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## Perceptions of Naval Power in Crisis Management: Lebanon and the Levant During the Cold War

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**Perceptions of Naval Power in Crisis  
Management: Lebanon and the Levant  
During the Cold War**

**Charles Matar**

**PhD in War Studies**

**2022**

## Abstract

Lebanon and the Levant are lands of ancient maritime history. Here, centuries of interactions with seapower have produced, through the agency of collective memories, specific perceptions of the use of navies as diplomatic and crisis management tools during the Cold War.

The literature concerning naval diplomacy during the Cold War is focused on theoretical conceptions and on the naval interactions between the Superpowers. The critical dimension of the dialectic between the naval diplomacy deployed by the Powers during Levantine crises and onshore strategic, political, and cultural conditions has generally been neglected. The mismatch between the language of naval power during the Cold War and Levantine perceptions thereof is rooted in pre-Cold War expectations and prejudices and has yet to be explored. This thesis proposes an original approach in examining how Levantine perceptions of naval power distorted the latter's communication and impacted its capacity to influence attitudes, behaviours, and events. For the first time, it provides a comprehensive account of the naval diplomacy deployed by the Powers in response to the Levantine crises during the Cold War. Based on this, a new understanding of navies as instruments of statecraft and diplomatic coercion as well as essential tools for the prosecution of the Cold War emerges. It shows how naval diplomacy in the Levant was essentially a coercive diplomacy and demonstrates the impact of navies on the local state system and mentalities.

The thesis develops a new dimension to the history of Lebanon, a polity which was shaped by naval power. By means of two case studies, the U.S. 1958 landing in Beirut and the U.S.-led Multinational Force in Lebanon (1982-84) – two key moments in Lebanese history, the thesis shows that naval diplomacy consists in a continuum of iterative nuances and multilateral messaging, away from the Cold War era mechanistic theoretical models. It demonstrates how naval diplomatic actions unfolded inside active war zones, clashing with conflicting local expectations and perceptions and engaging into an escalatory dialectic where the mightiest battleship seems powerless and naval diplomacy is taken to the brink of undeclared war. Through the adoption of a long-term perspective and the integration of the multiple dimensions of naval interventions, the thesis re-evaluates the notions of 'success' and 'failure' in naval diplomacy. It contributes to a wider understanding of how seapower shapes events ashore.

## **Declaration**

This thesis was authorised to conduct interviews by the Research Ethics Office at King's College-London. The Research Ethics Minimal Registration Form was approved on April 17, 2019 with the confirmation reference number MRS-18/19-11627. A copy of this Form is attached at the end of this thesis.

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This thesis' claim for originality would be unsubstantiated without the cooperation of the persons interviewed who patiently recalled their memories of often painful events several decades-old. Openness, patience and availability were generously granted by former United States Secretary of the Navy, the Right Honourable John Lehman, and by former National Security Council executive and Task Force Commander-United States Sixth Fleet, Rear Admiral (Ret) Philip Dur. Former officials such as Lebanese President Mr. Amine Gemayel, Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Elie Salem, Phalange Party leader and Minister, Mr. Karim Pakradouni, the Commander-in-Chief of the Lebanese Forces, Dr Fouad Abou-Nader, the vice-president of the Parti Socialiste Progressiste and Minister, Mr. Marwan Hamadé, and former correspondent of the newspapers *Le Monde* and *La Repubblica* in the Middle East, Mr. Lucien George, have all kindly welcomed me in their homes in Beirut and spent many hours answering my questions. The same gratitude is extended to Admiral (Ret.) Alain Oudot de Dainville, former Chief-of-Staff of the Marine Nationale, and to Mr Francis Gutmann, former Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay.

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## List of Abbreviations

**AD:** Archives Diplomatiques, La Courneuve (Paris, France)  
**AGI:** Auxiliary General Intelligence ship – NATO designation of Soviet intelligence ships  
**Agreement:** May 17, 1983, Agreement between Israel and Lebanon  
**ARAMCO:** Arabian-American Oil Company (Saudi Arabia)  
**ASW:** Anti-Submarine Warfare  
**BBBG:** Battleship Battle Group  
**BBSAG:** Battleship Surface Action Group  
**BLT:** U.S. Marines Battalion Landing Team  
**CHCW:** The Cambridge History of the Cold War  
**CIA:** Central Intelligence Agency  
**CINCNAVEUR:** Commander-in-Chief U.S. Naval Forces Europe  
**CINCNELM:** Commander-in-Chief U.S. Naval Forces Europe-North Atlantic-Mediterranean  
**CINCSPCOMME:** Commander-in-Chief Specified Command Middle East  
**CNA:** Centre for Naval Analyses  
**CNO:** Chief of Naval Operations  
**CTF/G:** Carrier Task Force/Group  
**CVBG:** Carrier Battle Group  
**DOD:** U.S. Department of Defence  
**EUCOM:** U.S. European Command  
**FASTAB:** Field Artillery Surveillance and Target Acquisition Battalion  
**GOL:** Government of Lebanon  
**IAF:** Israel Air Force  
**IPC:** Iraq Petroleum Company  
**ICRC:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**IDF:** Israel Defence Forces  
**IRGC:** Iran Revolutionary Guards Corps  
**JCS:** Joint Chiefs of Staff  
**KEW:** United Kingdom Archives, Kew Gardens  
**KSA:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
**LAF:** Lebanese Armed Forces  
**LF:** Lebanese Forces (Christian Militia)  
**LPD:** Landing Platform Dock- Amphibious warfare ship.  
**LST:** Tank Landing Ship  
**MAU:** U.S. Marines Amphibious Unit  
**MNF:** Multinational Force  
**MNF1:** Multinational Force 1 (August 29, 1982-September 14, 1982)  
**MNF2:** Multinational Force 2 (September 29, 1982-February 6, 1984)  
**NARA:** U.S. National Archives and Records Administration  
**NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organisation  
**NGFS:** Naval Gunfire Support



**NHHC:** Naval History and Heritage Command  
**NIE:** U.S. National Intelligence Estimate  
**NSC:** U.S. National Security Council  
**NSDD:** National Security Decision Directive  
**NSPG:** National Security Policy Group  
**NYT:** New York Times  
**OLJ:** LorientLejour- Lebanese francophone newspaper  
**PHIBRON:** U.S. Marines Amphibious Squadron  
**PLO:** Palestine Liberation Organisation  
**PSP:** Parti Socialiste Progressiste (Jumblatt's Druse militia)  
**ROE:** Rules of Engagement  
**RPI:** Reagan Peace Initiative  
**RRL:** Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley  
**SAA:** Syrian Arab Army  
**SAG:** U.S. Surface Action Group  
**SAM:** Surface-to-air missile  
**SARG:** Syrian Arab Republic Government  
**SLBM:** Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile  
**SLOCS:** Sea Lines of Communication  
**SSBN:** Ballistic Missile Launching Nuclear Submarine  
**TARPS:** Tactical Airborne Reconnaissance Pod Systems  
**U.A.R.:** United Arab Republic  
**U.N.E.F.:** United Nations Emergency Force (in the Sinai)  
**U.N.G.A.:** United Nations General Assembly  
**U.N.I.F.I.L.:** United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon  
**U.N.S.C.:** United Nations Security Council  
**U.N.S.G.:** United Nations Secretary General  
**USCINCEUR:** U.S. Commander-in-Chief European Command  
**WPR:** U.S. War Powers Resolution (November 1973)  
**WSAG:** Washington Special Action Group

## Chapter I – Introduction

*'The Western naval presence re-awakened the Christian "genetic" atavistic myth of the protective Fleets'.<sup>1</sup>*

*'The Fleets have come to exterminate the Druse...'<sup>2</sup>*

*'These Fleets are poised to intervene...It is a new Crusade against which the Arab nation must remain vigilant.'<sup>3</sup>*

*'Naval diplomacy was not understood by the Christian Lebanese as it should have been. They only wanted to see the Marines landing, stopping the war, and securing the land'.<sup>4</sup>*

These citations taken in relation to the Western naval intervention in the Lebanese war between 1982 and 1984 are but a few of many others spanning the Cold War-era and reflect a basic thread, that of conflicting perceptions of navies and naval diplomacy by Levantine populations of different creeds and nationalities. By focusing on the perceptions local leaders and populaces developed of the interventions of foreign naval power in times of crisis, this thesis is a reevaluation of the role of navies as diplomatic tools in crisis management and of their influence during the Cold War in the Levant.<sup>5</sup> It shows the deep historical roots of these perceptions, shaped by centuries of interactions with seapower, and the role of collective memories and expectations in their formation.<sup>6</sup>

The thesis is situated at the confluence of three fields of study. The first is the modern history of the Levant and its conflicts where centuries-old religious and civilisational

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<sup>1</sup> Interview of Fouad Abou-Nader, Former Commander-in-Chief of the Christian Lebanese Forces.

<sup>2</sup> Walid Jumblatt, Druse Leader, in *As-Safir*, September 20, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> Syria's State-Controlled Newspaper *Teshrine*, September 7, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Interview of Karim Pakradouni, Former Leader of the Christian Phalange.

<sup>5</sup> The few examples in the existing literature deal only with the Soviet-Egyptian influence dialectic: Ferris, Jesse, 'Guns for Cotton?', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 13/2 (2011), pp.4-38; El-Hussini, Mohrez Mahmoud, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations, 1945-1985* (London: MacMillan, 1987); Rubinstein, Alvin, 'The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship Since the June 1967 War' in MccGwire, Michael et al., (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> On the Eastern Question: Frémaux, Jacques, *La Question d'Orient* (Paris: CNRS, 2017); Laurens, Henry, *Les Crises d'Orient: Question d'Orient et Grand Jeu (1768-1914)* (Paris: Fayard, 2017); Macfie, Alexander, *The Eastern Question* (London: Routledge, 1996).

prejudices merged with the dynamics of the Cold War. The second is the wider Cold War historiography with its focus on Superpower competition and nuclear deterrence. The third is the study of navies and seapower, of their role in shaping political and economic history as well as in diplomacy and crisis management. Through this positioning, the thesis demonstrates how Levantines perceived the global conflict and attempted to adjust to its geopolitical paradigm through their perceptions of - and reactions to - the deployment of Superpower naval diplomacy as crisis management tool. By utilising rarely exploited local sources and reevaluating the 1958 American landing in Beirut and the Multinational Force (MNF) presence in Lebanon between 1982 and 1984, the thesis shows how these differentiated perceptions informed the understanding of - and reactions to - the naval deployments during the crises which shook the Levant during the Cold War. In turn, what was the impact of these perceptions and reactions on the prosecution of naval diplomacy by the Powers? How did the capacity of naval power to shape behaviours and events ashore by manipulating local perceptions, clash with entrenched pre-Cold War historical and cultural prejudices with often unfavourable results? Through the case studies and the consideration of Levantine expectations, perceptions, and reactions to deployed naval power, this thesis brings a new approach to the recurrent question of the effectiveness of coercive diplomacy and of its naval sub-category. If naval diplomacy is a communication exercise that rests upon signaling then, based on the way the latter is perceived, what can be said about its ultimate 'success' or 'failure'?

The collective memories of the different Levantine ethno-sectarian denominations and of their embodiment in the region's modern state system encompass traumatic past events including massacres and foreign aggression. In Lebanon, favourable Christian memories of Western naval interventions in 1840, 1860, and 1918 that ended centuries of violence and marginalization clash with Druse and Muslim recollections of the Crusades and later nineteenth and twentieth century Western colonialist penetration. Collective memories consist in '*giving meaning*' to traumatic historical events through not only '*objective remembering*' but also the attribution of a '*subjective meaning to the past*'.<sup>7</sup> They are

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<sup>7</sup> Lira, Elizabeth, 'Remembering: Passing Back Through the Heart', in Pennebaker, James et al., *Collective Memories of Political Events* (Mahwah, NJ: LEA Publishers, 1997), p.225. On the political role of collective memories: Larkin, Craig, *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon* (London: Routledge, 2012); Hodgkin, Katharine et al., (Ed.), *Contested Pasts* (Taylor & Francis, 2003); Ricoeur, Paul, *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'Oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2003); Halbwachs, Maurice, *La Mémoire Collective* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997).

*'postmemory...a recollection of events not personally experienced but socially felt; a traumatic rupture that indelibly scars a nation, religious group, community, or family'*.<sup>8</sup> Postmemory serves the present as it is *'reworked to sustain social solidarity, order, and state power'*.<sup>9</sup> It has *'strategic, political, and ethical consequences'*.<sup>10</sup> It feeds into the emotions, expectations, and perceptions/misperceptions of individuals and groups.<sup>11</sup> For Robert Jervis, expectations are the products of historical experience and *'fit incoming information into pre-existing images'*, thereby structuring perceptions and creating a narrative.<sup>12</sup> It is *'impossible'* to explain critical political decisions without reference to their authors' perceptions which are composed of their *'beliefs about the world and their images of others'*.<sup>13</sup> All the different categories of misperceptions identified by Jervis – *'unity of planning'* and its corollary of conspiracy theories, *'overestimation'* of one's importance, *'wishful thinking'* and *'affect'* – are relevant to a Levantine theatre where emotions, existential fears, and ideologically-driven paranoia run high.<sup>14</sup> They are also relevant for naval diplomacy as a communication tool. Hence, confronted with a present challenge, perceptions built upon past prejudices and ideological manipulations lead to reactions reflecting their underlying beliefs and narratives and result in unexpected, *'irrational'* behaviour and phraseology. This thesis will seek to understand to what extent the reactions by Levantines to a particular naval event were informed by emotive perceptions as much as by rational, interest-driven behaviour? What could be then inferred about the *'rationality'* assumed in the various theories of coercive diplomacy?

The term Levant requires some clarification. It derives from the medieval Italian *levare* which referred to the rising sun and was used by Italian merchants to designate a broad Eastern Mediterranean basin extending from Greece to Egypt.<sup>15</sup> In the early modern period,

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<sup>8</sup> Larkin, Craig, *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon* (London: Routledge, 2012), p.10.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.12.

<sup>10</sup> Gaskell, George & Wright, Daniel, 'Group Differences in Memory for a Political Event', in Pennebaker, *Collective Memories*, pp.177-9.

<sup>11</sup> On the role of emotions in coercive diplomacy: Markwica, Robin, *Emotional Choices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Jervis, Robert, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017 [1976]), p.410.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.28.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, Chapters 8-10.

<sup>15</sup> On the definitions of the Levant and the Middle East: Yilmaz, Huseyin, 'The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire', in Bonine, Michael et al, (Ed.), *Is There a Middle East?*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Held, Colbert & Cummings, John, *Middle East Patterns* (London: Routledge, 2011); Scheffler, Thomas, 'Fertile Crescent', 'Orient', 'Middle East': The Changing Mental Maps of Southwest Asia', *European Review of History*,

the Levant encompassed the area where port-cities such as Smyrna, Sidon and Alexandria, spurred by the Capitulations, would thrive as centres of trade and relative religious tolerance.<sup>16</sup> Twentieth century nationalism further altered the geographical scope of the Levant. The destruction of Smyrna by Turkish nationalists in 1923 and the 'arabisation' of Alexandria by Nasserism, reduced it to the Syrian-Lebanese-Israeli coast where only Beirut survived as a maritime-oriented space of trading and cultural exchanges.<sup>17</sup>

For the Arabs, the Levant is the *Mashreq* – literally Levant – covering the Arabic-speaking lands extending from Egypt to Iran. The British understood the Levant as the area stretching from Thessaloniki to Alexandria while Mandatory France limited it to Lebanon and Syria.<sup>18</sup> In present-day understanding, the Levant is the Mediterranean façade of the Middle East, itself an unstable geographical concept since being coined in the late nineteenth century and which, for the purposes of this thesis, covers the area bracketed by the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea, augmented with Egypt, Turkey, and Iran.<sup>19</sup> Today, the Levant and the Middle East represent a single geopolitical entity and Lebanon, situated at the core of the Levant, symbolises this paradigm and is a theatre where most of the wider regional tensions play out. It is the core Levantine area encompassing the states of Lebanon, Israel, and Syria, and selectively augmented with Egypt and Jordan which will be the subject of this thesis.

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10/2 (2003), pp.253-72; Schwara, Desanka, 'Rediscovering the Levant', *European Review of History*, 10/2 (2003), pp.233-51.

<sup>16</sup> On the Capitulations legal system: Van Den Boogerts, Maurits, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Sousa, Nasim, *The Capitulatory Regime of Turkey* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1933).

<sup>17</sup> Mansel, Philip, 'Cities of the Levant-The Past for the Future?' *Asian Affairs*, 45/2 (2014); Mansel, Philip, *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean* (London: John Murray, 2010); Georgelin, Hervé, *La Fin de Smyrne* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2005); On cosmopolitan Beirut: Hansen, Jens, *Fin de Siècle Beirut* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); Khalaf, Samir, *Heart of Beirut* (Beirut: Saqi, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> MacArthur-Seal, Daniel-Joseph, *Britain's Levantine Empire, 1914-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Cloarec, Vincent, 'La France du Levant ou la Spécificité Impériale Française au Début du XXe Siècle', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, 83/313 (1996), pp.3-32.

<sup>19</sup> Davison, Roderic, 'Where is the Middle East?', *Foreign Affairs*, (1960); Bonine, *Is There A Middle East?*



Figure 1 – The Levant of the Eastern Question. Source: Bonine et al., *Is there a Middle East?* p.30.



Figure 2 – The Middle East as Tricontinental Hub. Source: Held & Cummings, *Middle East Patterns*, p.6.

The thesis approaches naval diplomacy through a coercive angle, defined by James Cable as ‘the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war...’.<sup>20</sup> It generally

<sup>20</sup> For the definition of naval diplomacy: Cable, James, *Gunboat Diplomacy* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1994, [1971]), p.14. On the naval containment: Lehman, John, *Oceans Ventured* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018); Hattendorf, John, (Ed.), *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1970s*, Newport Papers No.30, (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2007); Marolda, Edward, ‘The U.S. Navy in the Cold War Era, 1945-1991’, *Naval History and Heritage Command* (2003); Grygiel, Jakub, ‘The Dilemmas of U.S. Maritime Supremacy in the Early Cold War’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28/2 (2005), pp. 187-206; Baer, George, *One Hundred years of Sea Power* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1993), Chapter 14; Sheehy, Edward, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean, and the Cold War, 1945-1947* (London: Greenwood Press, 1992); Kuniholm, Bruce, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Xydis, Stephen, ‘The Genesis of the Sixth Fleet’, *Proceedings*, 84/8 (1958), pp.41-50. On the re-emergence of Russian seapower: Vego, Milan, ‘Soviet and Russian Strategy in

adopts the analytical categories of the Cold War writers about this subject and the wider field of coercive diplomacy. It offers the first expansive study of how Cold War naval diplomacy was dominantly coercive, an iterative continuum of different force structures, levels, and postures, where kinetic actions were still diplomacy in violent bargaining.<sup>21</sup> It also presents the first comprehensive account of the naval diplomacy deployed by the Powers during Levantine crises, going beyond the Cold War-era literature which only illustrated single theoretical concepts with brief examples and overlooked the diplomatic, tactical, and operational variations of naval diplomacy in a conflict area.<sup>22</sup> In examining these events, the thesis extracts their many nuances and use them to qualify the 'binary, mechanistic', Cold War-era models and understanding of naval diplomacy.<sup>23</sup> It will contrast the activist, carrier-centred, and coercion-oriented American use in the management of Levantine crises with the reactive, prestige-seeking, and strategically defensive Soviet one.<sup>24</sup> It will contribute to the history of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, one of America's key military and diplomatic tools during the Cold War, but one that also has received little direct attention, by means of an in-depth analysis of its actions off Lebanon in 1958 and 1982-84.<sup>25</sup> It will demonstrate the key role of onshore perceptions in defining the limits of navies as structuring political agents, a role eclipsed in the literature by a quasi-exclusive concern with Superpower naval interactions.<sup>26</sup>

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the Mediterranean since 1945', in Hattendorf, John (Ed.), *Naval Policy and Strategy in the Mediterranean: Past, Present, and Future* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); MccGwire, Michael & McCormick, Gordon, 'Soviet Strategic Aims and Capabilities in the Mediterranean' Parts I & II, *The Adelphi Papers*, 28/229 (1988), pp.14-48. On the Eastern Mediterranean theatre: Dismukes, Bradford & Weiss, Kenneth, *Mare Mosso: The Mediterranean Theatre*, Professional Paper 423, (Alexandria, VA: CNA, 1984); Lewis, Jesse, *The Strategic Balance in the Mediterranean*, (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1976).

<sup>21</sup> The coercive essence of Cold War naval diplomacy is best captured by Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*; Luttwak, *The Political Uses*; and more recently in Rowlands, Kevin, *Naval Diplomacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Routledge, 2019); and Le Mière, Christian, *Maritime Diplomacy in the XXI Century* (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> It is the case of the theoretical productions of Booth, Ken, *Navies and Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 2014 [1977]); Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*; Luttwak, Edward, *The Political Uses of Sea Power* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974); Martin, L.W., *The Sea in Modern Strategy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967).

<sup>23</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, p.131.

<sup>24</sup> The contrast is best understood in: Turner, Stansfield, 'Missions of the U.S. Navy', *Naval War College Review*, 27/2 (1974), pp.2-16; Gorshkov, Sergei, *The Sea Power of the State*, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979); Dismukes, Bradford & McConnell, James, (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Diplomacy* (New York: Pergamon, 1979). For a prudent approach to Soviet naval diplomacy: Ranft, Bryan & Till, Geoffrey, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), pp.219-37. For a more sceptical approach: Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.132-134. See also Chapter Four.

<sup>25</sup> Bruns, Sebastian, 'The U.S. Needs an Official Sixth Fleet History, and the Europeans do too', *CIMSEC*, January 25, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> On the literature's focus on Superpower naval interactions: Goldstein, Lyle & Zuhov, Yuri, 'A Tale of Two Fleets: A Russian Perspective on the 1973 Naval Standoff in the Mediterranean', *Naval War College Review*, 57/2 (2004), pp.27-63; Blechman, Barry & Kaplan, Stephen, 'The Political Use of Military Power in the Mediterranean by the United States and the Soviet Union', *Lo Spettatore Internazionale*, 13/1 (1978) pp.29-66; Wells, Anthony,

It will show how the clash between overwhelming Superpower naval capabilities and deeply entrenched pre-Cold War historical and cultural prejudices played out unexpectedly in favour of the latter.

