on Lebanese villages held by the Palestinians and leftists. The shelling was followed by a ground attack with approximately 20,000 Israeli soldiers advancing on five axes. The Israeli forces consisted mainly of regular infantry and paratroopers units. Command of the operation, code-named 'Even Hachochma' (Stone of Wisdom), was given to the infantry. The IDF did not encounter any significant resistance except in two places, Bint Jubayl and Taibe, where the Palestinians briefly engaged the advancing Israeli troops. The overwhelming majority of the commandos simply evacuated their positions and fled to safer zones in the north. The objective of the invasion was to wipe out all commando concentrations along the entire length of the Israeli-Lebanese border and to destroy all their special bases from which the commandos set out on missions deep inside Israeli territory. By the end of the first day Israel had secured what Haddad's militia had failed to provide all along: a buffer zone ranging in depth from five to twenty kilometers, stretching from the

41. See the text of the special communique issued by Israel on the eve of the invasion. Arab World Weekly (Beirut), 18 March 1978, no.465, p.23.
Mediterranean sea to the foothills of Mount Hermon. Between 16 and 18 March, the IDF continued to make small advances in those areas where the security belt was thinner than ten kilometers. Concerned about casualties, the IDF abandoned its traditional practice of high mobility, choosing instead to advance its infantry very cautiously behind a devastating wall of artillery fire. Although this technique minimized Israeli casualties, it led to large-scale civilian deaths and destruction. As the Israeli forces moved north, Haddad's militia followed in their wake, looting the Shiite villages which had successfully held out for so long.

On 19 March, just when it seemed that the operation was coming to an end, the IDF suddenly broke out of the buffer zone towards the Litani river, and by evening, Israel controlled the entire area from its borders to the Litani river except for the town of Tyre (see Map 5). According to one Israeli source, the new advance "was designed to carve out a PLO-free security belt in the 1200 square kilometers between Israel's northern border and the Litani river." In reality, however, it was international

42. Arab Report and Record, 16-31 March 1978, no.6, pp.222-23
43. Only eighteen IDF personnels lost their lives during the operation. Newsweek, 3 April 1978, p.39.
45. It was at this stage that the name of the invasion was changed from "Stone of Wisdom" to "Operation Litani".
Map 5

Israeli Invasion of Lebanon, March 1978

- The Christian enclaves on the eve of the IDF operation
- Area taken by the IDF on 15 March 1978
- Area which surrendered to the IDF on 17 March 1978
- Area taken by the IDF on the 19 March 1978
- Main lines of advance

politics that had played the crucial role in the decision to expand the operation.

On 15 March, the Lebanese government had launched a complaint to the UN Security Council and the following day the US had given a call for an immediate Israeli withdrawal. On the same day the US proposed before the UN that the Israeli forces at present in Lebanon be immediately replaced by a UN force. When the US resolutely pushed for a UN Security Council resolution calling for an Israeli withdrawal and the despatch of UN troops to South Lebanon, the Israeli government was taken by surprise. The Israeli thrust towards the Litani was, therefore, seen by many as an attempt to achieve the maximum possible before the vote on the proposed UN Security Council resolution. This would increase the area the Israeli government could trade with the UN and leave manoeuvering room to fall back on all the way to its recently created security belt.

Given the size and intensity of the Israeli operation it is obvious that Tel Aviv's decision to invade Lebanon was

47. There were several reasons for the extremely negative American reaction to the Israeli invasion. The US was concerned about the Egyptian-Israeli peace process which had begun only a few months back and which still seemed vulnerable to negative regional developments. If America did not react strongly to the full scale Israeli invasion, Sadat's position in the Arab world would have been greatly weakened and the whole peace process was liable to crumble. Secondly, the US was also interested in expanding its influence in Syria in order to bring it into the orbit of the peace negotiations. The Israeli invasion seemed to adversely affect American prospects on this issue as well.