### 1.1 The Oldest ‘Debatable Ground’<sup>27</sup>.

The suitability of the Levant to study the perceptions of naval diplomacy during the Cold War stems from several considerations. First, the Levant possesses a rich maritime history and culture originating in the first Phoenician ships sailing west to trade and colonise.<sup>28</sup> Modern Levant is a product of naval power that was intensively employed during the Eastern Question (1774-1923). The navies of the Powers decisively intervened in the Greek Independence war (1821-29), sent ‘expeditionary’ forces to Mount-Lebanon, and oversaw its transformation into an autonomous entity (1860-61) - prelude to the future Republic of Lebanon.<sup>29</sup> Western naval power supported the post-First World War Mandates which configured the modern Levantine state system. And it was from the sea that the Powers managed the crises of the Levant during the Cold War.

The second consideration derives from the Levant’s geostrategic position, a land-bridge situated at the intersection of Asia, Africa, and Europe where the lines of communication of the Mediterranean Sea, the Suez Canal, the Persian Gulf, and the continental routes from the Arabian hinterland converge. A narrow coastal strip squeezed between the Mediterranean and a mountain range extending southward from Cilicia to the gates of the Sinai, it is a corridor which constrains the movements of goods and armies between Asia and Africa and exposes

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‘The 1967 June War: Soviet Naval Diplomacy and the Sixth Fleet’, *Professional Paper 284*, (Alexandria, VA: CNA, 1977).

<sup>27</sup> From Alfred Thayer Mahan’s *The Problem of Asia*, cited in Robertson, J. Michael, ‘Alfred Thayer Mahan and the Geopolitics of Asia’, *Comparative Strategy*, 15/4, (1996), pp.353-66.

<sup>28</sup> On the pre-modern maritime history of the Levant: Lambert, Andrew, *Seapower States* (London: Yale University Press, 2018); Abulafia, David, *The Great Sea* (London: Penguin, 2014), Parts I-IV; Meijer, Fik, *A History of Seafaring in the Classical World* (London: Routledge, 2014); Pryor, John, *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649-1571* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Casson, Lionel, *The Ancient Mariners* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>29</sup> This thesis understands ‘expeditionary’ force as the dispatching of naval and amphibious forces poised for onshore projection, including in kinetic mode. This is reflected for the U.S. Marines in Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1970s*, p.xi and in Department of the Navy, *Marine Corps Manual* (Washington, DC, 1980), Sections 1004/1 & 1005/1. On naval aspects of the Eastern Question: Holland, Robert, *Blue-Water Empire* (London: Penguin, 2013); Shenk, Robert, *America’s Black Sea Fleet* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012); Matzke, Rebecca, *Deterrence Through Strength* (University of Nebraska, 2011); Hattendorf, *Naval Strategy and Policy*, Part I; Daly, John, *Russian Seapower and the ‘Eastern Question’, 1827-41*, (London: Macmillan, 1991); Anderson, R.C., *Naval Wars in the Levant, 1559-1853* (Liverpool University Press, 1952).



it to recurrent invasion. Depressions cut across the mountain range and link the coast to the Arabian hinterland. It is a strategic pivot, a 'debatable' area the control of which is critical for any regional or non-regional power.<sup>30</sup> The Levant is part of the '*Christian-Muslim frontier*', a civilisational 'zone of contact' which splits the Islamic realm and fuels the debates around Samuel Huntington's '*clash of civilisations*'.<sup>31</sup> It is situated in equal distance from the Suez Canal, whose north-eastern approaches it controls, and from the Dardanelles Straits - Russia's access to the warm seas - which it outflanks. It is where Tsarist Russia, then the Soviet Union, elected to assert their naval ambitions and challenge Western - mainly British, then American - navies.<sup>32</sup> The Cold War first unfolded around the traditional flashpoint of the Straits, naval diplomacy becoming the first answer to Soviet encroachments in Greece and Turkey with the battleship *USS Missouri* visiting Istanbul and Athens in April 1946 to signal support and commitment.<sup>33</sup> The Levant is part of Nicholas Spykman's '*rimland*' surrounding the Soviet '*heartland*', at the crossroads of Halford Mackinder's '*world island*'; it is the Mediterranean gate to Middle Eastern oil and a potential launching zone for naval strategic attacks against the southwestern populations and industrial centres of the Soviet Union. In 1963, it witnessed the deployments of American ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) and in 1964 of the first nuclear-powered CTF in the Mediterranean.<sup>34</sup> Scholars such as John Gaddis, Geoffrey Sloan, and David Mayers have recognised Mackinder's and Spykman's influence on American policy-

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<sup>30</sup> On the Levant's geostrategic position: Cohen, Saul, *Geopolitics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), Chapter 12; Harris, William, *The Levant* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2003), Chapter I.

<sup>31</sup> Apostolov, Mario, *The Christian-Muslim Frontier* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Huntington, Samuel, *The Clash of Civilizations* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996), Chapters 9 & 10.

<sup>32</sup> On the Tsarist navy in the Eastern Mediterranean: Delanoë, Igor, *La Flotte de la Mer Noire de Catherine II à Vladimir Poutine*, PhD. Thesis, (Nice University, 2016); Lambert, Andrew, *The Crimean War* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), Chapters 1-4; Papastratigakis, Nicholas, *Russian Imperialism and Naval Power* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011), Chapters 1-3; Freller, Thomas, 'In Search of a Mediterranean Base', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 8/1 (2004), pp.1-30; Daly, *Russian Seapower*.

<sup>33</sup> On the 'Missouri Cruise' and the start of the Cold War: Hasanli, Jamil, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis of the Cold War, 1945-1953* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011); Gaddis, John, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (Columbia University Press, 2000); Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*; Bryson, Thomas, *Tars, Turks, and Tankers: The Role of the United States Navy in the Middle East, 1800-1979* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1980); Kuniholm, *The Origins*; Xydis, Stephen, *Greece and the Great Powers, 1944-1947* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963).

<sup>34</sup> On the geopolitical concepts of 'Heartland', the 'World Island' and 'Rimland': Sloan, Geoffrey, *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategic History* (London: Routledge, 2017), Chapter 2; Cohen, *Geopolitics*, Chapter 2; Blacksell, Mark, *Political Geography* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp.137-42; Parker, Geoffrey, *Western Geopolitical Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1985), Chapters 3 & 4; Mackinder, Halford, 'The Geographical Pivot of History', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol.23 (1904), pp.421-37. On the first SSBNs deployed in the region: Dragnich, George, 'The Soviet Union's Quest for Access to Naval Facilities in Egypt Prior to the June War of 1967', in MccGwire et al. (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Policy*, p.252. On the first nuclear CTF: Polmar, Norman et al., *Chronology of the Cold War at Sea* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), p.78 & 84

makers such as George Kennan and on the elaboration of a containment strategy by a maritime Western alliance that propelled navies to the forefront. The establishment of the U.S. Sixth Fleet symbolised this strategy in Levantine waters where, in a pattern reminiscent of earlier Mediterranean history, Soviet land power had to put to sea to confront its naval foe.<sup>35</sup> It is generally agreed upon that the Soviet Union first signalled its maritime ambitions in Levantine waters and deployed its only permanent overseas naval squadron in a forward defensive posture to counter the Sixth Fleet and outflank the American containment policy by seeking bases on Levantine shores. It was in response to the deployment of American aircraft carriers with nuclear capabilities in the Levantine basin that the Soviet 'first salvo' tactic was devised, and it was here that the Soviet squadron deployed the bulk of its forces, sending only small naval formations into the western Mediterranean for intelligence collection and surveillance.<sup>36</sup> The menace of Western SSBNs spurred the Soviet quest for naval facilities in radical nationalist Arab countries. The rise of Arab nationalism and the Arab-Israeli wars justified the deployment, under the guise of crisis management, of a Superpower naval diplomacy unique in its intensity and creativity.<sup>37</sup> Nowhere else did Western and Soviet warships intermingle as closely as off Levantine shores, drifting sometimes dangerously towards all-out war as during the October 1973 War. Earlier Western interest for the Eastern

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<sup>35</sup> On the conceptual origins of the containment and the seapower-land power dialectic: Sloan, *Geopolitics*, p.160; Leffler, Melvyn, 'The Emergence of an American Grand Strategy', in Leffler, Melvin & Westad, Odd Arne, (Ed.), *CHCW*, Volume I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Gaddis, John, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (London: Penguin, 2011), Chapter 10; Grygiel, Jakub, 'The Dilemmas'; Gaddis, John, *Strategies of Containment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.56-7; Gray, Colin, *The Leverage*, Chapter 1; Mayers, David, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.130; Gray, Colin, 'Keeping the Soviets Landlocked: Geostrategy for a Maritime America', *The National Interest*, No.4 (1986), pp.24-36.

<sup>36</sup> On Soviet Mediterranean problematics: Vego, 'Soviet and Russian Strategy'; Roberts, Stephen, 'The Turkish Straits and the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean', *Professional Paper 331*, (Alexandria, VA: CNA, 1982); MccGwire, Michael, 'The Mediterranean and Soviet Naval Interests', *International Journal*, 27/4 (1972), pp.511-27; Blixt, Melvin, 'Russia and the West in the Mediterranean', *Naval War College Review*, 22/10 (1970), pp.48-70; Davis, Benton, 'Soviet Naval Strategy: Mahan and Mackinder Revisited', *Naval War College Review*, 21/7 (1968), pp.1-13. On the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron, the 'first salvo' and anti-SSBN tactics: Monakov, Mikhail, 'The Soviet Presence in the Mediterranean at the Time of the Six Day War' in Ro'i, Yaacov & Morozov, Boris, (Ed.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 War* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2008); Goldstein & Zhukov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets', pp.27-42; Hattendorf, John, (Ed.), *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy, 1977-1986*, Newport Papers, No.19 (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2004), Chapter 2 and Appendix 1.

<sup>37</sup> On Arab Nationalism: Yaqub, Salim, *Containing Arab Nationalism* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Daweesha, Adeed, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). On the Soviet quest for bases in Arab countries: El-Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relation*; Weinland, Robert, 'Land Support for Naval Forces: Egypt and the Soviet Eskadra, 1962-1976', *Survival*, 20/2 (1978), pp.73-9; Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest'.

Mediterranean as a launching area for nuclear attacks against the Soviet Union and as a gate to Middle Eastern oil, was re-asserted in U.S. naval strategic planning with CNO Admiral Elmo Zumwalt's *Project Sixty* (1970). Admiral Stansfield Turner, who led the working groups on *Project Sixty*, released his foundational article concerning the 'Missions of the U.S. Navy' a few months after the October 1973 U.S.-Soviet naval stand-off and the oil crisis stemming from the Arab-Israeli war, highlighting the impact of the Levant and Middle East on U.S. naval thinking.<sup>38</sup>

These dynamics are better visualised in the comparative levels of 'U.S. naval crisis response activity' collected by Adam Siegel.<sup>39</sup> Between 1946 and 1990, the wider Levant and its Middle Eastern hinterland witnessed 76 U.S. naval crisis-related deployments (33% of the total), compared with 52 for the Caribbean area (25%), 40 for the Western Pacific (19%), 23 for the Indian Ocean (11%), and 11 for the East Atlantic (5%).<sup>40</sup> If one considers the force structures employed, it could be inferred that the presence of carriers and/or amphibious forces points not only at the intensity of a crisis, but also at the level of U.S. commitment. In the case of the Levant/Middle East, 64% of incidents involved at least one carrier while 56% involved amphibious forces, always simultaneously with carriers. The proportions fall to respectively 27% and 50% for the Caribbean, 42% and 35% for the Western Pacific, and 50% and less than 1% for the Eastern Atlantic almost solely related to the different Berlin crises (1948, 1958-59, 1961) which triggered naval responses in the Mediterranean and the Northern Atlantic.<sup>41</sup> As will be discussed, a significant part of the Atlantic Second Fleet's assets were diverted to the Mediterranean Sixth Fleet, the instrument of America's crisis diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean. In terms of significant power projection ashore, Lebanon witnesses the deployment of Marines and ground forces twice in 15 years (1958 and 1982-84). Only three other operations of comparable size occurred in the Cold War: Laos-related deterrent positioning of Marines and U.S Army troops in Thailand with naval support (1962), the Dominican Republic landing (1965), and Grenada (1983) - only the latter involving direct kinetic action by the landing forces and their naval support. If major naval diplomatic actions

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<sup>38</sup> *Project Sixty*, in Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1970s*, pp.1-31; Turner, 'Missions of the U.S. Navy'.

<sup>39</sup> Siegel, Adam, *Use of Naval Forces in the Post-War Era*, Naval History and Heritage Command (2020). It excludes humanitarian interventions, policing, and incidents at sea.

<sup>40</sup> Even if it witnessed, during the Cuban missile crisis, the largest naval deployment of all the global conflict, a 'relevance discount' should be applied to the Caribbean operations as many of them owed as much to 'Monroe Doctrine' considerations than to the Cold War.

<sup>41</sup> Siegel, *Use of Naval Forces*.

in different areas rarely coincide in time or are strategically related, Grenada and Lebanon in 1983 became linked in more than one dimension. The two operations 'shared' naval assets with the *Independence* CTF being briefly diverted from its Lebanese destination to support the Grenada action.<sup>42</sup> Both operations were kinetic with Lebanon being far more violent and lethal (273 U.S. personnel killed in Lebanon compared to 17 in Grenada), longer in its duration, and more complex and dynamic in its involvement of multiple players.<sup>43</sup> Both were related to the Reagan's administration anti-Communist drive with Soviet-backed Syria seen through the same lens as Maurice Bishop's Cuban-supported regime. But the most conspicuous link was that the decision to intervene in Grenada was taken two days after the bombing of the Marines' barracks in Beirut. Prominent commentators and parts of the U.S. public concluded that the sudden invasion of Grenada aimed at diverting attention away from the Lebanese tragedy.<sup>44</sup>

A third consideration is that the Levant is a zone of conflict, a result of its physical and human fragmentation. It is a land of ethno-religious minorities, which has deep geopolitical implications and explains the recurrent deployment of naval power throughout Levantine modern history.<sup>45</sup> The issue acquired its geopolitical dimension with the Capitulations which created opportunities for Levantine Christians to seek European protection, a development which underpinned the rise of the Eastern Question. The resulting emancipation of Ottoman Christian subjects and the upheavals affecting the Ottoman structures of power, led to violent crises and massacres of Christians which triggered an unprecedented deployment of gunboat diplomacy by the Powers.<sup>46</sup> The trend continued into the twentieth century following the structuring under French Mandate of Lebanon and Syria, two polities integrating a significant

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<sup>42</sup> Siegel, *Use of Naval Forces*.

<sup>43</sup> 'Accounting for the Fallen', *Beirut Veterans of America* website.

<sup>44</sup> Luconi, Stefano, 'Operation Urgent Fury', in Guderzo, Max et al., *The Globalization of the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.40; NYT, October 30, 1983.

<sup>45</sup> On minorities in Islam and in the Levant: Nga Longva, Anh & Roald, Anne-Sophie (Ed.), *Religious Minorities in the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Masters, Bruce, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); De Planhol, Xavier, *Minorités en Islam: Géographie Politique et Sociale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997); Chabry, Laurent & Chabry, Annie, *Politique et Minorités au Proche-Orient* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1974); Hourani, Albert, *Minorities in the Arab World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).

<sup>46</sup> Heraclides, Alexis & Dialla, Ada, *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Bouyrat, *La France*, Part V; Rodogno, Davide, *Against Massacre* (Princeton University Press, 2012), Chapter Four; Simms, Brendan & Trim, D.J.B., *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), Chapter VII; Khalaf, Samir, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon* (Columbia University Press, 2005); Louvier, Patrick, 'La Marine Française et la Sécurité des Chrétiens du Levant', *Chronique d'Histoire Maritime*, No.57-8 (2005).

number of ethno-religious minorities, and the political re-emergence under British mandatory auspices of the Jewish minority with the creation of the State of Israel.<sup>47</sup>

For the region's Sunni Muslim majority historically associated with the dominant Islamic state, European intrusion represented a political and cultural challenge and contributed to the emergence of Islamic revivalism and Arab nationalism. For them, the British control of Egypt following the 1882 naval intervention and the establishment of the Mandates system were made possible by Western maritime dominance. Islamic instinctive defiance against seafaring and seafarers reinforced the perception that seapower had been the malevolent vehicle of Western colonialism.<sup>48</sup> This perception fed into the anti-imperialist discourse of Nasserist Arab nationalism, giving rise to a specific type of anti-Western naval power literature and propaganda, a fact which would be leveraged by the Soviet Union for its own strategic and naval ambitions.<sup>49</sup>

With its highly fragmented landscape and human distribution, Lebanon summarises the Levant. Its principal mountain range - Mount Lebanon - is refuge to staunchly independent communities such as the Christian Maronites and the Muslim heterodox Druse and Shiites. It is a land of minorities *par excellence* where a dozen Christian denominations coexist with four Muslim sects and a small Jewish community.<sup>50</sup> This minority structure is endowed with a special psyche. Beginning with the Crusades, the establishment of strong links with the West by the Maronites gave Mount Lebanon its geopolitical identity. Contrary to the pattern of isolation typical to mountain-refuges, Mount Lebanon adopted a physical, emotional, political, and economic orientation toward the sea and beyond, toward Europe.<sup>51</sup> The interactions between the dynamics of the Eastern Question and the defensive strategies of the Lebanese minorities gave rise to a special diplomatic, political, and psychological model. The navies of the Powers intervened to stop massacres, offer relief, but also develop trade

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<sup>47</sup> On minorities in Lebanon and Syria: White, Benjamin, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Zamir, Meir, *Lebanon's Quest* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997); Khoury, Philip, *Syria and the French Mandate* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987); Zamir, Meir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1985); Hourani, Albert, *Syria and Lebanon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).

<sup>48</sup> On Islam's complex relation with the sea: De Planhol, Xavier, *L'Islam et la Mer* (Paris: Perrin, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> For a case study of this literature see Chapter 4.

<sup>50</sup> On Lebanon, its geography and human structure: Salibi, Kamal, *A House of Many Mansions* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988); Harris, *The Levant*, Chapters 1-3; Rondot, Pierre, 'Les Structures Socio-Politiques de la Nation Libanaise', *Revue Française de Sciences Politiques*, 4 /1 (1954), pp.80-104; Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World*, Chapter 6.

<sup>51</sup> Sanlaville, Paul, 'La Personnalité Géographique du Liban', *Géocarrefour*, 44 /4 (1969), pp.375-94.

and promote education, creating a virtuous cycle of protection, emancipation, and promotion.<sup>52</sup> It also entrenched in Christian minorities' collective memories a habit of counting on Western naval interventions to save them or bail them out. The creation of modern Greater Lebanon with French support anchored this propensity to look westward to the sea for succour. For these mountain people, the movement toward the sea was physical as much as mythical. First, it consisted in a significant mountain-to-coast migration but also in a massive emigration overseas. Second, it took the shape of the construction of a Phoenician identity, a re-appropriation of Lebanon's Antiquity which enhanced their organic link with the sea and the West.<sup>53</sup> Facing this Lebanist-Phoenicianist block, an Arabist one, essentially Muslim-based, adopted a more negative attitude vis-à-vis Western seapower. Many Lebanese Muslims initially rejected being integrated into Greater Lebanon considered as a Western-imposed partition of a mythicised Greater Syria and where Christians held political pre-eminence. They resented Western seaborne promotion of the Maronites. During the Cold War, this block was sensitive to transnational ideologies and causes such as Nasserism and the Palestinian struggle, a fact that facilitated the two Lebanese 'civil' wars of 1958 and 1975-90 which led to two significant Western naval interventions seen by many Christians as responses to their appeals for help. In reaction, the Arabists developed their own hostile reading of the two U.S.-led interventions, linking them to past naval expeditions in favour of the Christians, from the Crusades to the Eastern Question.<sup>54</sup>

## 1.2 The Cold War, Naval Diplomacy, and the Crises of the Levant

Despite the Levant's centrality to the employment of naval power during the Cold War and the deep impact seapower had on its political history during the conflict, to date there has been no comprehensive study of these interrelated dynamics. Rather, four main bodies of

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<sup>52</sup> Bouyrat, *La France*, pp.115-67 & 478-505; Khalaf, Samir, *Protestant Missionaries in the Levant* (London: Routledge, 2012); Makdissi, Ussama, *Artillery of Heaven* (Cornell University Press, 2008); Burrows, Mathew, "Mission Civilisatrice': French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914", *The Historical Journal*, Vol.29, No.1, (1986), pp.109-35.

<sup>53</sup> Kaufman, Asher, *Reviving Phoenicia* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014); Meouchy, Nadine et al.,(Ed.), *British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp.199-202; Firro, Kais, *Inventing Lebanon*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Hakim, Carol, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1982* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); Salameh, Franck, *Language, Memory and Identity in the Middle East* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010); Hitti, Philip, *History of Lebanon* (in Arabic) (Beirut: Dar Al-Thaqafa, 1985).

<sup>54</sup> On the two Lebanese cultural blocks: Boustani, Fouad-Ephrem, *Research on Lebanon and the Lebanese* (in Arabic) (Beirut: Sa'ér El-Mashreq, 2018); Yazbeck, Youssef, *The Historical Roots of the Lebanese War* (in Arabic), (Beirut: Naufal, 1993); Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, Chapter 7.

literature each address a distinct part of the problem – the definition of naval diplomacy, the role of navies during the Cold War, the use of coercive diplomacy during the conflict and its general history, and the history of the Levantine crises and their interaction with naval power.