not a spontaneous reaction to a particularly gruesome incident of Palestinian terrorism but had been made much before the incident of 11 March. The Palestinian action only provided the Begin government with a strong public-relations basis upon which an already decided military operation could be launched. Secondly, the declared Israeli objective of the invasion of 'liquidating' the PLO as resolved at a special session of the Knesset does not make much sense when one analyses the military aspects of the operation. The three day gap between the Palestinian raid and the invasion gave the PLO sufficient time to move its forces to safer zones in the north. Even the pattern of attack - from south northwards - gave the PLO ample scope to escape. "A liquidation strategy would have called for surprise seizure of the Litani by amphibian and helicopter-borne troops to cut off the PLO forces' lines of retreat". 49 The IDF also abandoned its traditional strategy of high mobility, preferring instead to advance its mechanized infantry very cautiously behind a devastating wall of artillery fire. Although this technique minimized Israeli casualties, it maximized non-combatant deaths and civil destruction and permitted the great bulk of enemy commandos to cross the Litani river to relative safety. "The Israeli army, once renowned for its Davidian finesse, was used as a

huge, stomping Goliath, hitting with all its might at places from which the terrorists had already fled".\(^50\) Finally, the IDF's treatment of Tyre also was at variance with the declared Israeli objective of liquidating the PLO. The largest concentration of Palestinians in the South was in Tyre where the PLO had three refugee camps. Yet the IDF completely bypassed PLO concentrations around Tyre, thereby, creating an enclave which came to be known as the 'Tyre Pocket'.

In the light of the preceding analysis, it can be said that the Israeli objectives in invading Lebanon were very different. These were basically two. The first was the establishment of a security belt which was merely a euphemism for annexation. For months, Israel had been trying through its proxy Saad Haddad to set up a security belt by territorially linking the three Christian enclaves but Haddad's militia had repeatedly failed in this regard. The Begin government seems to have come to the conclusion that a direct Israeli military intervention was required in order to achieve this objective and the incident of 11 March came as a handy excuse to launch an already decided upon military operation. A second objective of the invasion was to disrupt the Shtura Accords of July 1977 and thereby, the entire fabric of Syrian-PLO-Sarkis consensus on the interpretation as well as implementation of the Cairo Accords of

\(^50\) Newsweek, 3 April 1978, p.42.
1969. Given the centrality of the Shtura Accords to future national reconciliation and the rebuilding of a national army as well as its crucial role in the whole gamut of Lebanese-Syrian-PLO relations, "the Israeli objective can only have been to throw everything into turmoil once again."\textsuperscript{51} There is ample evidence of this, even prior to the invasion. The war by proxy in the South in the second half of 1977 was an attempt to obstruct the implementation of the Shtura Accords. The deliberate havoc wrought on the civilian population of South Lebanon during the invasion was specifically intended to create chaotic conditions in Lebanon once again. It is self-evident that the combined use of an incredibly intensive air, land and sea fire-power against densely populated towns and villages can have only one effect: "a pandemonium of panic and a mass stampede of civilians, not to mention a wanton loss of innocent lives."\textsuperscript{52}

Nearly 2000 Lebanese civilians were killed during the invasion and an equal number wounded. The invasion also created severe refugee problems which the Lebanese government was ill-prepared to cope. More than 250000 fled to the north in order to escape the wrath of the Israeli army. There was hardly a town or village south of the Litani that was not affected by the invasion. In over 100 Shiite villages nearly 2500 houses were completely destroyed and

\textsuperscript{51} Khalidi, n.48, p.126.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p.128.
twice that number severely damaged.\textsuperscript{53} H.D.S. Greenway, \textit{Washington Post} correspondent reported:

From the slopes of Mount Hermon in the east to the heights overlooking Tyre in the west, the Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon has left a broad patch of death and destruction unprecedented in the region south of the Litani river. Nothing that has gone before... prepares one for the devastation that has been visited on the ancient stone towns\textsuperscript{54} in this rolling, rock-strewn farming country.

Yet to recover from the rigours of the Civil War, the Israeli invasion sent fresh shock waves reverberating through the Lebanese body politic and doomed all prospects of an early national reconciliation. As a result of the invasion, tensions between Syria and the Lebanese Front became more manifest. Hawks within the Lebanese Front considered the moment opportune for a large scale Maronite offensive aimed at driving out the Syrians and Palestinians from Lebanese soil. Soon enough these tensions were translated into armed clashes in the suburbs of Beirut between militias of the NM and the Lebanese Front. Three days (9-12 April) of intense fighting left thirty-three dead and scores wounded and led to the resignation of Premier Salim al-Hoss.\textsuperscript{55} The country once again teetered on the

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Arab World Weekly}, 15 April 1978, no.469, pp.3-5.
brink of a Civil War. A nationwide conflict was narrowly averted when on the personal intervention of President Sarkis, a ceasefire was worked out and Saudi and Sudanese units of the ADF deployed along the line separating East and West Beirut.

(iv) **Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)**

On 19 March 1978, hours after the IDF had begun to move towards the Litani, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 425. The two key points of the resolution which was sponsored by the US, were (i) a call upon Israel to immediately "cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory"; and (ii) the establishment of a United Nations interim force for Southern Lebanon for the purpose of "confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area". 56

Despite its vehement opposition to the US-sponsored Resolution 425, Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire two days later. The Israeli Defence Minister Ezer Weizmann met with General Ensio Siilasvuo, Commander of United Nations

56. For the complete text of Resolution 425, see Arab Report and Record, 16-31 March 1978, no.6, p.221.
Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and Major-General Emmanuel S. Erskine Commander of the newly appointed UNIFIL. At this meeting following three points were agreed upon between Israel and the UN officer -

(1) the area overrun by the IDF in the second stage of the invasion would become a buffer zone;

(2) UNIFIL would be responsible for patrolling the buffer zone; and

(3) the strip of territory lying between the Israeli-Lebanese boundary and the UNIFIL buffer zone would be designated a "peace zone" to the patrolled by the militia of Major Haddad and units of the Lebanese army. Israel would be permitted to continue its 'good fence program' with the Lebanese inhabitants of the border region.\textsuperscript{57}

Consequently, instead of being pressured into turning over its ten-kilometer 'security belt' to UNIFIL, Israel simply bargained away its additional conquests, thereby buying time in which to solidify Haddad's grip on the strip of Lebanese territory.

The first contingent of UNIFIL consisting of elements of the Swedish infantry battalion entered Lebanon by way of Israel on 22 March 1978. In the months of April through June, an international force began to take up positions

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p.225.
south of the Litani. 58 The Israeli withdrawal called for by Resolution 425, took place very slowly and in several stages beginning on 11 April. By 30 April, Israel had turned over to UNIFIL around 550 square kilometers of Lebanese territory and was left in control of the security belt seized during the first phase of the invasion. 59 With regard to the security belt itself, Israel dragged its feet. Under strong international pressure, it finally set a firm date for its withdrawal from Lebanon - 13 June 1978. The withdrawal, according to the Israeli Cabinet Secretary, Ayre Naor, would be unconditional, but Israel would be obliged to "take measures to ensure the security of the local Christian Lebanese population". 60

On 13 June, as promised the IDF formally ended its ninety-one day occupation of Southern Lebanon. In a military ceremony at Meis al-Jabal the Israeli flag was lowered. However, the security belt occupied by the

58. The Secretary-General's term of reference at first provided for a force of 4000; these troops were founded as a result of a series of approaches made by him to the likely contributing countries. The result of his efforts was that nine countries in due course agreed to take part: Fiji, France, Iran, Ireland, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway and Senegal provided infantry battalions and Canada, France and Norway provided logistic units. The Security Council, on 3 May approved Waldheim's proposal to increase the size of UNIFIL by fifty per cent to 6000 troops. The majority of the additional men came from Fiji, Iran and Ireland. For details see UN Department of Public Information, The Blue Helments: A Review of UN Peacekeeping (New York, 1985), Chapter VI.