The conceptual foundations of naval diplomacy are found in the Cold War-era works of civilian and military writers such as L.W. Martin, James Cable, Edward Luttwak, Ken Booth, U.S. Admiral Stansfield Turner, and Soviet Admiral Sergei Gorshkov.<sup>55</sup> Following the Cold War, these foundations were re-visited, tested, and modernised by Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, Christian Le Mière, and Kevin Rowlands.<sup>56</sup> Foremost among the Cold War writers, Cable, a British diplomat, defines naval diplomacy - which he insists on calling 'gunboat diplomacy' - as '*the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war...*', capturing the essentially coercive nature of Cold War naval diplomacy.<sup>57</sup> Cable defines the '*principles*' of naval diplomacy as being the '*definitive*', '*purposeful*', '*catalytic*', and '*expressive*' modes. He illustrates each of these categories with examples including Levantine situations such as the 1958 American landing in Lebanon, a '*catalytic*' case, and the U.S.-Soviet naval standoff during the October 1973 War, a '*purposeful*' one.<sup>58</sup> The use of Levantine illustrative examples is dominant in Luttwak and Booth's works. Luttwak's concept of *suasion*, the reaction of the recipient of naval diplomacy actions after they were filtered by this recipient's perceptions, is almost exclusively based on Levantine situations, from the '*latent suasion*' resulting from the deployment of the Sixth Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean to the '*active supportive suasion*' deriving from the '*symbolic ship*' effect of the battleship *USS Missouri* visit to Istanbul in April 1946.<sup>59</sup> Luttwak, followed by Booth who extensively quoted him, insisted on the importance of perceptions in naval diplomacy, a key factor of unpredictability in the results of *suasion*, providing an illustration of their distortive impact in the Egyptian reserved attitudes toward Soviet supportive *suasion*.<sup>60</sup> The three authors stopped short of in-depth case studies which

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<sup>55</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*; Martin, *The Sea*; Luttwak, *The Political Uses*; Booth, *Navies and Foreign*; Turner, 'Missions of the U.S. Navy'; Gorshkov, *The Sea Power*.

<sup>56</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*; Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*; Coutau-Bégarie, Hervé, *Le Meilleur des Ambassadeurs*, (Paris: Economica, 2010).

<sup>57</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.14; Cable's other contributions are Cable, James, *The Political Influence of Naval Force in History*, (London: MacMillan, 1998) & Cable, James, *Diplomacy at Sea*, (London: MacMillan, 1985) & Cable, James, *Navies in Violent Peace* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989).

<sup>58</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.53-61 & 42-6.

<sup>59</sup> Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, Chapter I.

<sup>60</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign*, pp.28-33; Luttwak, Edward, *American Naval Power in the Mediterranean*, in three parts, Centre of Advanced Research, (Newport: RI: U.S. Naval War College, 1975) & Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, Chapter I.

would have embraced the variations in naval diplomacy actions and integrated their perceptions ashore. Only the third edition of Cable's book was published late enough to contain brief allusions to the U.S.-led operation in 1982-84.<sup>61</sup>

Admiral Turner's *Missions of the U.S. Navy* encapsulates the U.S. Navy's conceptual approach to naval diplomacy.<sup>62</sup> Turner establishes a nomenclature of naval missions where 'naval presence', is defined as 'the uses of naval forces, short of war, to achieve political objectives'. Turner's approach to 'presence' is coercive, using actions such as 'amphibious assault', 'air attack', 'bombardment', or 'exposure through reconnaissance' (an action which would be heavily used in Lebanon in 1958 and 1982-84). But Turner's programmatic article lacked historical or contemporaneous examples of 'presence' operations. Conversely, in a series of articles published in the West under the title *Navies in War and Peace* and in a book titled *The Sea Power of the State*, the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet navy, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, articulated a comprehensive Soviet vision of seapower, using historical digressions to demonstrate its importance and to highlight past Russian naval glory principally centred on the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>63</sup> His conceptions of the uses of naval power in peacetime 'radically differ from those of the imperialist powers' and are less apparently coercive than Turner's or Cable's. Nevertheless, his declared reliance on port visits and prestige did not exclude a coercive approach when he writes that the 'Soviet navy is an instrument for cutting short the aggressive endeavours of imperialism'.<sup>64</sup> For Gorshkov, this anti-imperialist mission is best illustrated in the Eastern Mediterranean, a region divided between countries resisting imperialism and others who are aligned with it. Gorshkov does not undertake detailed analysis of contemporaneous Levantine crises, but the place he devotes to the wider Levant as the theatre where Russian - then Soviet - naval power was deployed to check the threat of the maritime powers, confirms the relevance of this region for the study of Cold War naval diplomacy.

If, among the Cold War theoreticians, only Booth did use the expression 'naval diplomacy', the term becomes the norm in the recent works of Rowlands, Le Mière, and

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<sup>61</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.61, 97 & 115.

<sup>62</sup> Turner, 'Missions of the U.S. Navy'.

<sup>63</sup> Gorshkov, *The Sea Power*, pp.74-81; Gorshkov, Sergei, 'Navies in War and Peace', in *Proceedings*, 100/1-10 (1974).

<sup>64</sup> Gorshkov, *The Sea Power*, pp.251-2.



Coutau-Bégarie.<sup>65</sup> The main thrust of Rowlands' contribution consists in testing the suitability of the model of naval diplomacy inherited from the Cold War - which he characterises as essentially coercive, state-centric, and dualistic – in a post-modern world where soft power and coalition-diplomacy have emerged as new diplomatic categories. Applying a quantitative analysis built around Cable's principles, he concludes that the Cold War model cannot capture the whole spectrum of today's naval diplomatic interactions and argues for a new model of naval diplomacy.<sup>66</sup> His views are broadly shared by Le Mière who prefers the expression '*maritime diplomacy*' to dampen the coercive undertone of the 'naval' element and to reflect post-modern usages of navies.<sup>67</sup> Equally, Coutau-Bégarie suggests adapting Cable's categories to integrate post-modern non-coercive uses of maritime assets other than navies.<sup>68</sup>

The Cold War-era theoreticians broadly share a coercive approach to naval diplomacy. Their writings resonate with the contemporaneous concepts of deterrence and coercive diplomacy inaugurated by Thomas Schelling and continued in the works of Alexander George and, in the immediate post-Cold War years, of Robert Pape and Lawrence Freedman.<sup>69</sup> Luttwak considered the principles of deterrence as universal and applicable to naval diplomacy.<sup>70</sup> He illustrated his approach with a short analysis, based on deterrence theory, of the October 1967 sinking of the Israeli destroyer *Eilat* by Soviet-supplied Egyptian torpedo boats. He considered the role of cultural differences between Egyptians and Israelis in their respective judgments of the relative-value of assets on which they based their decisions.<sup>71</sup> Despite many Levantine crises witnessing warships engaged in Schelling's '*diplomacy of violence*' in a strategic context delimited by George's '*asymmetric motivations*', no extensive case studies of naval diplomacy during the Cold War using the tools of coercive and

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<sup>65</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*; Till, Geoffrey, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2013); Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*; Widen, J.J., 'Naval Diplomacy: A Theoretical Approach', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 22/4 (2011), pp.715-33; Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Meilleur*; Booth, *Navies and Foreign*, Chapter 2.

<sup>66</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, see particularly Chapter 2, Conclusion & Appendix.

<sup>67</sup> Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*, Chapters 1 & 5.

<sup>68</sup> Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Meilleur*, Chapters 2 & 3.

<sup>69</sup> Schelling, Thomas, *Arms and Influence* (London: Yale University Press, 1966); Freedman, Lawrence (Ed.), *Strategic Coercion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Pape, Robert, 'Coercion and Military Strategy: Why Denial Works and Punishment Doesn't', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 15/4 (1992), pp.423-75; George, Alexander et al. (Ed.), *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1971); George, Alexander, *Forceful persuasion* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1991).

<sup>70</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, pp.12-3,24,29 & 130; Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*, p.79; Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, p.18.

<sup>71</sup> Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, pp.19-22.

deterrence diplomacy, and integrating such notions as cultural differences, have been identified by this thesis.<sup>72</sup>

The literature concerning the role of navies during the Cold War is characterised by its extensive interest in the rise of Soviet seapower.<sup>73</sup> Some of the most distinguished authors, such as James McConnell and Michael MccGwire, were Sovietologists before becoming naval writers. The prevalence of the Soviet dimension in Cold War naval studies led Cable to devote a full chapter in the third edition of his *Gunboat Diplomacy* to a post-Cold War naval world 'In the absence of the Soviet Union'.<sup>74</sup> The fact that the Soviets had their only permanently forward squadron in the Mediterranean where its anti-carrier formations trailed the Sixth Fleet explains the outsized place devoted to the Eastern Mediterranean by this body of literature in its analyses of Soviet naval power.<sup>75</sup> Soviet influence projection in the Third World and the realisation that the U.S.S.R. sought free access to bases in the Levant put the spotlight on Soviet naval diplomacy. While Soviet efforts to gain access to Egyptian naval facilities were scrutinised, special attention was devoted to a predominantly fleet-to-fleet Superpower naval diplomacy, with Soviet naval diplomacy promoted as a field of study in Dismuke's and McConnell's *Soviet Naval Diplomacy* where Superpower interactions during the 1967 and

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<sup>72</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p.1; George, *Forceful Persuasion*, p.13.

<sup>73</sup> On Soviet naval strategy: Yegorova, Natalia, 'Stalin's Conception of Maritime Power', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28/2 (2005), pp.157-86; Hattendorf, *The Evolution*, Chapter 2 & Appendix 1; Hauner, Milan, 'Stalin's Big-Fleet Program', *Naval War College Review*, 57/2 (2004), pp.87-120; Gillette, Philip & Willard, Franck (Ed.), *The Sources of Soviet Naval Conduct* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990); Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*; Herrick, Robert, *Soviet Naval Theory and Policy* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1988); MccGwire, Michael, 'Naval Power and Soviet Global Strategy' in Miller, Steven et al, (Ed.), *Naval Strategy and National Security* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp.115-73; Polmar, Norman, *Guide to the Soviet Navy*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1986); Office of the CNO, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Series from 1975 to 1991); MccGwire, Michael, 'The Rationale for the Development of Soviet Seapower', *Proceedings*, 6/5 (1980), pp.155-83; MccGwire, Michael, 'Naval Power and Soviet Global Strategy', *International Security*, 3/4 (1979), pp.134-89; George, James (Ed.), *Problems of Sea Power as we Approach the Twenty First Century* (Washington D.C: American Enterprise Institute, 1979); MccGwire, Michael & McDonnell, John, (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Influence* (New York: Praeger, 1977); Ra'anani, Uri, 'The Soviet View of Navies in Peacetime', *Naval War College Review*, 29/3 (1976), pp.30-8; Wegener, Edward, *The Soviet Naval Offensive* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1975); MccGwire, Michael et al., (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1975).

On Admiral Gorshkov: Rowlands, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Gorshkov*; Polmar, Norman et al., *Admiral Gorshkov: The Man Who Challenged the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019); Chernyavskii, Sergei, 'The Era of Gorshkov: Triumph and Contradictions', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28/2 (2005), pp.281-308; Kurth, Ronald, 'Gorshkov's Gambit', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28/2 (2005), pp.261-80; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, pp.78-88; Chipman, Donald, 'Admiral Gorshkov and the Soviet Navy', *Air University Review*, 33/5 (July-August 1982); McConnell, James, 'The Gorshkov Articles' in MccGwire et al. (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Influence*, pp.565-617; Weinland, Robert, 'Admiral Gorshkov's "Navies in War and Peace"', in MccGwire et al., (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Policy*.

<sup>74</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, Chapter 5.

<sup>75</sup> See for example: Vego, 'Soviet and Russian Strategy'; MccGwire & McCormick, 'Soviet Strategic Aims'; Dismukes & Weiss, *Mare Mosso*; Lewis, *The Strategic Balance*.

1973 Arab-Israeli wars and the 1970 Jordanian crisis were analysed, and Superpower naval diplomacy tentatively codified in what McConnell called '*The rules of the game*'.<sup>76</sup> This attempt at codification of what became a new theatre for Détente was legalised in the May 1972 Incidents at Sea Agreement between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. which aimed at avoiding escalatory behaviour between the two countries' naval units.<sup>77</sup> The literature's concentration on the Soviet navy and on its confrontations with the Sixth Fleet overlooked most of the naval diplomacy which preceded the Soviet deployment to the Mediterranean, while predating the 1982-84 action in Lebanon.

There are fewer Cold War-era publications concerning the U.S. Navy and the Royal Navy than the ones about Soviet seapower, even if both navies are systematically mentioned in the literature on Superpower naval diplomacy. To this, one could add a few publications concerned with the way successive U.S. administrations managed international crises using naval power and which offer detailed analysis of the chain-of-command and the Sixth Fleet behaviour during the June 1967 War.<sup>78</sup> After the Cold War, the de-classification of state archives enabled a fresh look at Superpower naval diplomacy during major crises such as the June 1967 War and the naval standoff of October 1973.<sup>79</sup>

A source specifically devoted to the U.S. Navy, its naval diplomacy, and to the Sixth Fleet, consists of articles in the *Naval War College Review* and in the U.S. Naval Institute's

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<sup>76</sup> On the Soviet quest for access to Egyptian facilities: Weinland, 'Land Support', pp.73-9, Rubinstein, 'The Soviet-Egyptian Influence'; Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest'.

On fleet-to-fleet naval diplomacy: Roberts, Stephen, *Superpower Naval Crisis Management in the Mediterranean*, Professional Paper 317 (Alexandria, MD: CNA, 1981); Roberts, Stephen, 'Superpower Naval Confrontations', in Dismukes & McConnell, *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*; Luttwak, Edward & Weinland, Robert, *Sea Power in the Mediterranean* (London: Sage, 1979); Blechman & Kaplan, 'The Political Use'; Weinland, Robert, *Superpower Naval Diplomacy in the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, Professional Paper 221, (Alexandria, MD: CNA, 1978); Watson, Bruce, 'Problems in the Mediterranean Sea as We Approach the Twenty-First Century', in George, *Problems of Sea Power*; Wells, Anthony, 'The 1967 June War'; McConnell, James, 'The "Rules of the Game": A Theory on the Practice of Superpower Naval Diplomacy', in Dismukes & McConnell, *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*.

<sup>77</sup> Winkler, David, *Incidents at Sea*, (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 2017).

<sup>78</sup> Howe, Jonathan, *Multicrisis*, (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1971), Chapter II; Bouchard, Joseph, *Command in Crisis: Four Case Studies*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

<sup>79</sup> Wells, Anthony, *A Tale of Two Navies* (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 2017), Chapter 4; Goldstein & Zuhov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets'.

*Proceedings*, in papers for the CNA, in academic theses, and memoirs.<sup>80</sup> The recently released memoirs of Rear Admiral Philip Dur shed additional light on the Sixth Fleet.<sup>81</sup>

Interest has been devoted to American naval diplomacy during the Truman Administration's actions between 1946 and 1950 to check Soviet encroachments in Turkey, Greece and the wider Levant through the deployment of the *Missouri*, of a then carrier-centred naval diplomacy, and through the creation of the Sixth Fleet. These pivotal years at the outset of the Cold War are inseparable from naval power, as witnessed by the developments devoted to the latter in naval as well as non-naval writings where the perceptions of Western naval diplomacy in Greece and Turkey are examined and its impact on Greeks, Turks, and Soviets, but also Yugoslavs or Lebanese, evaluated.<sup>82</sup> The growing American realisation of the importance of the Mediterranean theatre in the context of receding British power, and the resulting debates and iterative decision-making which led to the creation of the Sixth Fleet are also discussed in writings about the U.S. Navy and its British counterpart with a focus on the domestic political and administrative processes.<sup>83</sup> The key role of the Eastern Mediterranean and of naval power for the prosecution of World War III is highlighted in works on Allied planning which started with the *Pincher* series of war plans in 1946.<sup>84</sup>

Coercive naval diplomacy constitutes the essential part of a literature concerned with the diplomacy of '*force without war*' – fostered by the Superpowers' preoccupation with limited wars and crisis management - to preserve the global balance of power and avoid a

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<sup>80</sup> Theses: Pricolo, Dennis, *Naval Presence and Cold War Foreign policy: A Study of the Decision to Station the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the Mediterranean, 1945-58* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Academy, 1978); Dur, Philip, *The Sixth Fleet: A Case Study of Institutionalised Naval Presence, 1946-68* (Annapolis, MD: Naval War College, 1975). CNA papers: Dismukes & Weiss, *Mare Mosso*; Wilson, Desmond, *The U.S. Sixth Fleet and the Conventional Defense of Europe*, Professional Paper 160, (Arlington, VA: CNA, 1976). Professional articles: Freedman, Norman, 'The Sixth Fleet at Forty', *Proceedings*, 113/5 (1987), pp.151-61; Deutermann, P.T., 'Requiem for the Sixth Fleet?', *Proceedings*, 108/9 (1982), pp.47-9; Breemer, Jan, 'De-Committing the Sixth Fleet', *Naval War College Review*, 35/6 (1982), pp.27-32; Dur, Philip, 'The U.S. Sixth Fleet: Search for Consensus', *Proceedings*, 100/6 (1974), pp.19-23; Kidd, Isaac, 'View from the Bridge of the Sixth Fleet Flagship', *Proceedings*, 98/2 (1972), pp.18-29; Xydis, 'The Genesis of the Sixth Fleet'; Hessler, William, 'Sixth Fleet: Beefed up for a Bigger Job', *Proceedings*, 84/8 (1958), pp.23-30. Memoirs: Holloway, James III, *Aircraft Carriers at War*, (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute press, 2007); Zumwalt, Elmo, *On Watch*, (New York: Quadrangle, 1976).

<sup>81</sup> Dur, Philip, *Between Land and Sea* (Austin, TX: Lioncrest, 2022).

<sup>82</sup> Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis*; Bryson, *Tars, Turks*; Kuniholm, *The Origins*; Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*; Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers*.

<sup>83</sup> Barlow, Jeffrey, *From Hot War to Cold* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), Chapters 8 & 15; Baer, *One Hundred years*, Part II; Grove, Eric, *Vanguard to Trident* (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 1987).

<sup>84</sup> Cohen, Michael, *Fighting World War III from the Middle East, 1945-1954* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); Cohen, Michael, *Strategy and Politics in the Middle East, 1954-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 2005).

spiral to general war. Stephen Blechman and Barry Kaplan presented two vanguard contributions to this field of research. They based their studies of the employment of force, short of war, by each of the Superpower on a quantitative analysis of interventions, of the force structures deployed, and of the eventual interactions between the two Superpowers. Case studies, mostly drawn from the Levant, were done. The impact of naval diplomacy ashore was briefly evaluated, but the priority therein given to a Superpower-centred approach prevented a deeper study of the inner historical and cultural workings of local perceptions and of their distortive effects on the dialectics of influence.<sup>85</sup> Blechman's and Kaplan's works were updated and expanded at the end of the Cold War by Adam Siegel, showing that naval power was the preferred tool for U.S. crisis management interventions while the Mediterranean, and especially its Eastern basin, witnessed the highest occurrences of naval interventions during the Cold War.<sup>86</sup> However, another study of the employment of U.S. Marines during the Cold War devotes little place to Levantine interventions such as the 1958 landing in Lebanon, and even less to the 1982-84 Marines' deployment in Beirut.<sup>87</sup>

The Reagan era witnessed fewer writings about naval diplomacy and the Soviet navy. The articulation of the U.S Maritime Strategy shifted the focus away from the tranquil pace of Superpower naval interactions which followed the October 1973 standoff, towards a tense atmosphere where American forces would contest heavily defended Soviet SSBN bastions.<sup>88</sup> This primacy of offence in the Maritime Strategy, with U.S. concentrations in the Western Pacific, Northern Atlantic, and Eastern Mediterranean, would be briefly disrupted in the Levant by the American engagement in Lebanon (1982-84). In his *Command of the Seas*, former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman devotes a full chapter to the episode where he criticises the administration's incapacity to fully leverage the naval power available for coercive diplomacy. But his analysis privileged technical aspects such as the use of naval guns

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<sup>85</sup> Blechman, Barry & Kaplan, Stephen, (Ed.), *Force Without War: U.S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1978); Kaplan, Stephen, (Ed.), *Diplomacy of Power: Soviet Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1981). See also: Zelikow, Philp, 'Force Without War, 1975-1982', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 7/1 (1984), pp.27-54.

<sup>86</sup> Siegel, Adam, *Use of Naval Forces in the Post-War Era*, Naval History and Heritage Command (2020).

<sup>87</sup> Alexander, Joseph & Bartlett, Merrill, *Sea Soldiers in the Cold War* (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 1995).

<sup>88</sup> Hattendorf, John & Schwarz, Peter, (Ed.), *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1980s*, Newport Papers 33, (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2008); 'The Maritime Strategy', *Proceedings*, Special Supplement, 112/1 (1986).

instead of naval air and did not integrate their interactions with the critical onshore dimension of the theatre.<sup>89</sup>

When scholars and analysts started reflecting on the Cold War, they naturally focused on the dualistic struggle between the two ideological blocks and on its most obvious geographical projection – Europe - and military translation - nuclear deterrence. Naval matters and Levantine crises were not objects of primary focus and the identification of naval diplomacy as such in its relationship with the global conflict was generally overlooked. John Gaddis devotes passing attention to naval matters even when he analyses the start of containment in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Levantine conflicts are only mentioned by him as parts of a more general analytical framework.<sup>90</sup> The *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, one of the most important histories, devotes a single chapter to the Middle East and overlooks naval matters even with reference to the Mediterranean.<sup>91</sup>

On another level, the Levant and the Middle East attracted interest as the regional crises merged with the global conflict. Starting from 1946, a succession of crises mobilised Superpower attention. Key in structuring the strategic landscape in the Eastern Mediterranean were the Arab-Israeli conflict, the repeated Syrian crises, the Jordanian and Lebanese convulsions, and the clash of Nasserism with the West magnified in the Suez expedition. A disparate body of literature focused on political and diplomatic issues, including studies of individual countries, of regional problematics, and of the respective Superpowers relations with the region. Though the writings are dominated by the region's recurrent crises, a selective approach reveals only rare mentions of the naval factor. References to naval diplomacy are diluted in onshore diplomatic analyses, and local interactions with seapower

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<sup>89</sup> Lehman, John, *Command of the Seas* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), Chapter 10; Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, p.93; Wilson, George, *Super Carrier* (New York: MacMillan, 1988), Chapter 14.

<sup>90</sup> Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 44 & 61; Gaddis: *The United States*, p.336. Gaddis' *We Now Know*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) ignores naval matters in the Third World, see Chapter 6. Other publications with the same lacunae: Sargent, Daniel, *A Superpower Transformed*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Yaqub, Salim, 'The Cold War in the Middle East', in McMahon, Robert, (Ed.), *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Zanchetta, Barbara, *The Transformation of American International Power During the 1970s* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); Westad, Odd Arne, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); Zubok, Vladislav, *A Failed Empire* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Crockatt, Richard, *The Fifty Years War* (Routledge, 1994). Leffler, Melvyn does mention the *USS Missouri* in *A Preponderance of Power* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp.121-5. Naval aspects are mentioned in Guderzo, Max & Magnato, Bruna (Ed.), *The Globalisation of the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2010), Chapters 3 & 5.

<sup>91</sup> Little, Douglas, 'The Cold War in the Middle East: Suez Crisis to Camp David Accords' & Di Nolfo, Ennio, 'The Cold War and the Transformation of the Mediterranean, 1960-1975', in Leffler & Westad, (Ed.), *CHCW*, Volume II.

are rarely and briefly considered. For example, Patrick Seale's classic *The Struggle for Syria* devotes less than ten lines to the U.S. and Soviet naval deployments during the October 1957 crisis.<sup>92</sup> A few exceptions stand out, offering some expanded descriptions of the naval dimension during the 1956 Suez crisis, the 1958 U.S. intervention in Lebanon, and of the American-Soviet naval standoff of October 1973, but remain fundamentally works of general diplomatic history.<sup>93</sup> Lawrence Freedman devotes a full chapter to the 1982-84 American intervention in Lebanon in his work on U.S. involvement in the Middle East. Freedman dives into strategic and diplomatic analyses of the intervention in which he highlights the centrality of coercive diplomacy but ignores its naval translation.<sup>94</sup>

The interactions of Superpower naval diplomacy with Levantine polities and their effects on their organisation and stability are illustrated in a few publications which analyse the imbrication of Soviet naval ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean with Egyptian politics and which draw on Egyptian primary sources.<sup>95</sup> The Soviet quest for access to Egyptian bases aimed at providing the Eskadra with repair and replenishment facilities, but also at building an integrated naval-air presence to outflank the Sixth Fleet and the European Southern theatre. The Soviet role in triggering the June 1967 War, the concurrent establishment of the

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<sup>92</sup> Seale, Patrick, *The Struggle for Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987 (1965)), Chapter 21. See also: Smith, Simon, *Reassessing Suez* (London: Routledge, 2016); Lesch, David, *Syria and the United States* (London: Routledge, 2019); Heller, Joseph, *The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1968* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Lutz Hupp, Clea, *The United States and Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Rathmell, Andrew, *Secret War in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Daigle, Craig, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); Smith, Simon, *Ending Empire in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 2012); Katz, Mark, *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (London: Routledge, 2011); Blackwell, Stephen, *British Military Intervention and the Struggle for Jordan* (London: Routledge, 2009); Ashton, Nigel, (Ed.), *The Cold War in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 2007); James, Laura, *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006); Quandt, William, *Peace Process* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005); Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*; McNamara, Robert, *Britain, Nasser, and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952-1977* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Israelyan, Victor, *Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1995); Efrat, Moshe & Bercovitch, Jacob, (Ed.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 1991); Taylor, Alan, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991); Karsh, Efraim, *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Assad Years* (London: Routledge, 1988); Marantz, Paul & Steinberg, Blema, (Ed.), *Superpower Involvement in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview, 1985); Freedman, Thomas, (Ed.), *The Middle East Since Camp David* (Boulder: Westview, 1984); Freedman, Thomas, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970* (New York, Praeger, 1982); Golan, Galia, *Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>93</sup> Hahn, Peter, *Caught in the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Lebow, Richard et al, (Ed.), *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), Part II; Divine, Robert, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), Chapter 3.

<sup>94</sup> Freedman, Lawrence, *A Choice of Enemies* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), Chapter 7.

<sup>95</sup> El-Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*; Heikal, Mohammed, *Sphinx & Commissar* (London: Collins, 1978); Heikal, Mohammed, *The Road to Ramadan* (London: Collins, 1975).

Eskadra, and their pre-planned intervention in the War of Attrition (1969-70) through *Operation Kavkaz* point at a long-term planning for a permanent power base in the Levant.<sup>96</sup> For some authors, who engage into a detailed analysis of Soviet naval movements during the June 1967 War, the neutralisation of Israel's nuclear capacities was a precondition for such a project and the Soviet navy was poised for an amphibious landing on Israeli coasts to support an Egyptian attack on Dimona.<sup>97</sup> It was the manipulation of Egyptian internal politics and strategic fears which enabled the U.S.S.R. to execute its strategy. This was an example of how seapower, or the quest for it, impacted the sovereignty and state structures of a country such as Egypt, and could have been at the origin of regional wars which transformed the Middle East.<sup>98</sup>

The naval dimension unfolds differently during the two Lebanese wars of 1958 and 1975-90, impacting the nature and content of the literature which was devoted to them. In 1958, the naval aspect was dominant because the U.S. intervention and the 'Cold War lens' defined the crisis. On the contrary, in the 1975-90 war, naval diplomacy intervened six to seven years into a conflict whose general pattern and resolution it did not determine and where the Cold War dimension varied in relevance over the course of the war. Hence, while tackling naval power in some form is unavoidable when writing about the 1958 crisis, it could only be mentioned as one of a long list of foreign interventions which characterised the second conflict. The literature concerned with both wars is divided between a sizeable set of general publications about their origins and developments, and a smaller one focusing on their naval and military aspects.

The general publications recognise the naval dimension, but do not comprehend it as naval diplomacy and neglect confronting it to perceptions onshore.<sup>99</sup> Lebanese sectarian-

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<sup>96</sup> Monakov, 'The Soviet Presence' & Adamsky, Dima, 'The "Seventh Day" of the Six Day War: The Soviet Intervention in the War of Attrition (1969-1970)' in Ro'i & Morozov, (Ed.), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 War*; Rubinstein, Alvin, *Red Star on the Nile* (Princeton, Cal.: Princeton University Press, 1977).

<sup>97</sup> Ginor, Isabella & Remez, Gideon, *Foxbats Over Dimona* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>98</sup> Ginor, Isabella & Remez, Gideon, *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>99</sup> Selected general publications on the 1958 crisis: Attié, Caroline, *Struggle in the Levant* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Kalawoun, Nasser, *The Struggle for Lebanon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000); Little, Douglas, 'His Finest Hour? Eisenhower, Lebanon, and the 1958 Middle East Crisis', *Diplomatic History*, 20/1 (1996), pp.27-54; Gendzier, Irene, *Notes from the Minefield* (Boulder: Westview, 1999); Alin, Erika, *The 1958 American Intervention in Lebanon*, PhD. Thesis, (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1993); Qubain, Fahim Issa, *Crisis in Lebanon* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1961).

On the 1975-1990 War: Hanf, Theodor, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015); Ménargues, Alain, *Les Secrets de la Guerre du Liban*, Vol I (Paris: Albin Michel, 2004) & Vol II (Beirut: Librairie Internationale, 2012); El Khazen, Farid, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000); Harris, William, *Faces*



based attitudes towards foreign interventions are considered but not analysed in their dynamic interactions with the projection of naval power.<sup>100</sup> In-depth and dynamic analysis of the perceptions of the different stakeholders ashore are limited to a few incidents which are reported from one publication to another, such as the standoff between U.S. troops and the LAF in July 1958, or the bombardment by the battleship *New Jersey* in 1983-84. With few exceptions, there is no attempt at integrating all these separate elements in a comprehensive model reflecting the interplay between naval diplomacy and political conditions onshore.<sup>101</sup>

The literature dealing with the military and naval aspects also ignore their naval diplomacy nature and apart from a ritual presentation of the local political and military situation, rarely dives into the intricacies of Levantines' perceptions of naval power and their reactions to its deployment. Beside the officially sanctioned histories of the U.S. interventions in 1958 and 1982 published by the History Department of the U.S. Marines Corps, the other naval-military publications consist in critical analyses of the technical execution of the different interventions, of the domestic political decision-making that led to them, and of the flaws in the strategic visions that undergirded them.<sup>102</sup> Only a few, recent publications do

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*of Lebanon* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1997); Wilson, Charles, *Lebanon* (London: Routledge, 1996); Sarkis, Jean, *Histoire de la Guerre du Liban* (Paris: PUF, 1993); Kimche, David, *The Last Option* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), Part II; Rabinovich, Itamar, *The War for Lebanon, 1970-1985* (London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

<sup>100</sup> Abadi, Jacob, 'Perception and Reality in US-Lebanon Relations', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 56/2 (2020), pp.305-26; Stocker, James, *Spheres of Intervention* (London: Cornell University Press, 2017); Salem, Paul, 'Superpowers and Small States: An Overview of American-Lebanese Relations', *Beirut Review*, No.5 (1993), pp.53-82; Gerges, Fawaz, 'The Lebanese Crisis of 1958: The Risks of Inflated Self-Importance', *Beirut Review*, No.5 (1993), pp.83-113; Lambrakis, George, *Perception and Misperception in Policymaking: The U.S. Relationship with Modern Lebanon*, PhD Thesis (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1989).

<sup>101</sup> For the 1958 intervention: Eveland, Wilbur, *Ropes of Sand*, (London: W.W. Norton, 1980), pp.240-307; McClintock, Robert, *The Meaning of Limited War* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1967), Chapter VII; McClintock, Robert, 'The American Landing in Lebanon', *Proceedings*, 88/10 (1962), pp.64-79; Murphy, Robert, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, (London: Collins, 1964), Chapter 27.

For the 1982-84 intervention: McFarlane, Robert, *Special Trust* (New York: Cadell & Davies, 1994), pp.243-57; Rumsfeld, Donald, *Known and Unknown* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), pp.20-30.

<sup>102</sup> For the 1958 intervention: Shulimson, Jack, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966) is the official description of *Operation Bluebat*. A professional analysis of the operation is presented in Spiller, Roger, *"Not War but Like War"* (Fort Leavenworth, TX: Combat Studies Institute, 1981); Dragnich, George, *The Lebanese Operation of 1958: A Study of the Crisis Role of the Sixth Fleet* (Alexandria, VA: CNA, 1970). Two studies of U.S. decision-making in 1958 and 1982: Dougherty, Kevin, *The United States Military in Limited Wars*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2012); Korbani, Agnes, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958 and 1982: Presidential Decision-making* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

For the 1982-84 intervention: Frank, Benis, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon, 1982-1984* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, U.S. Marine Corp, 1987) is the official history of the Marines engagement; Geraghty, Timothy, *Peacekeepers at War* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2009); Hallenbeck, Ralph, *Military Force as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy* (London: Praeger, 1991).

employ American archival sources, but still ignore the rich trove of French, British, Arab, and Levantine ones.<sup>103</sup>

Naval operations by the U.S.-led MNF in Beirut (1982-84) are briefly mentioned by Cable in *Gunboat Diplomacy* and ignored in *Diplomacy at Sea* and *Navies in Violent Peace* where he instead dwells on the contemporaneous Falkland War and the Grenada intervention.<sup>104</sup> MNF constituted an unstable blend of Cable's naval diplomacy categories and functions. Many passages in *Gunboat Diplomacy* seemed to have been written expressly for the MNF experience but shy away from making the connection.<sup>105</sup> Coutau-Bégarie, despite devoting several pages to the MNF, sticks to a strictly diachronic presentation of the French side of the naval operations.<sup>106</sup> Lastly, despite the MNF heralding post-modern naval diplomacy by introducing nation re-building as a sub-category of naval diplomacy, it did not attract the attention of other post-Cold War theorists such as Till, Le Mière, and Rowlands. Rear Admiral Philp Dur, NSC member during the MNF episode, sheds light, all be it limited, on the elaboration of American diplomacy in Lebanon.<sup>107</sup>

George Lambrakis studied the Lebanese perceptions of the U.S. relationship with their country between 1943 and 1976, the second year into the war, highlighting the Christian tendency to seek American protection, and their misperception of realist U.S. priorities.<sup>108</sup> James Stocker reviewed U.S.-Lebanese relations between 1967 and 1976, again showing the extent of Christian expectations for U.S. support and protection including repeated, and unheeded, calls for Sixth Fleet interventions.<sup>109</sup> While these works touch upon the key dimension of perceptions, they stop their analysis in 1976 before any Western naval deployment had occurred.

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<sup>103</sup> Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention*; Brower, Charles, 'Stranger in a Dangerous Land', in Coleman, Bradley & Longley, Kyle, (Ed.), *Reagan and the World* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2017); Boykin, *Cursed is the Peacemaker*, (Belmont, CA: Applegate, 2002).

<sup>104</sup> Cable, *Diplomacy at Sea* & Cable, *Navies in Violent Peace*.

<sup>105</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, Chapters 2 & 4.

<sup>106</sup> Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Meilleur*, pp.138-219.

<sup>107</sup> Dur, *Between Land and Sea*, Ch.8.

<sup>108</sup> Lambrakis, *Perception and Misperception*.

<sup>109</sup> Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention*, Chapters 1-5.

### 1.3 Methodology and Outline

The thesis employs a qualitative approach to test its core assumptions, consisting in the use of primary resources to conduct case studies of selected Levantine crises. The use of such sources sheds a light on the political and military processes behind the elaboration of naval diplomacy and provides an unprecedented understanding of how local societies reacted to coercive naval diplomacy in the framework of their cognitive structures and collective memories.

The first category of primary sources are newspapers. Although this thesis draws extensively from online archives of the British *The Times*, the American *New York Times*, and the French *Le Monde*, its originality is derived from systematic exploitation of the Arabic speaking press - where local perceptions are better reproduced - such as the Lebanese *An-Nahar*, *Al-Amal*, *As-Safir*, *Sawt-Al-Uruba*, *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi*, and *Beirut Al-Massa*, representing the Lebanese political spectrum. To these, should be added the Lebanese Francophone *LorientLejour* and *Le Réveil*. These sources were accessed in the *American University of Beirut Library* archives in Beirut. Other regional Arabic-speaking media were the Egyptian *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Akhbar*, and the Syrian *Al-Ayyam*, *Al-Baath*, *Al-Thawra*, and *Tishreen* accessed online through the *Moshe Dayan Centre* of the *University of Tel-Aviv*.

Among the regional publications, only the Lebanese *An-Nahar* and *LorientLejour* enjoyed a truly independent editorial line. The rest were, to varying degrees, propaganda mouthpieces for governments and/or political parties and currents. The Lebanese *Al-'Amal* and *Le Réveil* were respectively owned by the Phalange party and Phalange leader President Amine Gemayel. The other Lebanese outlets were mouthpieces for the different declinations of the local Arab nationalist spectrum: the Nasserists in 1958 turned pro-Syrian and pro-Palestinian in 1975-1990 – *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi*, *Beirut Al-Massa*, *Sawt Al- 'Uruba* – or the allegedly secular 'leftist' *As-Safir* experiencing the same drift. In Syria, *Al-Ayyam* was militantly Arab nationalist, and the three other newspapers – *Al-Baath*, *Al-Thawra*, *Tishreen* - were Baathist Government-owned. In Egypt, *Al-Ahram's* and *Al-Akhbar's* independent status was only theoretical as they were strictly aligned with the regime. Apart from the two Lebanese independent newspapers, the perceptions these different outlets displayed of naval interventions were determined by their ideological stance and the degree to which their editorial line was controlled by their respective governments/parties. In a scale of increasing

ideological control, the Lebanese *Le Réveil*, *Al-'Amal*, and *As-Safir* (in that order) would enjoy the greatest degree of freedom, while the other publications would be submitted to tighter control – with the Syrian ones being in absolute dependency.<sup>110</sup>

Due to the dependent status of most of these publications, this thesis does not consider them as sources of reliable journalistic information concerning the actual events. Contrary to the Western press which responds to different power structures, professional ethics and commercial and financial considerations, their utility as reservoirs of historical 'truth' is limited, except for the more independent publications which liberally drew from Western news agencies. Rather, they offer a unique insight into how Lebanese and Levantine perceptions reflected cultural divisions and political affiliations and what news and ideas were fed to the populations, contributing to solidifying their inherited worldviews. It is their capacity to reproduce the perceptions of naval interventions by their political leaderships and, to a certain extent, their populaces, that is important for this research. The caveat lies in the extent to which they could be manipulated by their own masters to convey twisted perceptions and analyses of naval diplomacy – as tools of deception and manipulation in a wider game of negotiations and influence as well as for the management of popular expectations. This limited credibility can only be partially alleviated by cross-checking the 'perceptions' with diplomatic memoranda and carefully handled interviewees' memories or, more crudely, with actual behaviour on the ground.

The second category are interviews with key participants. Recalling thirty-year old events is inevitably impacted by fading memories, ideological inclinations, and personal motivations. However, it was possible to reasonably verify many assertions made during the interviews. These include key Lebanese witnesses, at strategic decision-making level of the events related to the MNF in 1982-84. The full political spectrum, from Christian Phalangists (former President *Amine Gemayel*, former Commander of the LF *Fouad Abou-Nader*, former Head of the Phalange, *Karim Pakradouni*) to Druse 'leftists' (*Walid Jumblatt's* right hand, *Marwan Hamade*), through more centrist figures (former Foreign Minister, *Elie Salem*), was covered. The COVID pandemic and Lebanese instability impeded this effort. These Lebanese actors provided precious information about the local perceptions of naval power and the way these leaders reacted to it. Interviews were conducted of key American and French actors of

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<sup>110</sup> See Appendix A for additional information about the origins of each publication and its political alignment.

the 1982-84 drama: former U.S. Secretary of the Navy, *John Lehman*, former NSC and Sixth Fleet Commander *Admiral Philip Dur*, and former Quai d'Orsay Secretary General, *Francis Gutman*.

The third category of primary sources are state archives. For the 1958 intervention, the online U.S. *Office of the Historian* (FRUS) provides access to the spectrum of U.S. decision-making in the Middle East. *The National Archives*, Kew, Surrey and the *Archives Diplomatiques*, La Courneuve, Paris, provide a significant amount of de-classified material, including precious ambassadors' correspondence rich in information about local perceptions. British and French state archives were also used for the 1975-90 Lebanese war. However, French naval and military archives at *Vincennes*, Paris, were either poorly endowed when considering the 1958 crisis (partially explained by the marginal French naval role), or still classified as to the 1975-90 events. This was also the case for the American FRUS regarding the Reagan years which are still 'work in progress'. However, archives at the *Reagan Presidential Library*, Simi Valley, California, were accessed by the author who noted nevertheless the absence of many documents, especially those related to the Habib missions in 1982-83. Another important official source is U.S. *Central Intelligence Agency, Reading Room*, which provided unique material related to the whole Cold War and to this thesis multiple fields of research, from intelligence and monographies about the Soviet navy, to papers and memoranda about the two Lebanese wars. The personal archives of *Farid Chehab*, Lebanon's Police Chief during the 1958 events were accessed online through the *Woodrow Wilson Centre*.

The thesis is divided in two parts and employs a mixed thematic and chronological structure. The first part sets the historical and conceptual context and describes Arab perceptions of Superpower naval diplomacy, while the second offers in-depth case studies of the two Western interventions in Lebanon.

In the first part, Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical foundations of naval diplomacy during the Cold War and analyses the latter's influence over their elaboration. It examines how the requirements of containment, of crisis management, and of meeting the Soviet naval challenge, fostered theoretical writings about naval diplomacy as well as a whole field of naval Sovietology. Chapter 3 examines the Levant as an object of naval diplomacy from the Eastern Question, a century-long geostrategic competition which was essentially prosecuted through gunboat diplomacy, to containment, which gave way to an American-led naval diplomacy of

increasing intensity and scope. Chapter 4 shows the emergence of a Superpower naval diplomacy which displaces pre-Cold War gunboat diplomacy. It examines how Arab nationalist perceptions of seapower were determined by their anti-Western prejudices and impacted their framing of Superpower naval diplomacy.

The second part focuses on two case studies. Chapter 5 presents the 1958 American landing in Lebanon as a first case study of the dialectic between naval power, local perceptions of it, and its eventual impact on the local state system and societies. It examines how Lebanese Christian vision of Western navies as protectors was managed by American diplomacy. Chapters 6 to 8 are devoted to the MNF experience in Lebanon from 1982 to 1984. Chapter 6 describes the events which led to the dispatching of the MNF and its early presence phase. Chapter 7 describes the local perceptions of an increasingly coercive Western naval diplomacy forced to catch up with a deteriorating military and strategic landscape. Chapter 8 examines how the Western naval intervention tested Christian expectations of protection beyond their breaking point and analyses how local perceptions distorted the effects of naval diplomacy and contributed to the MNF's failure.

The thesis concludes by evaluating the impact of naval diplomacy in light of the dialectic between onshore perceptions and conditions, and naval actions.

## Chapter II – The Cold War and the Codification of Naval Diplomacy

The '*Leverage of Seapower*' is as old as navigation itself and uses of naval power by organised polities to achieve diplomatic aims are documented as early as Antiquity.<sup>1</sup> The rise of the Westphalian state in seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries' Europe witnessed the birth of modern times naval diplomacy.<sup>2</sup> During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Western imperialist competition and the enforcement of the *Pax Britannica* generalised the coercive use of navies for political purposes, a practice later labelled 'gunboat diplomacy', a set of concepts and methods that were not doctrinally articulated and organised. Its coercive semantics and the end of the colonial era relegated it, if not its practice, to a negative and supposedly bygone category of international relations. During the Cold War, the confluence of Levantine tensions with the rise of a credible Soviet naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean inspired the doctrinal systematisation that made gunboat diplomacy a recognised dimension of seapower and an officially sanctioned naval strategic mission. In turn, this systematisation enabled the use of gunboat diplomacy, under the more modern term of naval diplomacy, as one tool for the management of the Cold War competition and the preservation of global stability. The fact that Cold War naval diplomacy started in Levantine waters with the '*Missouri cruise*', and that it was these same waters which witnessed the irruption of the Soviet navy as a structuring strategic phenomenon, inserted its emergence as doctrine and discipline into the wider dialectics of the Cold War as reflected in the crises of the Levant. This chapter will show the pivotal importance of the events which took place in the Levantine maritime arena during the Cold War in fostering the emergence of the theoretical tools for a new understanding of naval diplomacy as a codified instrument of statecraft.