60. Ibid., 16-31 May 1978, no.10, p.389.
IDF was handed over not to the UNIFIL but to Haddad and his militia (see Map 6). Speaking on the occasion General Yanosh said "The Israeli government insists on its commitment to continue to protect the Christian minority in South Lebanon". It was clear that Israel had no intention of relinquishing its hold over the security strip and even though the IDF had withdrawn, Haddad's militia had now been charged with the responsibility of policing the area on behalf of Israel. During the weeks preceding the withdrawal, the IDF had resupplied and reinforced the militia which now had a strength of three thousand and its ability to hold on not just to the three former enclaves but the entire security strip was greatly enhanced.

Soon after the IDF withdrawal, the Lebanese government decided to despatch an army contingent to the South to establish a symbol of authority as well as supplement the UNIFIL effort in policing the area. With characteristic caution Sarkis at first despatched several Lebanese officers to meet their Israeli counterparts at the UNIFIL Headquarters at An-Naqrarah to discuss the impending southern movement of the army. During the meeting, Israel placed four pre-conditions for the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south: (1) the position of Major Haddad must be officially recognized by the Lebanese government, (2) units of the Lebanese army could be deployed only outside the security

61. Quoted in Hamizrachi, n.9, p.181.
Area turned over to UNIFIL on 11 April 1978
Area turned over to UNIFIL on 14 April 1978
Area turned over to UNIFIL on 30 April 1978
Area turned over to the Christian militias on 13 June 1978

strip, (3) no Syrian officers or advisors could accompany
the army and (4) no interference with the 'Good Fence' would
be tolerated.62

The nature of the demand made it clear that Israel
would accept no Lebanese military deployment in the South
except under conditions that would make the Sarkis regime an
active accomplice in the Israeli plan to annex the border
region. The second and fourth points were clearly aimed at
luring Sarkis into an arrangement whereby the Christian
enclaves would be Lebanese in name only.

On 31 July 1978, the Lebanese President despatched a
650-man army battalion to the South. The unit planned to
establish its headquarters in Tibnin, a village north of
Bint Jubayl and outside the security belt. The Lebanese
soldiers received enthusiastic reception in the villages on
their way as they proceeded south. The cheering stopped at
Kawkaba, however, as the battalion came under an artillery
attack by Haddad's militia.63 By entering Kawkaba, the
Lebanese unit indicated its intention of moving to Tibnin by
way of the Christian enclave in the vicinity of Marjayoun,
a violation of the second point of the Israeli guidelines.
The lightly-armed Lebanese battalion was in no position to

62. Hirsh Goodman, "Israeli 'Guidelines' for Lebanese
Troops", Jerusalem Post (International Edition), 1

63. Ramesh Thakur, International Peacekeeping in Lebanon:
United Nations Authority and Multinational Force(Boulder
challenge the Israeli-backed Haddad militia. Under the circumstances the Lebanese Defence Ministry was left with no option but to order the expeditionary force back to its barracks.

In early 1979, the Lebanese government made yet another serious effort to assert its authority in the South and restore the state's sovereignty in the border area. Serious preparation began in 1979 to send an army unit to the South and the Lebanese government negotiated with the PLO and the NM for the unhindered passage of the troops along the coast. The battalion began its southward sojourn on 17 April and the following day was deployed in the central sector of the UNIFIL-held area. The newly arrived battalion was immediately subjected to intense shelling by Haddad's militia and the UNIFIL itself was subjected to one of the most violent attacks ever by Haddad's troops. Haddad then followed this up by proclaiming the independence of the border strip under his control and named it the "Free State of Lebanon". 64

Haddad's 'State', an area ten kilometers deep and extending ninety kilometers along the border contained some 60,000 Shiites and 40,000 Maronites, most of the latter having being transferred from the north via Israel. In September, with Israeli assistance, a radio station called "The Voice of Hope" began to operate and in November Haddad

issued instructions for the collection of taxes in the area under his control. Food and civil supplies came from Israel via the 'Good Fence' and residents of the enclave were employed in large numbers in Israeli farms and industrial establishments in the Galilee. Military aid came from Israel which also undertook to pay the salaries of the men serving in Haddad's militia.65

By supporting and directing Haddad's defiance of the Lebanese government, it was obvious that Israel was thinking about issues much broader than the question of merely retaining its hold over the strip of Lebanese territory on the border. Israeli encouragement of Haddad was part of a wider strategy aimed at influencing the future shape of the Lebanese body politic itself. Specifically, the Israel-Haddad connection was an integral part of Israel's growing relationship with the Lebanese Front - particularly with its young and charismatic leader Bashir Jumayil.

(v) Consolidation of Israeli-Lebanese Front Ties

Following the Israeli invasion of March 1978, there had been a rapid expansion of Israel's ties with the Lebanese Front. The invasion had given a fresh impetus to the Front's war against the Syrian presence and soon after the invasion, there was a copious flow of Israeli

military assistance to the Maronites. The number of Israeli military advisers was greatly increased. After making a thorough assessment of the potential and real requirements of the Front they proceeded to reconstruct the Lebanese Forces "into a fully-structured army with standardized uniforms, an orderly chain of command, a detailed training programme and much of the weaponry of a modern mechanized infantry force". 66

The Phalangist Party - one of the principal constituents of the Lebanese Front - meanwhile sought to eliminate all those sections within the Maronite community which continued to orient themselves towards Syria or were critical of the Front's blatant collusion with Israel. Prominent among these was the Franjieh family of North Lebanon which was very close to the Assad regime in Syria. On 13 June, in an operation masterminded by Bashir Jumayil, the Phalangists killed Franjieh's son Tony Franjieh along with his family and bodyguards in his native hometown Ehden. 67

The assassination immediately sparked off a violent conflict between the Lebanese Front and Syria. The Syrian troops commanded by Rifat al-Assad, the President's


brother, entered Lebanon and shelled the Maronite stronghold of Dayr al-Ahmar. The Syrian offensive intensified in July as Syrian troops of the ADF shelled the Christian quarters in Beirut.68

In the face of the Syrian offensive, Bashir Jumayil turned to Begin and asked for Israeli intervention. On 6 July, two Israeli Kfir jets flew over Beirut breaking the sound barrier and sending sonic booms crashing throughout the capital. This token show of force was accompanied by armoured concentrations on the Golan Heights. Begin, Weizmann and other prominent officials publicly warned that Israel would not stand by idly as the massacre of Christians continued in Lebanon.69 The Israeli signals succeeded and the Syrian offensive against the Lebanese Front was stopped.

In August, a Lebanese Front delegation led by Kamil Shamun and Bashir Jumayil secretly visited Jerusalem where it held talks with Prime Minister Begin, Foreign Minister Dayan and Defence Minister Weizmann. Begin promised to give unreserved support to the Lebanese Front in its conflict with the Syrians without attaching any pre-conditions.70 Encouraged by this new Israeli assurance of unreserved


support the Lebanese Front renewed its armed confrontation with the Syrians in September. The Lebanese Front attacks on Syrian soldiers in Beirut provoked a new explosion of violence which continued for over a month and led to a strong condemnation by both France and the US of the Lebanese Front and of Israel's promotion of the Front's intrasigence. With the help of Western powers and the Arab League a ceasefire was finally arranged in mid-October at Bayt al-Din in Lebanon.71

In early 1979, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and UAE withdrew their troops from the ADF. In the face of the security vacuum created by the Arab troop withdrawals, the Lebanese government decided to deploy the Lebanese Army in strategic positions previously held by the foreign troops. The Lebanese Front rejected the government plan to deploy troops particularly in East Beirut. President Sarkis, wishing to avoid a fresh conflagration, ultimately relented to the Front's demand. A symbolic force of one hundred and twenty men equipped with light weapons was positioned exactly as demanded by the Lebanese Front whose militia then took over most of the strategic positions vacated by the Arab troops.72 Once in total command of the Christian East Beirut, Bashir Jumayil began a systematic campaign aimed at silencing all dissent to his policies within the