### 2.1 The Theoretical Corpus

The codification of naval diplomacy as political tool and object of study is a product of the mid-Cold War. Between the late 1960s and the late 1970s, the field of strategic studies witnessed the emergence of a literature inspired by the conflict's dominant characteristics, namely nuclear deterrence and crisis management in peripheral conflicts, and which focused

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<sup>1</sup> Gray, *The Leverage*; Lambert, *Seapower States*, Chapters 1 & 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cable, *The Political Influence*, p.44.

on the use of force short-of-war for political purposes. These developments provided the backdrop for a specific body of writings concerning the role and utility of navies as instruments of state diplomacy. Naval diplomacy principles may be traced back to Thomas Schelling's *Arms and Influence* (1969), which introduced the basic concepts of coercive diplomacy. Defining diplomacy as a bargaining process, Schelling wrote that the 'power to hurt' can be used to 'coerce' people's 'decision or choice'.<sup>3</sup> 'Power to hurt is bargaining power' and hence, diplomacy.<sup>4</sup> It is 'most successful when held in reserve' when the 'threat of damage' or 'latent violence' would make a 'victim' yield to the coercer's will, a process which Schelling labelled 'compellence'.<sup>5</sup> Schelling did not rule out the actual use of force as 'the power to hurt is communicated by some performance of it'.<sup>6</sup> While following Schelling's distinction of deterrence from compellence, the latter being at the core of coercive diplomacy, George et al. insisted in the *Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (1971) that force should be used in an 'exemplary, demonstrative manner'.<sup>7</sup> They positioned coercive diplomacy as one of four strategies for the use of force, coming after the 'quick, decisive military strategy' and before the 'strategy of attrition' and the 'test of will'.<sup>8</sup> They outlined eight conditions for the success of a coercive policy – their key items being the 'clarity of the objective', the 'asymmetry of motivation', and the 'adequacy of domestic support'.<sup>9</sup> Both Schelling and George et al. distinguished between the 'undiplomatic' use of 'brute force' in war and the coercive use of the power to hurt to gain diplomatic/political advantages. Both were contributing to a new theory of influence in international relations.<sup>10</sup>

The codification of naval diplomacy began in British scholarship. The collapse of the British empire, the decline of the Royal Navy, and the global strategic stalemate fostered a desire in Royal Navy and Foreign Office circles for a new purpose that would justify the maintenance of a strong navy. A codified approach to naval diplomacy would endow a navy with a specific role in peacetime. A first enquiry into the notion of 'non-belligerent action' was attempted by L.W. Martin in *The Sea in Modern Strategy* released in 1967, a few months after

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<sup>3</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp.1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.3 & 70.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> George et al., *The Limits*, p.18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp.15-21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 216-228.

<sup>10</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p.3.



the establishment of the *Beira Patrol* and before the withdrawal from *'East of Suez'*. Going beyond the 'negative' posture of deterrence, Martin considered that naval power can be *'manipulated in peace as in war to achieve positive results'*.<sup>11</sup> He introduced key notions such as the strategic value of prestige or *'reputation for power'*, jointness between services, cooperative/humanitarian and constabulary naval diplomacy, and picture building.<sup>12</sup> Martin analysed the more coercive – a term he never employs - uses of naval power as *'demonstrations'* ranging from the *'greatest amiability to very specific threats of violence and war'*.<sup>13</sup> Developing his notion of *'standing demonstrations'*, he used for the first time the concepts of *'presence'* and *'readiness'* to describe the pre-emptive positioning of naval power in areas of strategic importance and recognised that a demonstrative posture in an area of conflict could blend into preparation for war.<sup>14</sup> In a world where the notions of peace and war were blurred, Martin acknowledged that *'only in retrospect'* will an action be considered a *'diplomatic manoeuvre or open war'*.<sup>15</sup>

It is in this emerging conceptual context that James Cable released the first edition of *Gunboat Diplomacy* in 1971 where he defined it as the:

*'use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or jurisdiction of their own state'*.<sup>16</sup>

Cable's definition encapsulated Schelling's and George et al's basic tenets of coercive diplomacy as it highlights the threat of force short-of-war as a conflict management tool and envisions naval diplomacy as an inter-state activity. Like Schelling, he distinguishes between the *'positive'* profit motive in naval diplomacy and the *'negative'* motive to injure in war.<sup>17</sup> Despite recognising that *'gunboat diplomacy'* was a *'term of abuse'*, Cable elected to keep it and *'regenerate'* it with a definitional extension as *'limited naval force'*.<sup>18</sup> He then defined the *'principles'* of limited naval force which he articulated in four categories: *'Definitive force'*

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<sup>11</sup> Martin, *The Sea*, p.133.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp.133 & 135-41.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.138.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.143.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.14.

<sup>17</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.11-13.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.1.

consists in fulfilling a limited objective with a direct application of limited force as a *fait accompli* where the 'victim's' cooperation is not solicited. Contrary to Schelling, and despite the force applied being limited, there is no 'bargaining' - hence no diplomacy - while in contravention to George et al.'s approach, force is not applied in an 'exemplary' manner. It is 'brute force' whatever its benignity and corresponds to George et al.'s 'quick, decisive military strategy'.<sup>19</sup> 'Purposeful Force' aims at 'changing the policy or character of a foreign government' and corresponds best to Schelling's and George et al.'s coercive diplomacy of influence and compellence. It is still diplomacy as force is employed to 'induce' the victim to take the decision to change its policy.<sup>20</sup> 'Catalytic Force' is 'applied for vaguer purposes' in a situation calling for a pre-emptive positioning of force to respond to unforeseen events. It is akin to latent deterrence, an echo to Schelling's 'passive' deterrence which sets the stage and waits.<sup>21</sup> 'Expressive Force' is when warships 'emphasise attitudes' and are used as 'outlet[s] for emotion' which could involve sheer display of brute force.<sup>22</sup> Each 'principle' or category is illustrated with short examples taken from twentieth century history, with the bulk derived from contemporary Cold War events. One individual incident can fit in more than one principle in recognition of the dynamic nature of naval diplomacy.<sup>23</sup> Cable gave these principles an operational translation in what he called '*Naval Capacities and Doctrines*' where he reviewed different warships and fleet configurations and deployments – from the '*simple ship*' to the '*opposed amphibious*' landing through the '*superior fleet*' able to '*overcome...oppositions*'.<sup>24</sup> His contribution remained fundamentally coercive as he dismissed more benign forms of naval diplomacy such as goodwill visits, writing that '*Gunboat diplomacy is the weapon of the strong against the weak*', a clear reflection of his affiliation to the realist school of international relations.<sup>25</sup> Curiously, for a career diplomat, Cable is one of the few writers on coercive diplomacy who did not articulate his own definition of diplomacy.

In 1974, two important U.S. contributions followed. They came as tools to combat the U.S. Navy's strategic confusion and loss of purpose at a time when the difficulties in Vietnam - where the navy was heavily engaged in an essentially land war - merged with ageing surface

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<sup>19</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.15-33.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp.33-46.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp.46-61; Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p.71.

<sup>22</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.62-4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pp.159-213.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 99-127.

<sup>25</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.32.

platforms, limited budgets, and the increased global presence of the Soviet navy.<sup>26</sup> The first was U.S. Admiral Stansfield Turner's 'Missions of the U.S. Navy' in which he articulated a set of four missions among which '*Naval Presence*' echoed Martin and, in a reflection of Cable's definition, was presented as '*the use of naval forces short of war to achieve political objectives*'.<sup>27</sup> However, more explicitly than Cable, Turner introduced the notion of multiple audiences for an act of naval presence and insisted on a persuasive, cognitive-based approach integrating perceptions and the '*human intellect*'.<sup>28</sup> Turner's approach remained resolutely coercive and positioned inside the wider paradigm of the Cold War where peacetime deployments are preventive/deterrent or reactive/coercive.<sup>29</sup> '*Presence...threatens another nation*' through five '*actions*': '*amphibious assault, air attack, bombardment, blockade, and exposure through reconnaissance*'.<sup>30</sup> In his *Political Uses of Sea Power*, Edward Luttwak positioned perceptions at the centre of his theory of '*armed suasion*' of which naval suasion is a sub-category, and which he defined as the reaction evoked by a naval action after it has been filtered through the victim's perceptions.<sup>31</sup> It is therefore an indirect exercise of cognitive-based influence which is '*inherently unpredictable in its results*'.<sup>32</sup> The pivotal importance of the victim's perceptions requires the deploying party to consider whether its naval power is perceived by the victim in the same way itself perceives it.<sup>33</sup> Positioning his approach in the conceptual field defined by Schelling (whom he references specifically for his coining of compellence), Luttwak distinguished two categories of suasion.<sup>34</sup> *Latent suasion* obtained, deliberately or not, through routine and passive naval deployments is akin to deterrence – and echoes Cable's catalytic principle and Schelling's 'passive' deterrence- but can also be supportive of allies, while *active suasion* involves '*reactions evoked by any deliberate action or signal*' and is supportive or coercive, the latter being either 'positive' (compellence) or 'negative' (deterrence).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Baer, *One Hundred Years*, Ch.16, Zumwalt, *On Watch*.

<sup>27</sup> Turner, 'Missions of the U.S. Navy', p.99.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, pp.100-1.

<sup>29</sup> Turner, 'Missions of the U.S. Navy', p.99.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, pp.99-100.

<sup>31</sup> Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, pp.5-6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.6.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.8.

<sup>34</sup> Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, p.25.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pp.11-36.

Hence, Luttwak integrated multiple messaging as a single suasion can simultaneously support allies and coerce foes. Contrary to Cable who focused his approach on crisis situations, Luttwak introduced permanence – as opposed to discreet actions - in naval diplomacy through his concept of latent suasion inspired from the routine deployments of the U.S Sixth Fleet. He briefly criticised Cable’s classification of naval diplomacy actions as being more descriptive than analytical because they ‘*intermingle functional and intensity criteria*’.<sup>36</sup> His focus on perceptions and influence led him to highlight the visibility/capability dilemma where the aspect of a warship could matter at least as much as its real military capability – Cable had already noted the difference between military potential and the capacity of applying the appropriate force. From this, Luttwak derived the concept of the *symbolic ship* which, beyond its strict military relevance to a given situation, yields its capacity for suasion from its ‘visibility’ as an embodiment of its country’s national power.<sup>37</sup> While Cable focused on a functional approach to naval diplomacy, focusing his analysis on an action-reaction dialectic, Luttwak was concerned with what happened between the moment the action was perceived by its victim and the latter’s reaction – by the intimate workings of the influence process.

Building partially on Cable’s and Luttwak’s works, but also drawing selectively from Martin, Ken Booth in his *Navies and Foreign Policy* (1977) aimed at an integrated theory of naval diplomacy. Contrary to Cable and Luttwak, he started by defining the ‘*trinity*’ of functions of navies whose ‘*oneness*’ is embodied in the ‘*use of the sea*’.<sup>38</sup> Beside a military and a policing one, Booth identified a diplomatic role to which he attributed three main objectives: ‘*Negotiation from Strength*’ which encompasses the supportive, deterrent, and coercive categories, ‘*Manipulation*’ which partly overlaps with the former but also involves cooperative policies, and ‘*Prestige*’, the latter explicitly linked to Martin’s ‘reputation for power’ and deserving a full chapter highlighting its strategic importance.<sup>39</sup> Booth dwelled on the attributes of warships - versatility, controllability, mobility, projection ability, access potential, and endurance - before moving to the ‘*tactics*’ of naval diplomacy, his equivalent of Cable’s ‘*principles*’.<sup>40</sup> These tactics consist in five categories spanning the deterrent and

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<sup>36</sup> Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, Footnote 2, pp.2-3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp.29-34 & 39-52.

<sup>38</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign*, pp15-6.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pp.17-25 & Chapter 3.

<sup>40</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign*, pp.33-6 & p.40.

coercive modes – ‘*standing demonstrations of naval power*’ (another reference to Martin) and ‘*specific operational deployments*’ – and a more cooperative one – ‘*naval aid, operational deployments, and goodwill visits*’ (already closely examined by Martin).<sup>41</sup> Like Luttwak, and echoing Schelling and George et al., Booth was more concerned than Cable with the inner processes of power and influence, recognising the difficulty to evaluate the latter because of its indirect nature. Compared to Cable, Turner or Luttwak, Booth’s contribution is the closest to an integrated naval diplomacy model and appears to be the least ‘coercive’.

On the Soviet side, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet navy, outlined in *The Sea Power of the State* published in English in 1972, his conceptions of seapower and Soviet maritime development and doctrines where he dwelled on the peacetime activities of the navy. Gorshkov’s conceptions were not far removed from his Western counterparts’, except in terms of the weighting given to different modes of naval diplomacy. As Martin, Booth or Luttwak, Gorshkov promoted prestige through the visibility of warships as products of superior Soviet technology, extolling the importance of port visits where awe-inspiring warships combined with impeccable behaviour by Soviet sailors were efficient vehicles for ideological influence.<sup>42</sup> Whilst insisting on the diplomatic value of a navy, Gorshkov articulated a coercive approach in peacetime associated with the need to manage the local wars of imperialism, where ‘*demonstrative actions*’ achieved political ends by threatening force ‘*with one’s potential might*’.<sup>43</sup> Gorshkov’s writings on naval diplomacy remain less coercive than Cable’s and Turner’s. Contrary to the former, he promotes cooperative diplomacy and only mentions the threat of force based on national power rather than its actual use. This also differentiates him from Turner’s ‘presence’ which is not only coercive but also kinetic in its envisaged operational applications.

The end of the Cold War, the demise of the Soviet navy, and the promises of a ‘new world order’ triggered a new series of writings concerning the utility of navies in peacetime. In 1992, Colin Gray argued the continuous relevance of seapower, a concept expanded to its maritime dimension or ‘*the ability to use the seas...for military and commercial purposes and to preclude an enemy from the same*’.<sup>44</sup> For him, the Soviet collapse and with it, the possibility

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<sup>41</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign*, pp.40-5.

<sup>42</sup> Gorshkov, *The Sea Power*, p.252-3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.248.

<sup>44</sup> Gray, *The Leverage*, p.4.

of a surprise nuclear war, have reinforced the strategic relevance of the U.S. navy.<sup>45</sup> Over the next two decades, the post-September 11 'war on terror' and the rise of Chinese maritime ambitions renewed interest for 'traditional' naval diplomacy. The Cold War literature was subjected to extensive critical review foremost by Geoffrey Till, Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, Christian Le Mière, and Kevin Rowlands.<sup>46</sup> These writers differentiate themselves by their integration of the post-Cold War dynamics of international relations where the emergence of non-state actors was an important feature and the development of more cooperative forms of naval diplomacy gave birth to the label of post-modern naval diplomacy.<sup>47</sup> Another differentiation shared by these authors is their extension of seapower beyond its Cold War naval perimeter as they integrate, echoing Mahan and Gorshkov, all of a country's maritime assets in support of diplomacy.<sup>48</sup> This is consistent with their extension of naval diplomatic actions to more cooperative policies - where maritime assets from coast guards to civilian vessels acquire new international roles - and dilutes the coercive charge which characterised the Cold War approach.<sup>49</sup>

After deferentially reviewing Cable's principles - he dedicates his book to 'James Cable, the Great Founder' - Coutau-Bégarie moves to a Gallic cartesian construct articulating 'functions', 'categories', and 'instruments' where 'cooperative' and 'multinational' diplomacies are introduced and a special attention is devoted to the amphibious instrument.<sup>50</sup> Le Mière and Rowlands are influenced by the theories of soft power developed by Joseph Nye in a replication of their predecessors' inspiration from Schelling's 'hard power' theories.<sup>51</sup> They criticise the dominant state-centric model of their predecessors, recognising the role non-state actors could play as 'assailants' or 'victims'.<sup>52</sup> Because of their widely admitted seminal nature, Cable's writings are the main targets of qualifications and criticism. For Le Mière, who recognises Cable's foundational value, '*maritime diplomacy*' is the '*management of international relations through the maritime domain*' and gunboat diplomacy corresponds to coercive 'maritime diplomacy'. Other categories of 'maritime

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<sup>45</sup> Gray, *The Leverage*, p.28.

<sup>46</sup> Till, *Seapower*, Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Meilleur*, Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*, Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*.

<sup>47</sup> Till, *Seapower*, pp.35-40.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pp.23-26 & Chapter 4 ; Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*, p.17.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.17.

<sup>50</sup> Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Meilleur*, pp.46-75.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.8; Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, pp.9-11 & 37-40.

<sup>52</sup> Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*, p.16.

diplomacy' are the *cooperative* – ranging from humanitarian assistance to joint security operations - and the *persuasive* – akin to prestige building – ones.<sup>53</sup> Le Mière does not contest the intrinsic validity of each of Cable's principles but doubts of their systematic analytical value as he writes that '*it is unclear whether maritime diplomatic events can be...so neatly classified into discrete categories...as each event [is] so unique...*'.<sup>54</sup> Criticising Cable for confusing ends with means, he develops an original approach where the '*properties*' of an event, its ways and means, are tools for the understanding of the intents behind it as well as of the importance of the issue at stake for the initiating country and hence, of potential future moves.<sup>55</sup> The type of force used, the pre-emptive or reactive nature of its deployment, its kinetic or non-kinetic nature, the degree of explicitness of the messaging built around its actions, the endurance of the initiator, and the balance of power are the most important signifiers of intents.<sup>56</sup> But the promotion of a new post-modern approach to naval diplomacy does not estrange Le Mière from pivotal Cold War-era contributions. He echoes Schelling in building an economics-based concept of the '*law of diminishing marginal credibility*' of maritime diplomacy where the repetition of a threat without consequences erodes the credibility of the initiating party.<sup>57</sup> Schelling's influence is also felt in a chapter devoted to the application of game theory to maritime diplomacy.<sup>58</sup>

A more systematised and ambitious approach is found in Kevin Rowlands' *Naval Diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Rowlands' criticism of Cold War-era literature represented in Cable's writings centres on the '*binary state-to-state*' nature of a naval diplomacy '*coercive by definition*'.<sup>59</sup> He distinguishes Booth for his highlighting of prestige and of a '*prestige race*' between the Superpowers - a fact reflected in Gorshkov's writings – which leads him to identify a '*prestige-focused*' Cold War naval diplomacy model.<sup>60</sup> Starting from a definition of diplomacy as being a '*communication process that seeks to further the interests of an international actor*', Rowlands invokes Nye's '*spectrum of behaviour*' which organises power from 'hard' (coercive) to 'soft' to challenge the coercive-only Cold War model.<sup>61</sup> His use of the

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<sup>53</sup> Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*, p.7-15.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.50.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.50-1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, pp.51-9.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, Chapter 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, Chapter 6.

<sup>59</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, p.22.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, pp.31-4.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, pp.9-12.

more systemic term of 'communication' distinguishes him from the Cold War writers who either seldom used it, or did so interchangeably with 'signalling' – a more unilateral concept. Only George et al., who saw coercive diplomacy as a communication exercise, identified signalling as a 'non-verbal communication', essentially through military moves.<sup>62</sup> But Rowlands' most compelling contribution derives from his criticism of most of his predecessors' reliance on a dominantly binary model of interactions. For him, if diplomacy is a '*multi-directional communicative tool*', naval diplomacy as '*niche diplomacy*' shares the same function.<sup>63</sup> Based on the multi-audience communication theory and marshalling corporate management multi-stakeholder theory, Rowlands builds an original '*model for 21<sup>st</sup>-century naval diplomacy*' which is not only a strategic planning tool but also, as in Cable's approach, an instrument for the analysis of past events.<sup>64</sup> Structured around the pivotal question of the purpose of a naval diplomacy event, the model deploys the nature of the action, the '*what?*' which integrates a stand-alone category of '*amity*' reflecting 21<sup>st</sup>-century cooperative preoccupations, alongside a more traditional '*enmity*' category of coercive and deterrent measures. The mode of execution of the event, the '*how?*' integrates Nye's soft power contributions while the last element, the '*who?*' constitutes the strongest contribution of the model. It encompasses all the participants – initiator(s) and recipient(s) - of the naval event and underlines the multi-directional nature of naval diplomatic communication, representing a major conceptual de-linkage with the Cold War-era literature.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign*, p.42; George, *Forceful Persuasion*, pp.9-10.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p.96

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, pp.97-104 & 109.

<sup>65</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, p.109.



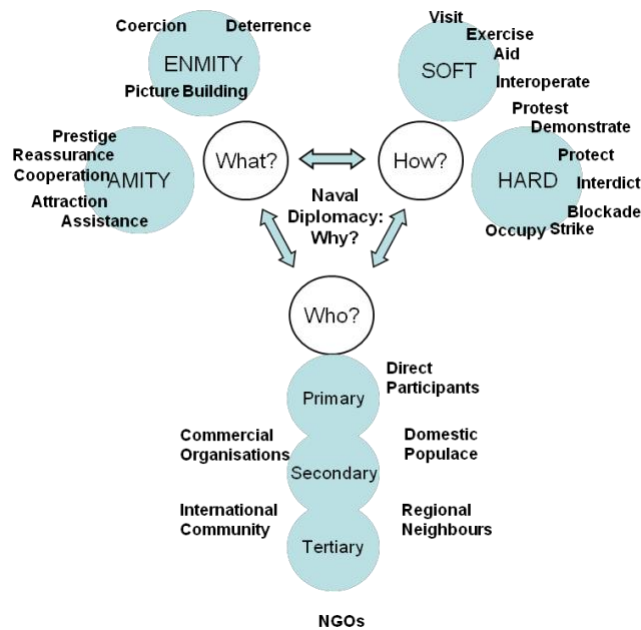


Figure 3 – Rowlands’ ‘Foundational Model of 21st-century Naval Diplomacy’, in Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, p.109.