Christian camp. His militia first moved against the Syriac Christians and after their subjugation, Jumayil served notice on the far right Guardians of the Cedars and al-Tanzim to unite with the Lebanese Forces or face the consequences. Its leaders Etienne Saqir and Georges Adwan quickly agreed to integrate their forces into the Front's militia. Jumayil then warned the Armenian community to abandon its neutrality and support the Lebanese Front. The Phalangist's launched a savage attack on the Armenian quarters because of the community's refusal to pay taxes to the Lebanese Front. Jumayil's drive for unquestionable supremacy within the Christian camp ultimately culminated in a violent conflict with his erstwhile ally Kamil Shamun in mid-1980. This conflict had been proceeded by minor clashes between the Phalangists and National Liberals but these had been of a local nature. By the beginning of 1980, Jumayil had finally come to the conclusion that the military power of the 'Tigers' had to be broken before they would accept his hegemony over the Front. On 7 July 1980, in a surprise move the Phalangists attacked and destroyed the military headquarters of the Tigers. Despite the savagery of the attack, Shamun and his followers had no option but to accept the new reality. They continued to cooperate with Bashir Jumayil and accepted the Phalangists as the dominant power in the Lebanese Front and Jumayil as the supreme authority.

73. Ibid., p.256.
74. Evron, n.30, p.91.
(vi) Siege of Zahle and the Israeli-Syrian Confrontation

Having established himself as the undisputed leader of the Lebanese Christians Bashir Jumayil with the active backing of Israel, now made preparations for a final showdown with the Syrians in Lebanon. In December 1980, he made yet another secret trip to Israel. This time Begin promised to provide the Lebanese Front with air-cover, if the Syrian air-force attacked the Front's territory in the next round of fighting.75 Assured of Israeli support, the Lebanese Front decided to challenge the Syrians in Zahle, the heart of the Syrian-dominated territory. Zahle, the largest city in Lebanon and the capital of the Biqa valley had a predominantly Christian population, mostly Greek Orthodox. Situated on the Beirut-Damascus highway, it was regarded as vital by the Syrians for two reasons: (a) the defence of Damascus, and (b) an essential links between Syria and its troops stationed in Beirut.76

In December 1980, gunmen belonging to the Lebanese Front infiltrated into Zahle and attacked an ADF unit killing some Syrian soldiers. The Syrian reaction was immediate and strong. ADF troops besieged the town and demanded the surrender of the culprits. When this demand was not met,

75. Yaniv, n.66, p.86.

Syria resorted to heavy artillery shelling causing extensive damage to life and property. After a week of fighting, a ceasefire agreement was finally negotiated between Lebanese and Syrian officials and religious and political leaders of Zahle.

Soon after the siege of Zahle, the Phalangists brought in heavy earth moving equipment to build a new road connecting Mount Lebanon with Zahle and circumventing a possible Syrian blockade. The Syrians interpreted it as an attempt to provide a link with the Lebanese South, which could enable an Israeli-backed pincer movement to be launched, that would cut off their forces in Beirut from their strategic bases in the Biqa. Matters came to a head on 1 April when the Phalangists ambushed a Syrian unit near Zahle and killed a number of Syrian soldiers. The very next day, the Syrian army launched a major offensive aimed at driving out the Phalangists from Zahle. It began a heavy shelling of Zahle and Christian neighbourhoods in Beirut. Zahle was once again besieged by the Syrian forces. Additional troops, transported by helicopters, began the rugged climb up Mount Sanin along the eastern slopes of Mount Lebanon, a Phalangist stronghold. They finally managed to dislodge the Phalangist militiamen from the "French Chamber" a formidable rock fortress on Mount Sanin's highest peak. The fall of the "French Chamber" posed a

77. Evron, n.30, p.93.
grave threat to the very existence of the Christian canton from Zahle to the outskirts of Jounieh. 78 Aware of the fact that Israel was bound to come to the aid of its ally Bashir Jumayil, Syrian teams meanwhile prepared ground emplacements near Zahle for the stationing of Soviet-made surface-to-air missiles (SAM-6).

Soon after the siege of Zahle began, Jumayil appealed to Begin for help. The latter urged him to stand firm and ordered the IAF to go into action. On 28 April, the IAF shot down two Syrian helicopters carrying supply for their troops in the Biqa. 79

President Assad's response to the Israeli action came within twenty-four hours. Instead of backing down in the face of the Israeli threat, the Syrians installed SAM-6 missiles in the prepared dug-out and additional batteries were placed on the Syrian border with Lebanon. Scud surface-to-surface missiles were placed on the outskirts of Damascus bringing within their range much of Israeli territory. The Syrian action brought Israel and Syria on the brink of a war. Prime Minister Begin threatened that Israel would remove the SAM-6 missiles by force and on 30 April, ordered the airforce to destroy the missiles from air. Just an hour before take off, however, the mission had

78. Schiff and Yaari, n.69, p.32.
79. Seale, n.76, pp.369-70.
to be called off due to inclement weather. Meanwhile the US, concerned about the likely fallout of an Israeli air strike began to pressurize Begin into go ahead with his plans to destroy the Syrian missiles. On the evening of 30 April, the American Ambassador Samuel Lewis informed Begin that President Regan was sending Philip Habib to mediate between the parties and Israel should refrain from any action that was likely to jeopardize the American initiative. Yielding to the American pressure, Israel cancelled the proposed air strike and agreed to Habib's mediation. 80

Though Israel was willing to seek a diplomatic solution, it was not ready to compromise on its substantive demands. These included not only the removal of Syrian missiles but also a termination of the siege of Zahle and the Syrian withdrawal from the positions seized from the Christians on Mount Sanin. Even as Habib's mission was underway, as if to compensate for the restraint he was showing over the Syrian missiles, Begin instructed the IAF to bomb PLO positions in South Lebanon. On 28 May, Israel bombed a SAM-9 missile site set up by Libyan officers near Damour and on 2 June, a regional Fath headquarters north of Tyre. 81 The new Israeli attacks further complicated Habib's mission and by the last week of May it seemed that he would not be able to produce any concrete results. Still Habib

80. Schiff and Yaari, n.69, pp.34-35.
continued with his efforts and with the help of intensive Saudi mediation, the crisis was partially resolved.\textsuperscript{82} Syria agreed to lift the siege of Zahle but on the other two issues - Syrian withdrawal from Mount Sanin and the presence of Syrian missiles inside Lebanese territory - the deadlock continued.

Israeli air raids against the Palestinians which had been suspended in June due to Washington's strong objections were suddenly renewed on 10 July and for five days Israel continuously pounded Southern Lebanon from land, air and sea. The renewal of Israeli raids at a time when Habib was involved in complicated negotiations with the Syrians could not but have been intended to create new obstacles to the American envoy's efforts. Concerned with denying Israel a pretext for a large-scale operation, the PLO exercised great restraint in the face of the Israeli provocation. But there was a limit to PLO restraint and on 15 July after a particularly severe Israeli raid the PLO shelled the Israeli sea-side resort of Nahariya. The Israeli response was to blanket bomb densely populated areas in South Lebanon deliberately killing men, women and children and setting Lebanon's main oil refinery at Zahrani aflame. On 17 July, the IAF bombed West Beirut's most

heavily populated areas, the Arab University and nearby refugee camps resulting in over three hundred deaths. 83

The raid generated sharp international reactions and much to the chagrin of Begin shifted the focus of Habib's mission to one of reaching a ceasefire between Israel and the PLO. The US appealed for immediate ceasefire in South Lebanon and Habib attempted to reach one; with the help of Saudi Arabia. At the same time the Reagan administration announced the postponement of the planned resumption of the delivery of F-16 jets (the shipment of F-16 jets had been temporarily withheld in the aftermath of the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor on 7 June 1981) and stipulated that future deliveries of weaponry will be conditional on Israel's cooperation with the US in solving the Lebanese problems. 84 Israel initially refused to go along, reiterating its long-standing refusal to deal with the PLO and claimed that it was Syria which had instigated the attack on Naharia. Yet in the end, Begin had to yield once again to American pressure and agree to a ceasefire negotiated by Habib on 24 July 1981. 85