How effective is naval diplomacy as a tool? Martin notes that because it acts ‘*within an overall military balance...it is impossible to...evaluate the peculiarly naval contribution*’.<sup>66</sup> Cable considered the ‘definitive’ mode in gunboat diplomacy as the most effective with the ‘expressive’ mode being the least efficient, implicitly pegging his ranking on the clarity of objectives which decreases as one moves towards the expressive mode. He defined effectiveness as ‘*whether or not the results achieved corresponded to the intention of the assailant*’, recognising the difficulty of understanding that ‘intention’. His examples, spanning 72 years from 1919 to 1991, show ‘the range’ of gunboat diplomacy and are not eligible for ‘mathematical conjectures’.<sup>67</sup> Incidents are rated as ‘Success’, ‘Temporary Success’, ‘Unclear Outcome’, or ‘Failure’.<sup>68</sup> Rowlands criticises Cable’s ratings because they neglect incremental effects, long-term impacts, and exclude third parties.<sup>69</sup> A theoretical approach for coercive diplomacy was attempted by George et al. Based on the examination of American crisis interventions in Laos (1960-1), Cuba (1962), and Vietnam (1964-5), they derived the set of eight pre-conditions evoked above for the successful use of coercive diplomacy.<sup>70</sup> In their statistical study of the uses by the U.S. of ‘*force without war*’, Blechman & Kaplan analysed a

<sup>66</sup> Martin, *The Sea*, p.134.

<sup>67</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.158.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, pp.158-213.

<sup>69</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, p.24.

<sup>70</sup> George et al., *The Limits*, Chapters 2-4.

sample of 33 events between 1946 and 1972 and of the different force structures employed.<sup>71</sup> Ranking their outcomes as 'Favourable' or 'Unfavourable', and distinguishing between short-term and medium-term effects, they reached two key conclusions. Firstly, that the use of coercive force is more likely to succeed in deterrence than in compellence.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, that naval forces were less efficient than land-based airpower or ground forces. They attributed this relative inefficiency to the flexible quality of warships which diminishes their commitment-making potential in the eyes of the recipient/victim as they can '*be withdrawn as easily as they can enter*'.<sup>73</sup> Robert Mandel challenged these conclusions, insisting on the 'distinctiveness' of warships. Based on a sample of 133 incidents, he showed that while naval diplomacy yielded '*mixed results*', navies were relatively more effective than land or air forces. Mandel vindicated Cable's judgment that definitive force is the most effective mode, and Schelling's principle that the threat of force is more efficient than its actual use.<sup>74</sup>

Le Mière developed the 'law of diminishing marginal utility' discussed above and used game theory to model the possible outcomes of naval diplomacy. His aim was more to dissect the decision-making iterations in a maritime diplomacy incident than to infer a pattern – he believed in the uniqueness of each incident - or draw systematic conclusions about the effectiveness of naval diplomacy. Rowlands equally avoids drawing statistically-based patterns of effectiveness. His data base of 528 naval diplomacy events between 1991 and 2011 demonstrates the changes in the nature and practice of naval diplomacy after the Cold War with coercive actions becoming significantly less frequent than 'amity' initiatives. In a recent U.S.-focused study, Larissa Forster adopts Blechman's & Kaplan's approach, but on a considerably larger sample.<sup>75</sup> She confirms their finding that land-based air power was the most efficient instrument for coercive diplomacy, adding that the use of naval forces alone has the highest probability of producing a '*stalemate*' or a '*compromise*' while the adjunction of other services increases the probability of '*victorious*' or '*definite outcome*'.<sup>76</sup> However,

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<sup>71</sup> Blechman & Kaplan, *Force Without War*, Table 3-2.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, pp.91-93.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, pp.529-530.

<sup>74</sup> Mandel, Robert, 'The Effectiveness of Gunboat Diplomacy', *International Studies Quarterly*, 30/1 (1986), pp.71-72.

<sup>75</sup> Forster, *Influence Without Boots*.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p.168.

naval forces have a higher diplomatic potential than other services, leading more often to '*formal agreements*' as their '*subtle*' influence makes them the least escalatory.<sup>77</sup>

The need to compare the impact of navies – essentially the U.S. navy – to the one of other services underlies the interest shown by Mandel, Blechman & Kaplan, and Forster for the force structures deployed with a particular attention to carriers and amphibious forces. However, it also points at a potential limitation. If one considers Forster's study and the research by Adam Siegel for the NHHC and CNA, their U.S. navy-centred nature carries implicit policy aims and calls for caution when using their conclusions.<sup>78</sup> Another important limitation of these 'statistical' case studies is their 'understanding' of the cases they present. The 1958 landing in Lebanon and the 1970 Jordanian crisis were analysed in *Force Without War* by William Quandt, himself a NSC member and Middle East specialist. 36 years later, they are briefly described by Forster who extracted them from available data bases. Between the two publications, hundreds of primary sources had been released and the understanding of the events has changed, but this is not reflected in Forster's work. The degree to which the author made use of primary sources determines her understanding of the 'intentions' of the parties involved. Is the understanding of an individual event inversely proportional to the size of the sample, sacrificing accuracy and granularity to statistical imperatives? What justifies the attribution of an 'importance' grade for an event or a region, a variable factored in some of these statistical studies? From the partially inaccurate brief description of the MNF episode in Lebanon in Forster's study, what conclusion could be drawn concerning the rest of her sample and the 'judgement' of failure or success? How could some of the 'statistical' writers conclude that land-based air is more efficient than naval forces when the latter's naval-air intervenes far more often in crises than its land counterpart? The relative disregard for the dynamic complexity of naval diplomacy strengthens the criticism of the mechanistic, discreet nature of the Cold War-inherited coercive model. This thesis will try to show that the more one knows about an individual event the more qualified the judgment about success or failure would be, vindicating Le Mière's assertion that each naval diplomacy event is 'unique'.

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<sup>77</sup> Forster, *Influence Without Boots*, p.175.

<sup>78</sup> Siegel, *Use of Naval* only lists the interventions of USN and USMC during Cold War crises and does not provide qualitative judgements, which is not the case in Siegel, Adam, *To Deter, Compel and Reassure in International Crises* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 1995).

## 2.2 Containment and the Application of Naval Diplomacy

The fact that one had to wait for the Cold War to witness such attempts at conceptualising and systematising a centuries-old naval diplomatic practice, can be attributed to four significant strategic developments specific to this period.

The first development was the containment policy in response to perceived Soviet and Communist expansionism in Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. After 1945, Soviet pressure increased in Central and Eastern Europe, but was also felt in Iran, Turkey, and Greece.<sup>79</sup> Stalin's push for a shared control of the key Dardanelles choke-point in early 1946 and for territorial concessions in north-eastern Anatolia, and his ambivalent attitude towards the deteriorating security in Greece justified a containment strategy inspired by the March 1947 Truman Doctrine - an answer to British pleas for a deeper U.S. involvement in the Levant and Middle East.<sup>80</sup> The first 'shots' of the Cold War took the shape, in April-May 1946, of the American battleship *Missouri* visiting Istanbul - under the pretext of repatriating the Turkish ambassador's body - and Athens in a show of friendship and support. Subsequently, the visit of the *USS Leyte* CTF to Turkey on the heels of the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, and the institution of a permanent U.S. naval deployment in the Mediterranean in September 1946 - prelude to the creation of the Sixth Fleet in June 1948 - contributed to the crystallisation of the concept of containment.<sup>81</sup> While the deployments of the *Missouri* and the *Leyte* can be ascribed to Cable's expressive mode, the establishment of a permanent American naval presence called instead for Luttwak's latent suasion, acting through force level change and manipulation.<sup>82</sup>

These events revealed the role of navies in the conception and prosecution of containment and echoed the historical '*leverage of sea power*' by maritime powers against continental competitors.<sup>83</sup> Underlining the link between naval power and containment,

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<sup>79</sup> Pechatnov, Vladimir, 'The Soviet Union and the World, 1944-1953'; Schwarz, Hans-Peter, 'The Division of Germany, 1945-1949'; Rajak, Svetozar, 'Cold War in the Balkans, 1945-1956', in Leffler & Westad (Ed.), *CHCW*, Volume I.

<sup>80</sup> Kuniholm, Bruce, *The Origins*, pp.408-25; Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers*, pp.476-500; Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis*, Chapter VII; Knight, Jonathan, 'America's International Guarantees for the Straits: Prelude to the Truman Doctrine', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13/2, (1977), pp.241-50.

<sup>81</sup> Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis*, pp.301-2; Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*; Pricolo, *Naval Presence*; Dur, *The Sixth Fleet*; Xydis, 'The Genesis of the Sixth Fleet'; Polmar, *Chronology*, pp.8 & 11.

<sup>82</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.62; Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, p.6 & 74-5.

<sup>83</sup> Grygiel, Jakub, 'The Dilemmas'; Gray, *The Leverage*, Chapter One & p.266; Gray, 'Keeping the Soviets Landlocked', pp.24-36.

Walter Lippmann wrote on the eve of the *Missouri* cruise that the '*Missouri...[made it] unmistakably clear in Moscow where we believe the outer limits of their expansion are*'.<sup>84</sup> Containment was institutionalised in NSC 68 (April 1950) which promoted the '*proportionality*' of response and the preference for methods '*short of war*' both of which fitted well into the playbook of naval diplomacy.<sup>85</sup> Already in the case of the *Missouri* deployment, the initial intent of despatching the battleship with a strong task force made of two carriers, cruisers and destroyers had been downsized as the Truman Administration preferred to avoid an overtly provocative purposeful action. The lack of a sufficient number of active ships also contributed to the decision.<sup>86</sup> A larger force would have signalled that the U.S. was clearly aiming at coercively changing the behaviour of the Soviets, exposing itself to the risk of non-cooperation by the target and forcing itself to escalate.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, a large task force would have been militarily irrelevant against an essentially land-based menace to Turkey and Greece. Instead, for Luttwak, the *Missouri* - one of the more modern ships of the fleet with Pacific theatre battle honours - was the symbolic ship that essentialised U.S. national power which would be brought to bear in case of wider armed conflict.<sup>88</sup> The overtly coercive messaging of a task force was therefore limited to a morale-boosting show of support to Turkey - honoured of having its ambassador's body repatriated on a battleship - and Greece at the expense of directly verifiable coercive suasion effects on the Soviets, who started by ignoring the warship's visit and only momentarily relented in their pressures on Turkey weeks after it took place.<sup>89</sup>

Despite debates in Britain and the United States about the nature and extent of their respective navies' contributions to the new strategic paradigm, the relevance of naval power for the prosecution of containment was vindicated by the key role played by Allied navies in the Korean War and by the recognition of their contribution to the defence of Europe's southern flank and of the Middle East, its oil resources, and maritime and air communications.<sup>90</sup> Naval power was also to constitute a forward offensive presence

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<sup>84</sup> Cited in Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers*, p.170.

<sup>85</sup> FRUS, 1950, National Security Affairs, Foreign Economic Policy, Vol I, Docs.51-156.

<sup>86</sup> Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, The Mediterranean*, pp.34-6; Bryson, *Tars Turks*, pp.89-90; Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers*, pp. 169 & 171.

<sup>87</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.42.

<sup>88</sup> Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, pp.29-34.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, pp.33-4; Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers*, pp.190-1; Kuniholm, *The Origins*, pp.334-42.

<sup>90</sup> The naval and strategic debates of the early Cold War in Britain and the U.S. are analysed for the Royal Navy in Grove, *Vanguard to Trident*, Chapters I to III. For the U.S. Navy: Barlow, *From Hot War to Cold*, Chapters 2 to

threatening the Soviet Union's southwestern flank and maritime communications out of the Black Sea.<sup>91</sup> Naval diplomacy, applied on the periphery of the Communist Bloc, fulfilled the underlying requirement of NSC 68 to keep the Cold War cold. The flexibility, mobility, and extraterritoriality of warships combined with their ambiguous lethality and lesser provocative charge made them particularly adapted to the constraints of Cold War crisis management, in contrast with the rigidity and escalatory potential of land or air forces.<sup>92</sup> A vivid example of the versatility of navies can be found in the way the Sixth Fleet was pre-positioned in the Eastern Mediterranean on the eve of the 1956 Suez Crisis. In June 1956 - before Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal and Britain's collusion with France and Israel to attack Egypt during the fall - tensions rose in the Levant around Nasser's hostility to the Baghdad Pact, his support to radical Arab nationalist coup attempts in Syria and Jordan, and the deteriorating security on the Israeli-Egyptian border.<sup>93</sup> The Eisenhower administration was concerned with potential Communist manipulations of the tensions and with the risk of Soviet-inspired aggressions in the region.<sup>94</sup> After a first phase where U.S. and British warships criss-crossed the waters around the Arabian Peninsula in a posture of active suasion to deter any possibility of a new Arab-Israeli flare-up, '*Operation Stockpile*' saw the Sixth Fleet's *Oglethorpe* pre-positioned with '*weapons in escrow*' to be delivered to any country that could be subject to aggression, be it Egypt, Israel or Syria...<sup>95</sup> *Operation Stockpile* represented a fusion of catalytic and purposeful modes, as it faced a situation of looming threats while simultaneously deterring aggressive initiatives by threatening to lend support to the aggressed, what Booth called a '*specific operational deployment*' in view of diplomatic manipulation.<sup>96</sup>

Of particular interest was the rise of a '*carrier diplomacy*', with the aircraft carrier progressively replacing the battleship as capital ship and '*symbolic ship*' and whose

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5 & 9; Baer, *One Hundred Years*, Chapter 12. For the role of naval containment in the Mediterranean: Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*, Chapter 6.

<sup>91</sup> Grygiel, 'The Dilemmas', pp.203-4 and footnote 74, p.215 about British and U.S. divergences regarding the strategic function of the Mediterranean. For a detailed account of the various Anglo-American war plans for the the Middle East see, Cohen, *Fighting World War Three* and Cohen, *Strategy and Politics*.

<sup>92</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, p.33-5; Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.92.

<sup>93</sup> See Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*; Daweesha, *Arab Nationalism*.

<sup>94</sup> Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, p.78-9; Little, Douglas, 'Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958', *Middle East Journal*, 44/1, (1990), pp.51-75; Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, pp.247-83.

<sup>95</sup> Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, pp.188-9.

<sup>96</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, p.43.

demonstrations of naval aviation brought a new visualisation of power.<sup>97</sup> The carrier added to the battleship's expressive charge as the striking range of its aircraft superseded the one of the battleship's guns and brought Soviet territory within reach. It was not only the warship symbolic of national power, but also a credible, relevant, and lethal force ready to be unleashed. Three months after the *Missouri* and the *Essex*-class *Leyte* visited Turkey and Greece, the new *Midway*-class large carrier *Franklin D. Roosevelt* visited the same two countries, to be followed a few weeks later by the *Randolph*. CTFs visits increased in frequency after December 1947, culminating in the Korean War-related decision to permanently assign two CTFs to the Sixth Fleet.<sup>98</sup> Ultimately, between 1946 and 1990, carriers were to be used for political purposes in 75% of all Sixth Fleet interventions.<sup>99</sup> In the Levant, starting with the *Missouri* and for the duration of the Cold War, the United States and its Western allies deployed their naval forces for diplomatic purposes in preference to other means of persuasion or coercion: 60% of the incidents which resulted in deployments of the Sixth Fleet between 1946 and 1990 were concentrated around Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.<sup>100</sup> Naval diplomacy was used for the containment of perceived Communist attempts at expansion such as in Turkey (1946), Greece (1946-7), or Syria (1955 and 1957); it was regularly deployed to contain the rise of an anti-imperialist, anti-western, and suspiciously neutralist Arab nationalism as in Jordan (1957 and 1958) and Lebanon (1958); and it played a critical role during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 in a strategic context complicated by the irruption of the Soviet Navy in the mid-1960s. The unique attributes of navies for crisis management and escalation control were to be confirmed by the occurrence of a second strategic development around the middle-course of the Cold War.

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<sup>97</sup> Wood, Michael Leslie, *U.S. Carrier Strike Diplomacy and the Mediterranean, 1970-1989*, Master Thesis, National Defence University, (Norfolk, VA, 2014); Holloway, *Aircraft Carriers*; Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*, Chapter 4; For a discussion of the notions of 'supreme ship' and 'expressive force' respectively see Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, pp.29-34 & Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.62.

<sup>98</sup> Dur, *The Sixth Fleet*, pp.17-32.

<sup>99</sup> Blechman & Kaplan, *Force Without War*, p.42.

<sup>100</sup> Blechman & Kaplan, 'The Political Use of Military Power', p.45; Siegel, *Use of Naval Forces* updates Blechman's & Kaplan's *Force Without War* and mentions 207 U.S. naval responses to crises through the Cold War duration out of 258 crises and incidents.

## 2.3 Limited Wars and Détente

Following Stalin's death in March 1953, the new Soviet leadership reoriented his antagonistic foreign policy. In the Third World, the Soviet policy of '*peaceful coexistence between states of differing social systems*' outlined under Khrushchev in the mid-1950s, abandoned the vision of a duel to the death between capitalism and communism promoted in Stalin's speech of February 1946.<sup>101</sup> Under 'peaceful coexistence', international expansion of the socialist camp went through a support for '*national liberation movements*'.<sup>102</sup> While Soviet support was limited to military and technical advisors, arms exports, and development aid, the initially localised, limited, and often internal conflicts threatened to degenerate into Superpower clashes as the U.S. and its Western allies tried to prevent Soviet-leaning nationalist movements from altering the regional status quo.<sup>103</sup> This was particularly the case in the Levant and the Middle East where, starting in 1955, the Soviets embraced the Arab cause and balanced the increasingly strategic Western support for Israel. Such developments contributed to a doctrinal evolution in the U.S. approach to containment throughout the Eisenhower years. In 1953, NSC 162/2 introduced the notion of 'instant' massive retaliation and stated that nuclear weapons could be used by the U.S. as any other munitions.<sup>104</sup> Dubbed '*New Look*', this strategic posture represented through the carefully built ambiguities surrounding the conditions for its application, a strongly articulated American nuclear deterrence strategy.<sup>105</sup> However, the notion that the U.S. had a discretionary appreciation of which local aggression by Communist forces would trigger 'instant' nuclear retaliation, implied that local crises and limited wars could escalate into atomic Armageddon.<sup>106</sup> The realisation of the all-or-nothing implications of New Look, of its formal coupling of containment with nuclear weapons, and of the primacy of the U.S. Air Force in its potential execution, led to its progressive reappraisal and softening under the influence of the U.S. Navy and Army.<sup>107</sup> A Navy-inspired attenuated doctrine of '*finite deterrence*' (paralleled by the

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<sup>101</sup> Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, p.42; Pechatnov, 'The Soviet Union and the World', p.100.

<sup>102</sup> Wheeler, G.E., 'Russia and the Middle East', *International Affairs*, 35/3, (1959), pp.300-2; Savranskaya & Taubman, 'Soviet Foreign Policy'; Golan, Galia, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.9-11; Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, pp.109-10.

<sup>103</sup> Latham, 'The Cold War in the Third World'; Gaddis, *We Now Know*, Chapter 6.

<sup>104</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, National Security Policy, Volume II, Part 1, Doc.101.

<sup>105</sup> Freedman, Lawrence, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, (London: Macmillan, 2003); Immerman, Richard, *John Foster Dulles*, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999), pp.80-5 & 130.

<sup>106</sup> Immerman, *John Foster Dulles*, p.130.

<sup>107</sup> Baer, *One Hundred Years*, p.341-4.



Army's 'flexible response') emerged towards the late 1950s, where the Navy promoted sub-strategic crisis management 'to control and limit wars to a magnitude we can tolerate'.<sup>108</sup> The actions of the Sixth Fleet during the Suez Crisis and the 1958 landing in Lebanon were emblematic of this renewed naval diplomatic approach to containment.<sup>109</sup>

In the second half of the 1960s, the anticipated attainment of strategic nuclear parity by the Soviet Union re-configured and stabilised the central balance of power in Europe and the North Atlantic.<sup>110</sup> The concept of Détente that resulted from this new strategic paradigm translated under the Nixon administration into a negotiation process on strategic arms reduction and control, and into a renewed bilateral desire to prevent peripheral limited conflicts from escalating into a Superpower clash.<sup>111</sup> But there was an inherent contradiction in this concern for crisis management because the Soviet Union considered Détente as a 'divisible' concept.<sup>112</sup> While Moscow showed readiness to abide by Détente in the central theatre and in relation to the overall strategic parity, it continued to consider the Third World as a distinct arena where 'peaceful coexistence' could proceed unabated. Regional conflicts repeatedly tested the validity of Détente and the Superpowers' capacity to control and manage them. Their escalatory potential was enhanced as the Soviets, emboldened by the strategic rebalancing and by their increasing naval capability for global presence, became increasingly willing to accept the risks of involvement in limited wars.<sup>113</sup> Nowhere else than in the Levant were these dangerous developments more crudely displayed when the U.S.-Soviet diplomatic and naval standoff during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war culminated in the American global state of alert being raised to DEFCON-III.<sup>114</sup> In this volatile context, naval

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<sup>108</sup> Baer, *One Hundred Years*, p.360.

<sup>109</sup> On the naval diplomatic aspects of this operation, see Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.53-61; McClintock, *The Meaning of Limited War*, pp.108-23; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, pp.480-510. On the operational aspects see Chapter I, footnote 89. On the political and strategic aspects see Chapter I, footnotes 86 & 88 & Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, Chapter 7.

<sup>110</sup> Burr, William & Rosenberg, Alan, 'Nuclear Competition in an Era of Stalemate', in Leffler & Westad (Ed.), *CHCW*, Volume II, pp.88-115; CIA, 'The Changing Strategic Military Balance' (7/1967).

<sup>111</sup> Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*; Schultzing, Robert, 'Détente in the Nixon-Ford Years, 1969-1976', in Leffler & Westad (Ed.), *CHCW*, Volume II, pp.373-94; Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, Chapters 7 & 8; Garthoff, Raymond, *Détente and Confrontation*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995).

<sup>112</sup> Golan, *Soviet Policies*, p.21.

<sup>113</sup> McConnell, 'Doctrine and Capabilities'; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, p.232.

<sup>114</sup> On the October War, its origins and military operations: Bregman, Ahron, *Israel's Wars: A History Since 1947*, (London: Routledge, 2010), Chapters 5 & 6; On the wider strategic and diplomatic aspects: Herzog, Chaim, *The War of Atonement*, (London: Greenhill Books, 1998); On Superpower involvement and bilateral interactions: Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*; Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*; Burr, William (Ed.), 'The October War and U.S. Policy', *The National Security Archive*, (2003); Kissinger, Henry, *Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), Part I; Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*; Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*; Lebow et al., *We All Lost the Cold War*,

diplomacy reflected the need to introduce gradualism and thresholds into the management of Superpower commitments in limited regional conflicts. It became embedded into the aforementioned-concepts of 'finite deterrence'/'flexible response', which were institutionalised under the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations and undergirded the military *status quo* in the European theatre.<sup>115</sup>

It was in this context that Schelling articulated in 1966 his concepts of '*diplomacy of violence*' and '*coercive bargaining*'.<sup>116</sup> As discussed, his analyses, further developed by George, influenced Cable's and Luttwak's later works in the naval field and were extensively quoted by Booth.<sup>117</sup>

The combined effects of 'peaceful coexistence' *à la* Soviet and of Détente translated into a normalisation in the recourse to coercive diplomacy by the two Superpowers, with the June 1967 War being the turning point in the Soviet use of naval diplomacy and the period extending from 1961 to 1980 witnessing almost half of all U.S. naval crisis responses.<sup>118</sup> In the Levant, the complex and careful choreography of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and its Soviet counterpart during the September 1970 Jordanian crisis illustrated the adaptability of naval power to the fine-tuning of Superpower Détente diplomacy.<sup>119</sup> Soviet projection of influence across the periphery could not have been justified and sustained absent the emergence of a blue-water Soviet navy, the third transformational development of the period.

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Part II; Kissinger, Henry, *Years of Upheaval* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982) Chapters VI, IX, XII & XIII; Golan, Yom Kippur and After. On naval diplomacy: Goldstein, & Zuhov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets'; Bouchard, *Use of Naval Forces*, pp.756-858; Luttwak & Weinland, *Sea Power in the Mediterranean*, Part II; Roberts, 'Superpower Naval Confrontations', pp.164-213; Zumwalt, *On Watch*, pp.432-51.

<sup>115</sup> Burr & Rosenberg, 'Nuclear Competition', pp.98-101; Baer, *One Hundred years*, p.375-80.

<sup>116</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p.3.

<sup>117</sup> George et al., *The Limits*.

<sup>118</sup> Kaplan, *Diplomacy of Power*, p.42; Siegel, *Use of Naval Forces*, Table 2.

<sup>119</sup> On the Jordanian crisis diplomatic aspects: Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, pp.145-53; Holloway, *Aircraft Carriers*, Chapter 15; Ashton, Nigel, 'Cold War, Hot War and Civil War: King Hussein and Jordan's Regional Role, 1967-1973' in Ashton, *The Cold War in the Middle East*, pp.188-209; Little, Douglas, 'A Puppet in Search of a Puppeteer? The United States, King Hussein, and Jordan', *The International History Review*, 1/3 (1995), pp.512-44; Kissinger, Henry, *The White House Years*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1979), Chapter XV; On naval diplomacy: Wood, *U.S. Carrier Strike Diplomacy*, pp.20-3; Roberts, 'Superpower Naval Confrontations', pp.170-7; Kidd, 'View from the Bridge', pp.25-7; Zumwalt, *On Watch*, pp.293-307.

## 2.4 The Rise of the Soviet Navy-the Fifth Eskadra

In the immediate post-war, Soviet naval policy experienced several alterations that translated into the shape, size, and missions of the navy.<sup>120</sup> Until Stalin's death, the Soviet Union focused on building a navy centred on a large surface fleet of heavy cruisers and, potentially, aircraft carriers. Under Khrushchev and with the simultaneous development of nuclear bombs and rocketry, the large warship-centred program was discontinued.<sup>121</sup> To Khrushchev, his Army entourage, and some naval strategists, large naval platforms were made obsolete by their vulnerability to nuclear weapons.<sup>122</sup> The missile-equipped submarine became the backbone of the new Soviet naval stance.<sup>123</sup> Khrushchev's interest was attracted by the submarine's capacity to carry nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles that could strike the continental U.S from beyond its territorial waters.<sup>124</sup> With the development of cruise-missile technology its mission was extended to anti-ship attack, complemented by naval aviation equipped with anti-ship missiles.<sup>125</sup> However, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, promoted Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet in January 1956 by Khrushchev envisioned a balanced, all-purpose fleet and, to the growing inventory of submarines and naval aviation, added new classes of guided-missile cruisers and destroyers which were smaller than their Stalin-era predecessors.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, the inner strategic spirit of the Soviet navy remained essentially defensive. Aside from its traditional role of supporting the Army, the navy's defensive posture evolved with the Soviet perception of the Western threat. Accordingly, the fear of Western amphibious operations akin to Overlord that dominated until Stalin's death resulted in a strengthening of littoral defence with the building of scores of small missile-launching vessels complementing a strong naval aviation, shore artillery, and mine-laying vessels.<sup>127</sup> However, the increasing awareness during the second half of the 1950s of the danger U.S. aircraft carriers represented with their

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<sup>120</sup> Herrick, *Soviet Naval Theory*, Chapters VI & VII; Gillette & Willard, *The Sources*; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, Chapters 4 & 5; Wegener, *The Soviet Naval Offensive*, Chapter II.

<sup>121</sup> Herrick, *Soviet Naval Theory*, p.224; Yegorova, 'Stalin's Conception of Maritime Power'; Hauner, 'Stalin's Big-Fleet Program'; Rohwer, Jürgen, 'Alternating Russian and Soviet Strategies', in Gillette & Willard (Ed.), *The Sources*, pp.96-111.

<sup>122</sup> Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, p.100; Wegener, *The Soviet Naval Offensive*, p.22.

<sup>123</sup> Polmar, *Admiral Gorshkov*, p.114-8.

<sup>124</sup> Rohwer, 'Alternating Russian'; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, Chapters 5 and 6; CIA, 'Soviet Naval Strategy and its Effects on the Development of Naval Forces, 1953-1963' (22/10/1963), p.3.

<sup>125</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Naval Strategy, 1953-1963', p.4.

<sup>126</sup> Polmar, *Admiral Gorshkov*, pp.111-4; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, pp.101-3.

<sup>127</sup> Rohwer, 'Alternating Russian', p.109; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, Chapter 7; MccGwire, 'Naval Power and Soviet Global Strategy'.

nuclear bombing capabilities, led to the adoption of a forward defensive posture made possible by the development of anti-ship missile technology.<sup>128</sup> This consisted in an anti-carrier doctrine revolving around the '*first salvo*' tactics where missile-equipped Soviet warships, essentially submarines, and land-based naval aviation were to deal a crippling preemptive blow to Western CTFs before they could strike.<sup>129</sup> Soviet forces were to strike the enemy between the take-off point of its aircraft and the Soviet territory, a distance estimated in the late 1950s at around 1,000 nautical miles.<sup>130</sup>

Despite the deployment of U.S. Polaris-equipped SSBNs in 1964 to the Eastern Mediterranean and their displacement of the carrier as the principal delivery system, Soviet anti-carrier obsession did not abate and anti-carrier systems continued to be reinforced.<sup>131</sup> The carrier was seen as the backbone of NATO fleets and their principal power projection tool, including as a reserve nuclear force. It magnified the vulnerability to air attacks of the Soviet navy and could participate in the ASW barriers interdicting choke points in wartime.<sup>132</sup> Soviet propaganda portrayed it as an "*oppressor of national liberation movements*" following its key role in Western foreign interventions.<sup>133</sup> From the mid-1960s, new warships such as the *Kirov*, *Kresta* and *Kinda* cruiser classes, helicopter carriers of the *Moskva* and *Kiev* classes, and submarines of the NATO-coded *Charlie*, *Victor* and *Papa* classes were equipped with anti-ship and surface-to-air missiles for the prosecution of anti-Polaris ASW and anti-carrier warfare.<sup>134</sup> The constant trailing and surveillance of U.S. CTFs by Soviet warships, submarines, medium and long-range naval aviation, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean, was a necessary condition for the successful discharge of the '*first salvo*' pre-emption in case of war.<sup>135</sup> Doctrinal evolutions about general war and the introduction by the U.S. of '*flexible response*' increasingly admitted the possibility of a conventional phase and reinforced the

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<sup>128</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Capabilities to Counter US Aircraft Carriers', (5/1972), p.5; MccGwire, 'The Evolution of Soviet Naval Policy, 1960-1974', in MccGwire et al., (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Policy*, p.508.

<sup>129</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Capabilities to Counter', pp.29-30; CIA, 'Certain Problems of Superiority at Sea Under Conditions of Closed Naval Theatres', (29/6/1977), p. 7; Wilson, Desmond, *The U.S. Sixth Fleet and the Conventional Defence of Europe*, (Annapolis, MD: CNA, 1976), pp.33-5.

<sup>130</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Naval Strategy, 1953-1963', pp.14-5.

<sup>131</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Capabilities to Counter', p.36.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p.4; Goldstein & Zhukov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets', p.33.

<sup>133</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Capabilities to Counter', p.4.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, pp.6-8 & Tables A-3 & A-4; Polmar, *Guide to the Soviet Navy*, pp.79-86.

<sup>135</sup> Goldstein & Zhukov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets', pp.42 & 53; Bouchard, *Command in Crisis*, pp. xxix & xxxv-xxxvii; Breemer, Jan, 'Soviet Naval Capabilities', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 1/4 (1986), p.123; McConnell, 'The Rules of the Game', pp.262-4; Booth, Ken, *U.S. Naval Strategy*, Lecture at the Naval War College, (Annapolis, MD, 1977), pp.16-7.

role of surface platforms.<sup>136</sup> The use of the new classes of guided-missile cruisers, destroyers, fast-attack missile boats, and AGIs for the trailing of U.S. and British carrier task forces started from the June 1967 War, and their subsequent organisation into anti-carrier task force formations propelled them as visible symbols of Soviet power. They contributed a key input into the development of a Soviet naval diplomacy, heretofore 'handicapped' by the predominance of the submarine.

The strategy of 'peaceful coexistence' in the Third World confronted the U.S.S.R. with unforeseen naval requirements. The humiliations suffered in Lebanon in 1958 and in Cuba in 1962, revealed a pathetically outclassed Soviet navy and amplified the need for an instrument of global power and diplomatic projection. The West's coercive, mainly naval reactions to limited conflicts often involving Soviet-leaning leftists and nationalists, compelled the Soviets to develop means to project their presence to balance Western interventionism and protect their political, military and economic investments in key geographic areas, principally in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.<sup>137</sup> Far-flung client and progressive states and growing maritime interests in trade, fishing and mining, called for a global and powerful maritime presence. It was the concurrence of these two necessities, strategic and diplomatic-ideological, that led to the accelerated rise of a modern Soviet navy from the mid-1960s.

The deployment of the Soviet navy in the Eastern Mediterranean under the form of the Fifth Mediterranean Squadron or Eskadra, fulfilled centuries-old Russian attempts at establishing a permanent presence in this basin, and constituted the first significant deployment of a Russian fleet in the Mediterranean since the days of the Eastern Question. To old Russian strategic aims the Eskadra added Cold War-specific ones. It overcame the Straits and the old Ottoman foe successor state and NATO member – Turkey - while Russian secured access to international SLOCS was reinforced. The advent of the Eskadra constituted a new paradigm for Western naval strategy.<sup>138</sup> It established a permanent forward defence against western CTFs and Polaris SSBNs, outflanking the Sixth Fleet's maritime containment and the European theatre. The quasi-monopoly of Western navies in a key maritime theatre,

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<sup>136</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Naval Strategy: Concepts and Forces for Theatre War Against NATO', (1/1975), p.5-6.

<sup>137</sup> Cox, David, 'Sea Power and Soviet Foreign Policy', *Proceedings*, 95/6, (1969), pp.32-44.

<sup>138</sup> Goldstein & Zuhov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets', p.56; Vego, Milan, 'Soviet and Russian Strategy'; MccGwire & McCormick, 'Soviet Strategic Aims'; El-Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, pp.124-81; Thaler, David, 'The Fifth Eskadra: Soviet Maritime Power in the Mediterranean', *Security Affairs*, 1/3 (1987), pp.1-4; Lewis, Rivero, 'Why a U.S. Fleet in the Mediterranean?' *Proceedings*, 103/5 (1977), pp.65-89; Murphy, F.M., 'The Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean', *Proceedings*, 93/3 (1967), pp.38-44.

a hitherto British then 'NATO lake', was upended while Western SLOCs and the Suez Canal were threatened. The U.S.S.R could now back with visible power its influence projection in a Middle East close to its southern borders. The patterns of use of naval diplomacy were profoundly altered. The Soviet navy could now systematically deploy to crisis areas, shadow or harass Western forces, and make a statement. Western diplomatic flexibility and political impact were seriously impeded. The traditional fleet-to-shore pattern of naval diplomacy was eclipsed by increasingly complex and tense fleet-to-fleet interactions, especially in the Levant where hectic diplomatic messaging using warships manoeuvring could unfold in times of crisis.

The Soviet Navy lacked strong underway repair and replenishment capabilities, forcing the Eskadra into long interludes in open sea anchorages, reducing its endurance and with it, its visibility.<sup>139</sup> These weaknesses were only partially offset by the important role submarines held in the Soviet navy. Despite his reservations about their naval diplomacy value, Cable admits that submarines can play a non-negligible role in leveraging their major weakness, their invisibility. While their stealth and the non-proportionality of their weapon system make them difficult to employ in low-intensity, peacetime coercive actions, the mere suspicion of their presence complicated the tasks of the Sixth Fleet. Throughout the Superpower standoffs related to the Arab-Israeli conflicts, submarines represented around 50% of the Eskadra's deployed major combatants, forcing the Sixth Fleet to earmark a heightened attention to ASW.<sup>140</sup> Their presence also reinforced the message of commitment to Soviet Arab clients ashore. Between 1967 and 1976, regular Soviet submarine calls to Alexandria for replenishment and repairs were powerful reminders of the extent of the Soviet naval presence and of its capabilities. And in a twist to Cable's assertion that a '*submarine cannot communicate a threat without making its presence known*', in September 1970, when the Jordanian Crisis was subsiding, the surfacing of Soviet submarines in clear view of the Sixth Fleet was probably meant to convey the message of a *reduced* threat by voluntarily exposing themselves.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, the Soviet navy lacked aircraft carriers to defend its task forces, for the round-the-clock air surveillance of its Western counterparts, and for tactical support

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<sup>139</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, p.35.

<sup>140</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy* (1st Edition), pp.133-5; Ditzler, Brent, *Naval Diplomacy Beneath the Waves*, MA Thesis, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1989), pp.53-60.

<sup>141</sup> Roberts, 'Superpower Naval Confrontations', p.175.

ashore. These shortcomings made access to shore bases and facilities in the Eastern Mediterranean critical for the continuity of its forward defence mission and for its outflanking projection.<sup>142</sup>

The role of naval diplomacy in the justification of the Soviet naval surge was articulated in Admiral Gorshkov's writings. Gorshkov explicitly promoted naval diplomacy as a conduit for prestige and ideological propaganda but also for the management of limited, 'imperialist' driven conflicts that threatened Soviet client states such as Egypt or Syria.<sup>143</sup> The emergence of a Soviet naval power based on a rich corpus of doctrines and promoting naval diplomacy as a tool for the advancement of 'state interests' had a profound impact on Western naval strategy and thought.

## 2.5 Western Naval Strategic Thought and the Soviet Factor

The creation of the Eskadra in June 1967 and its employment during the June 1967 War, ushered a new Western perception of the Soviet navy as a potential threat to NATO's traditional naval dominance. The threat was made explicit in 1970 when the Soviet naval exercise *Okean 70* mobilised more than 200 ships in globally coordinated manoeuvres. It intervened at a critical phase that witnessed an ageing, shrinking, and soul-searching U.S. Navy, and a Royal Navy having recently pulled back from East of Suez.<sup>144</sup> *Okean 70*, to be followed in 1975 by a roughly similar *Okean 75*, had profound diplomatic and strategic reverberations in the West leading to a revival in U.S. strategic thought.<sup>145</sup> Naval diplomacy was identified as a core function of the U.S. Navy under the concept of 'Presence' and associated with power projection ashore in the *Project Sixty* strategic plan which was released a few months after *Okean 70*, and in Admiral Stansfield Turner's 'Missions of the U.S. Navy' article published four years later.<sup>146</sup> *Project Sixty* and Turner's article constituted the first explicit integration of naval diplomacy as a distinct mission in U.S. official strategic thought,

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<sup>142</sup> Goldstein & Zhukov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets', p.36.

<sup>143</sup> Gorshkov, 'Navies in War and Peace' & *The Sea Power of the State*, pp.251-2. For a critical analysis of Gorshkov's ideas: Rowlands, *Twenty-First Century*; Whitten, Robert, 'Soviet Sea Power in Retrospect', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 11/2, (1998), pp.48-79; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, pp.78-8; McGwire, Michael, 'Gorshkov's Navy', Parts I & II, *Proceedings*, 115/8 & 115/9, (1989); Chipman, 'Admiral Gorshkov'; Chernyavskii, 'The Era of Gorshkov', McConnell, 'The Gorshkov Articles'.

<sup>144</sup> Grove, *From Vanguard to Trident*; Zumwalt, *On Watch*, Chapters, 4 & 6; Baer, *One Hundred Years*, pp.394-418.

<sup>145</sup> Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1970s*, pp.ix-xi & xiii-xv.

<sup>146</sup> 'Project Sixty' in Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1970s*, pp.1-31; Turner, 'Missions of the U.S. Navy'.

with Turner's contribution being released the same year that saw the publication of Gorshkov's *Navies in War in Peace*.

The convergence of all these developments fostered a new academic and doctrinal interest in naval diplomacy. The Soviet factor was prominent in the previously mentioned works by Martin, Cable, Booth, and Luttwak, who drew heavily from incidents involving the Soviet navy to illustrate their analyses and examined the broader aspects of Soviet naval diplomacy and strategy. The first edition of Cable's *Gunboat Diplomacy* devotes a chapter to the Soviet '*Naval Enigma*', while the post-Cold War third edition contains a chapter titled, not without a hint of nostalgia, *In the Absence of the Soviet Union*, that questions the extent and reality of Soviet naval diplomacy and dwells upon the future of naval diplomacy following the exit of the Soviet navy.<sup>147</sup>

A new class of Sovietology emerged, focused on Soviet naval developments and naval diplomacy. Between the early 1970s and mid-1980s, numerous professional and academic works concerning Soviet naval power and naval diplomacy were published, where the latter was attributed at least as much importance as the former. They reflected the shock felt in Western circles following the acquisition of global naval power by a quintessentially continental one.<sup>148</sup> A fascination for the personality and achievements of Admiral Gorshkov developed, which persists until today.<sup>149</sup> Western analysts and naval leaders were impressed by the apparent modernity of Soviet platforms and the power of their weapons systems leading to the perception that the Soviets had tipped the naval balance in their favour.<sup>150</sup>

Naval diplomacy became the Superpowers' preferred tool for crisis management.<sup>151</sup> The seas were the locus of military diplomatic manoeuvrings that were unthinkable on land or in the air. This was blatant in Levantine waters where, in a '*pond*'-like quasi-closed basin, in times of 'peace' or of crises, Western and Soviet warships engaged in mutual trailing and,

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<sup>147</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy* (1<sup>st</sup> Edition), Chapter V & Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), Chapter 5.

<sup>148</sup> Among the many publications on Soviet seapower see Hattendorf, *The Evolution*, Chapter 2 and Appendix 1; Gillette & Willard (Ed.), *The Sources*; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*; Polmar, *Guide to the Soviet Navy*; MccGwire, 'The Rationale for the Development of Soviet Seapower'; Dismukes & McConnell (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*; MccGwire, 'Naval Power and Soviet Global Strategy'; MccGwire et al.(Ed.), *Soviet Naval Policy*; George (Ed.), *Problems of Sea Power*; Ra'anah, 'The Soviet View of Navies'; MccGwire et al. (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Developments: Capability and Context*, (New York: Praeger, 1973); Davis, 'Soviet Naval Strategy'.

<sup>149</sup> Rowlands, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Gorshkov*; Polmar, *Admiral Gorshkov*; Chernyavskii, 'The Era of Gorshkov'; Kurth, 'Gorshkov's Gambit'; Chipman, 'Admiral Gorshkov'.

<sup>150</sup> Turner, Stansfield, 'The Naval Balance', *Foreign Affairs*, 55/2, (1977), pp.339-54.

<sup>151</sup> For the U.S.: Blechman & Kaplan, *Force Without War*; For the U.S.S.R.: Kaplan, *Diplomacy of Power*.



sometimes, close-in buzzing.<sup>152</sup> This potentially dangerous fleet-to-fleet aspect of naval diplomacy acquired a legal dimension with the signing in May 1972, initially by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, of the Agreement for the Prevention of Incidents at Sea.<sup>153</sup> Without the Cold War, naval diplomacy would have remained confined to the realm of the old, uncodified, sporadic, and unilateral gunboat diplomacy.

But what was the reality and extent of Soviet naval diplomacy? What were its distinctive characteristics? It is a fact that a navy built for the purposes of strategic deterrence and defence was able to find the flexibility and the surplus, both in types and numbers, to indulge into naval diplomacy 'in the far abroad'; and there was no inherent contradiction at national strategy level between the strategic and political functions of the Soviet navy.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, Soviet naval diplomacy had to face a specific set of constraints that impacted its nature, scope, and efficiency. It had no modern carriers able to rival U.S. carrier diplomacy and no significant global amphibious capabilities, a fact that deprived it from the flexibility and power projection capability offered by U.S. carriers and MAUs. As discussed, the Soviet navy suffered from a deficiency in underway replenishment capacities, forcing its ships to spend long days in open seas anchorages and limiting their visibility and staying power, two key pre-requisites for a successful naval diplomacy. The overwhelming majority of Soviet naval diplomacy initiatives of the fleet-to-shore category were port visits to show the flag and build influence, and, rarely, a '*vague menace or the expressive mode*'.<sup>155</sup> Naval diplomacy as '*the use or threat of use of limited force*' short of war was rarely practiced by the Soviet Navy, the one significant exception being the warlike behaviour against the Sixth Fleet during the 1973 October War.<sup>156</sup> Soviet naval diplomacy was a derivative of the navy's strategic mission. In the Eastern Mediterranean, in periods free of tensions, the trailing by the Eskadra of Western CTFs - a strategic mission - symbolised the shift in the regional balance of power and the accession of the Soviet Union to a full status of global power, exactly as theorised by

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<sup>152</sup> The '*pond*' image is drawn from USN Admiral Murphy's report during the Yom Kippur War, cited in Zumwalt, *On Watch*, p.447.