The ceasefire proved to be a political set-back for Israel and its ally the Lebanese Front. According to the

terms of the ceasefire, Syria was permitted to keep its missiles in Lebanon, the Phalangists had to evacuate Zahle and control over the surrounding hills and over the entire Beirut-Damascus highway remained in Syrian hands. It forbade both Israel and the PLO from attacking each other across the Israeli-Lebanese border and more important "constituted de-facto Israeli recognition of the PLO, despite Israeli denials and Habib's inventive obfuscation that the truce was concluded between Israeli territory and Lebanese territory". Having had to retreat over the question of Syrian missiles in Lebanon and having handed Arafat a political victory in return for the cessation of hostilities which it initiated, the Begin government was now convinced more than ever of the necessity of launching a formidable military operation in order to radically reconstruct the Lebanese state under the hegemony of Israel's allies - Bashir Jumayil and the Lebanese Front.

Conclusion

The formation of the Likud government headed by Menachem Begin in 1977 led to important changes in Israeli Lebanon policy. Likud's foreign policy was activist, supportive of frequent and extensive use of force as an instrument for dealing with Israel's political and military problems. The change over, therefore, brought with it a

86. Petran, n.23, p.262.
very assertive posture \textit{vis-a-vis} Lebanon than hitherto pursued by the government of Yitzhak Rabin.

Begin openly acknowledged Israel's role in Lebanon both in the South and in Beirut. He publicly sympathised with the Christians and declared that Israel was duty bound to protect them. The Lebanese Front which was in an exultant and defiant mood because of the military outcome of the Civil War, became very bold and assertive following the installation of the Likud government. It rejected all peace plans put forward by Syria and declared that the future of Lebanon could be determined only after the expulsion of Palestinians from the country and the withdrawal of Syrian peace-keeping troops. The intrasignet attitude of the Lebanese Front led to a break with Syria which once again began to support the NM and the PRM.

The war by proxy in the South also intensified after the formation of Begin's government. Haddad, however, found it difficult to expand his domain beyond the three Christian border enclaves as the Palestinian fighters and their Lebanese allies were being supported by the Syrian army. The pressure in Israel to relieve the Christians increased and this ultimately resulted in the March 1978 invasion of Lebanon. The invasion secured what Haddad's militia had failed to provide all along: a buffer zone ranging in depth from five to twenty kilometers, stretching
from the coast to the foothills of Mount Hermon. Yet to recover from the rigours of the Civil War, the invasion sent fresh shock waves reverberating through the Lebanese body politic and doomed all prospects of an early national reconciliation.

Under international pressure Israel was forced to withdraw from the bulk of the territories occupied during the March invasion. The UNIFIL formed soon after the invasion, was deployed in the territories evacuated by the IDF. Israel, however, handed over the buffer zone not the UNIFIL but to Haddad. The following year Haddad proclaimed the independence of the border strip and named it the "Free State of Lebanon".

Throughout the late seventies the Lebanese Front with the active backing of the Likud government made preparations for a final showdown with the Syrians in Lebanon. Finally in December 1980, the Lebanese Front decided to challenge the Syrins in Zahle, the heart of Syrian-dominated territory. The conflict that ensued in Zahle between the Lebanese Front and Syria soon led to a large-scale Israeli involvement. The IAF came to the aid of the Maronites and shot down Syrian helicopters carrying supply to their troops. This prompted the Syrians to deploy SAM-6 missiles in Lebanon in violation of the 'red line' agreement of 1976. As the situation deteriorated and an all-out conflict seemed
imminent, the US stepped in to defuse the crisis. It sent Philip Habib to mediate and find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

Even as Habib was involved in complicated negotiations with the Syrians, Israel suddenly attacked Palestinian positions in Lebanon. In retaliation the PLO shelled northern Israel and a new and much more serious Israel-PLO conflict seemed imminent. The Israel-PLO confrontation shifted the focus of Habib's mission to one of reaching a ceasefire between Israel and the PLO. Israel initially refused to go along, reiterating its long-standing refusal to deal with the PLO. Yet in the end Begin had to yield to American pressure and agree to a ceasefire negotiated by Habib in July 1981.