<sup>153</sup> Winkler, *Incidents at Sea*, pp.99-124; Winkler, David, 'The Evolution and Significance of the Incidents at Sea Agreement', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28/2 (2005), pp.361-77.

<sup>154</sup> Gorshkov, *The Sea Power*, pp.251-2; Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, p.54; Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, pp.179-85; Smolansky, Oles & Joynt, Carey, 'The Political Background to Soviet Naval Policy in the Mediterranean', in MccGwire (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Developments*, pp.370 & 379.

<sup>155</sup> Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, p.57; Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.137.

<sup>156</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.133.

Admiral Gorshkov.<sup>157</sup> The presence of the Eskadra sent the message that Western naval power had lost its freedom to act at will potentially inhibiting, in a latent suasion mode, 'imperialist aggression' against Soviet allies. Consequently, Soviet clients ashore perceived the Eskadra as their own fleet-in-being and a strategic extension of their defences, exactly as the Israeli Government perceived the Sixth Fleet on the eve of the June 1967 War.<sup>158</sup>

Around the late 1970s, a new Soviet naval '*bastion*' doctrine emerged, transforming Western views about the Soviet navy's primary wartime mission.<sup>159</sup> With the increased range of SLBMs, Soviet SSBNs could now launch their missiles from deep inside Soviet home waters without having to venture through the dangerous choke points and restricted waters that command their access to the open seas. They were to be withheld as a strategic reserve for a second strike or for war termination negotiations.<sup>160</sup> Their bastions, located in the Barents Sea basin and in the Sea of Okhotsk-Kamchatka Peninsula area, were to be protected by a sea-denial area consisting in an array of ASW, anti-carrier and anti-air systems deployed on nuclear attack submarines, naval aviation, and surface platforms.<sup>161</sup> With the exception of the Black Sea Fleet and the Eskadra, the earmarking of surface platforms for bastion defence raised the question of their availability for peacetime use. Indeed, after 1975, the levels of Soviet out-of-area naval presence stabilised albeit at lower levels than in the first half of the decade, while the capacities for a flexible and permanent involvement in crisis management on a global scale appeared constrained.<sup>162</sup> The aggressive U.S. Maritime Strategy of the Reagan era which focused on attacking the bastions and neutralising them, only reinforced this trend until the end of the Cold War.<sup>163</sup>

The imbrication of naval diplomacy with the Cold War and with the rise of the Soviet navy, led logically to a modification in its nature and relevance as the global conflict neared its end. The marginalisation of the U.S.S.R. in Middle Eastern diplomacy and the progressive

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<sup>157</sup> Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, p.81.

<sup>158</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>159</sup> Hattendorf, *The Evolution*, Chapter 2; Breemer, Kan, 'The Soviet Navy's SSBN Bastions', *RUSI Journal*, 134/4, pp.33-9; CIA, 'Soviet Naval Strategy and Programs through the 1990s', (3/1985), pp.1-2.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Hattendorf, *The Evolution*, Appendix 1; Oswald, Sir Julian, *The Soviet Navy-A Western View*, *RUSI Journal*, 141/4 (1996), pp.45-7; Gillette & Willard, *The Sources*, pp.3 & 111; MccGwire, 'Naval Power and Soviet Global Strategy', pp.146-7.

<sup>162</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Naval Strategy and Programs through the 1990s', p.24.

<sup>163</sup> On the U.S. Maritime Strategy: Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1980s*, Document Five; 'The Maritime Strategy', *Proceedings*, Special Supplement, 112/1, 1986.

resolutions of the conflicts in Angola and the Horn of Africa reduced the Soviet navy's exposure to regional crises. The bastion strategy further eroded the availability of its surface platforms for sustained presence overseas. As we shall analyse later, the Western naval deployment in Lebanon in 1982-84 triggered neither a significant surge of the Eskadra nor a marked aggression in its behaviour. In the waning years of the Cold War, academic and doctrinal work concerning naval diplomacy and the Soviet navy progressively dried up. As a practice, naval diplomacy became quasi-exclusively Western. This organic relationship between the Cold War, the rise of the Soviet navy, the crises of the Levant, and naval diplomacy was not consciously recognised and formalised by the first generation of Cold War-era writers about naval diplomacy, despite the prominent place devoted to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Soviet navy in their writings. Nothing better symbolises this relationship than the sight of the international naval force mobilised by the United States for the first post-Cold War regional war, the Gulf War.

## Chapter III – The Levant as Object of Naval Diplomacy

Navies were born in the Levant and with them, naval warfare. Phoenicians and Greeks competed for colonies and trade and Phoenician navies fought for Persia in its Medic Wars. Naval battles with pivotal strategic and civilisational results were fought here, from Salamis to Crete, through Actium and Lepanto.<sup>1</sup> An uninterrupted deployment of seapower where the use of limited naval force short of war was frequent gave the region, with its narrow waters and coastal configuration, a strong maritime identity.<sup>2</sup> Crusaders established kingdoms that depended on maritime power for their survival, with mainly Italian merchants reviving the ancient Phoenician harbours of Acre, Tyre and Sidon, while quasi-uninterrupted SLOCS undergirded a logistical chain of pilgrims, fighters, and goods.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the Levant was anchored to Europe in a geopolitical relationship defined by western seapower.

This chapter addresses how, from early modern times to the Cold War, Levantine crises and mentalities fostered and interacted with recurrent deployments of naval power. It will show how a pattern of naval diplomacy developed in a Levantine theatre defined as much by its geopolitical fundamentals as by its perception of navies. Western seaborne interventions were welcomed by Christian minorities while Muslims reviled them. On both sides, a sedimentation of selective memories emotionally structured the perceptions of the present, endowing naval power with imagined qualities, defining attitudes toward its interventions, and raising expectations as to its effects.<sup>4</sup> Starting with the Eastern Question, a synergy between local crises and naval interventions took hold where the potency of representations derived from the past distorted the impact of naval diplomacy and questioned the strategies that motivated it. Conversely, from Navarino in 1827 to the U.S. landing in Beirut in 1958, naval diplomacy re-modelled the Levant as a political system and contributed to the crystallisation of its collective identities and memories. It was in Levantine waters that the

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<sup>1</sup> Lambert, *Seapower States*; Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, Parts I-IV; Meijer, *A History of Seafaring*; Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War*; Casson, *The Ancient Mariners*.

<sup>2</sup> Gray, *The Leverage*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Gertwagen, Ruthy et al. (Ed.), *Shipping, Trade and Crusade in the Medieval Mediterranean*, (London: Routledge, 2012); France, John, 'The First Crusade as a Naval Enterprise', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 83/4, (1997), pp.389-91; Richard, Jean, 'La Méditerranée des Croisades' in *Regards sur la Méditerranée* (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1997); Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War*, Chapter 5; Groenningsaeter, Arne, 'A 12<sup>th</sup> Century "Sixth Fleet"', *16 NATO Letter* 1 (1968), pp.24-7.

<sup>4</sup> Of collective memories, representations, and perceptions: Fisher, Glen, *Mindsets: The Role of Culture and Perception in International Relations* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997); Pennebaker, *Collective Memories*; Hodgkin, *Contested Pasts*; Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions*; Markwica, *Emotional Choices*.

Royal Navy upheld a *Pax Britannica* and where its decline was played out at the beginning of the Cold War. It is where the U.S maritime containment was born, where the Sixth Fleet was constituted, and where the Soviet Navy, true to old Russian maritime dreams, emerged to challenge it.

### **3.1 A Maritime Geography**

The core Levant is structured around four longitudinal geological zones: a coastal plain, very narrow in the north and widening as one moves southward; a parallel chain of highlands of varying altitude; a central rift valley, and a second mountain chain declining into an eastern plateau. Four west-east depressions cut across the highlands, dividing them into distinct mountain ranges with differentiated populations and cultures.<sup>5</sup> The northernmost range is the Jabal Ansarieh, or Mountain of the Alawites, situated in Syria and with an average height of 850 meters; the central range is Mount Lebanon with an average altitude situated above 2,000 metres; to the south are the fragmented and lower highlands of Palestine, extending from the Upper Galilee to the Negev. The section of the central rift valley situated in Lebanon is the Beqaa with an average altitude of 800 metres. The second mountain range is the Anti-Lebanon which separates Lebanon from Syria and culminates south in the Mount Hermon, a massif shared between Lebanon, Israel, and Syria. By neatly separating the coast from the steppes and deserts of the Syrian-Arabian hinterland, the Levant acts as a land bridge between them, deflecting regional circulation of men, armies, and goods along its coastal North-South axis.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Baly, Denis, 'The Geography of Palestine and the Levant in Relation to its History' in Davies, W. and Finkelstein, L., (Ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.3-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.3.

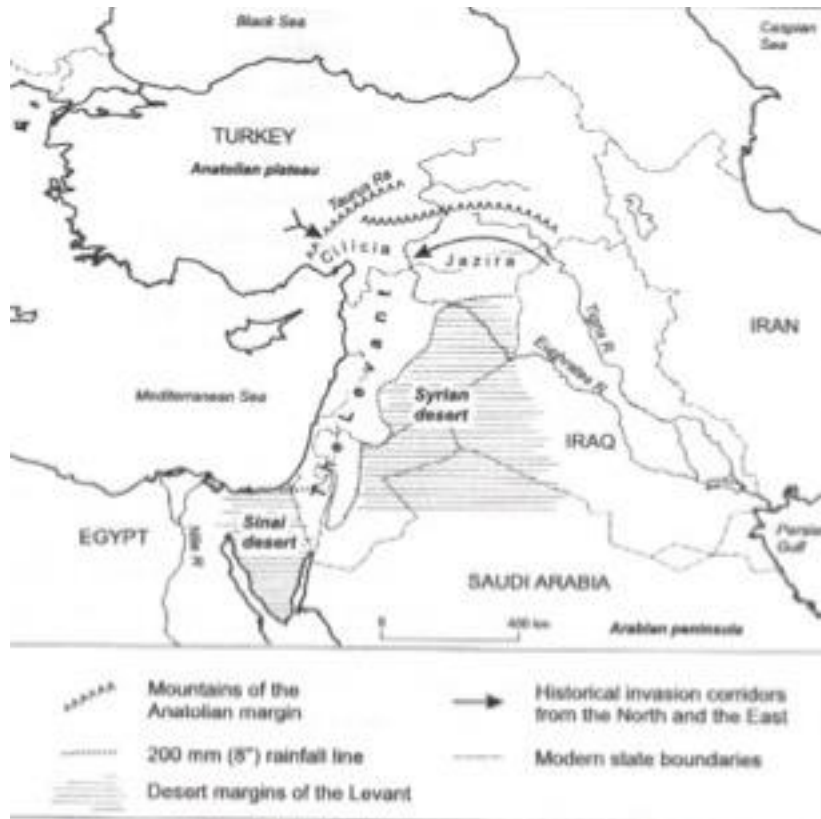


Figure 4 – The Levant. Source: Harris, *The Levant*, p.4.

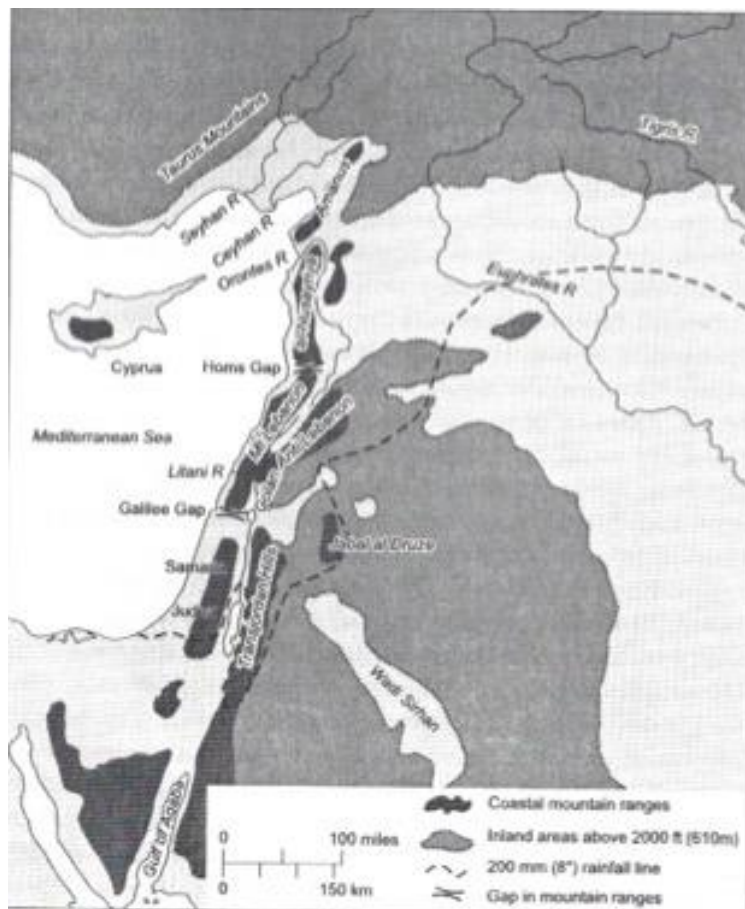


Figure 5 – The Levant Physical Map. Source: Harris, *The Levant*, p.15.

Historically, it is the central section of the coastal plain, a predominantly rocky coast with frequent harbouring possibilities extending from Tripoli in the north to modern Akko (Acre) in the south, which has witnessed the most intense and sustained maritime activity through the centuries. This is the Phoenician coast with ancient trading cities such as Tyre, Sidon (Saida), Beirut, Byblos (Jubail) and Tripoli. These cities are often strategically located near the west-east depressions that cut across the Mount Lebanon range and connect them to the interior.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, of all the Levantine coast, Mount Lebanon is uniquely endowed with a physical feature which adds to its towering height: to the east, it presents a steep, defensive scarp above the Beqaa; to the west, it gently declines to the sea, offering access to the harbours of the coast.<sup>8</sup> Hence, for the ethno-religious minorities such as the Christian Maronites and the Islamic-heterodox Druses who settled in these mountains, the Lebanon offered the combined advantages of safe reclusion in a fortress-refuge, and of access to the sea. The maritime-oriented western slopes of the Lebanon connected the cultures, economy, and politics of the Mountain to the mercantile cities of the coast and beyond, to Europe. The Mountain was hence an integral part of the Levantine maritime ecosystem.

### **3.2 Maritime Minorities and Memories**

The core Levant is home to a trove of ethno-religious minorities.<sup>9</sup> This minority status is chiefly religiously determined and reflects the fact that demographically, militarily, and politically the predominant force in the region since the early Islamic empires have been the Sunni Muslims. There are two broad categories of minorities: the Islamic heterodox ones, ranging in increasing degree of heterodoxy from the Twelver Shi'a to the Alawites and including the Ismaili and the Druse; and the non-Islamic minorities, essentially Christians and Jews. The Christians of the Levant are distributed among several different denominations, dominated by the Catholics with the Maronites at the forefront, and the Greek Orthodox.

Before the twentieth century, Christians - predominantly Greek Orthodox - and Jews lived in the cities, dwelling in segregated quarters but mixing with Muslims in markets and harbours.<sup>10</sup> The notable exception were the Maronites who elected refuge in the northern

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<sup>7</sup> Baly, 'The Geography of Palestine', p.8.

<sup>8</sup> De Planhol, *Minorités en Islam*, pp.59-60; Baly, 'The Geography of Palestine', p.9.

<sup>9</sup> Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World*; Chabry, *Politique et Minorités*; de Planhol, *Minorités en Islam*.

<sup>10</sup> Mansel, 'Cities of the Levant', p.228.

Lebanese mountains.<sup>11</sup> The most heterodox of Muslim sects, such as the Alawites and Ismailis, hunted down by Sunni power, took refuge in the highlands of the northern Syrian coast; the Druse settled in the southern half of Mount Lebanon.<sup>12</sup> If the non-Islamic minorities were subjected to the derogatory status of the *dhimma* - with the exception of the Maronites in their mountain refuge - , they also benefited from an internal autonomy in the management of their economic, religious, and personal status matters.<sup>13</sup> Under Ottoman rule, this was translated and institutionalised into the system of the *millet*, from the Arabic word meaning nation or community, contributing to the crystallisation of differentiated, quasi-national, and religion-based minority identities.<sup>14</sup>

Three seaborne geopolitical shocks deeply impacted the relationship of these minorities with the sea and with Europe, while structuring their self-definition of identity and their collective memories. The first shock came with the Crusades. If the First Crusade was a land expedition, the subsequent Crusades heavily relied on maritime transport and gave way to an uninterrupted flow of logistics and trade built around the Latin Kingdoms of the Levantine coast. By projecting European military, cultural and economic power on the littoral, the Crusades gave minorities with a strong rebellious ethos such as the Maronites a strategic depth and wider maritime horizons, anchoring them religiously, intellectually, and emotionally to the West. Between 1266 and 1291, the fall of the Frankish principalities of the coast - in Byblos, Tripoli, and Beirut - was a bitter experience for most Maronites. Henceforth, until the Capitulations heralded the progressive return of Western seapower, they lived in the expectation of a Frankish *Reconquista*.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the Crusades had crystallised the Maronites' vision of the sea as an escape from seclusion and source of protection and contributed to the emergence of a maritime expectation that will be progressively fulfilled over the next six centuries.<sup>16</sup>

The second shock derived from the Eastern Question which, for Levantine Christian minorities, took the form of a '*gentle Crusade*', a seaborne protection, education, and

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<sup>11</sup> Salibi, Kamal, 'The Maronites of Lebanon under Frankish and Mamluk Rule (1099-1516)', *Arabica*, 4/3 (1957), pp.288-90.

<sup>12</sup> De Planhol, *Minorités en Islam*, pp.70-91.

<sup>13</sup> On the *dhimma* system, see Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi*, (London: Associated University Press, 1985).

<sup>14</sup> Chabry, *Politique et Minorités*, pp.39-42.

<sup>15</sup> Salibi, 'The Maronites', pp.9-10.

<sup>16</sup> Nga Longva, Anh, 'From the Dhimma to the Capitulations', in Nga Longva & Roald, Ann-Sofie, (Ed.), *Religious Minorities in the Middle East*, pp.47-71.



promotion.<sup>17</sup> The watershed event inside the Eastern Question were the large-scale massacres of Christians in Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860 at the hands of the Druse and the Muslim urban populace, which irremediably altered the political, strategic, and psycho-social configuration of the Levant. Their traumatic memory lasts to these days and contributes to structure the present. During the two Lebanese 'civil' wars of 1958 and 1975-90 which witnessed Western naval interventions, the 'massacres of the 60s' (*Madhabih al Sitteen*), were regularly evoked as a way to conjure the past and justify calls for international interventions.<sup>18</sup> Of equal structuring importance for collective perceptions and imaginaries was the European naval intervention which fulfilled Christian expectations regarding the protective role of European seapower.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, the French power projection ashore, its hunt for culprits and demand for their punishment, and the creation of the semi-autonomous, Christian-majority Mount Lebanon with European guarantees, instilled in Druse and Muslims a perception of unfairness and equated in their minds Western naval interventions with a *parti pris* for Christians.<sup>20</sup> Their feelings morphed with the Islamic revival stemming from the frustrations of the Ottoman elite and society with European meddling and intrusive influence and re-opened the old wounds of the Crusades.<sup>21</sup>

The third shock came from the definitive projection of Western power after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the modern Levantine state system under the aegis of British and French mandatory power. Inspired by the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreements, the mandates acknowledged the Levantine mosaic and were broadly beneficial to minorities. In their realm, the French responded to Maronite representations by helping create Greater Lebanon in 1920, a polity imagined by a minority for minorities.<sup>22</sup> In Syria, France promoted minority identities through the creation of semi-independent 'states' for the Alawites and the

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<sup>17</sup> Makdisi, Ussama, *Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), Chapter II.

<sup>18</sup> Abou, Selim, *Béchar Gemayel ou l'Esprit d'un Peuple* (Paris: Anthropos, 1984), p.308; Pennebaker, 'On the Creation and Maintenance of Collective Memories', in Pennebaker, *Collective Memories*, p.6.

<sup>19</sup> Bouyrat, *La France*, pp.580-623.

<sup>20</sup> Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, Chapter IV.

<sup>21</sup> Riley-Smith, Jonathan, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), Chapter Four.

<sup>22</sup> Boustani, François, *Liban: Genèse d'une Nation Singulière*, (Paris: Erik Bonnier, 2020); Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, Chapter 8.

Druse.<sup>23</sup> In Palestine, Britain opened the way for the political re-birth of the Jewish people.<sup>24</sup> But it was in Lebanon that the bond between minority politics and naval foreign interventions was the strongest because it stemmed from the country's unique physical, demographical, and historical construct. By gathering eighteen ethno-religious denominations in a resolutely maritime oriented economy, Lebanon represented the quintessential Levant, the core of the core, its recurrent convulsions calling for repeated naval interventions by the Powers in a constant replay of the Eastern Question.

From this tormented history, conflicting collective memories and narratives have emerged as to the attitude toward foreign interventions and seapower. The recollection of events is a subjective cognitive process, and how history is remembered is more important than the actual events.<sup>25</sup> Memories are selected because they play a critical role in structuring a collective identity.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, in the Levant, the past is contested because the '*understanding of the past has strategic, political, and ethical consequences*' and this fact translates into deep conflicts over representations.<sup>27</sup> In the Levant and in Lebanon in particular, these selective memorial processes crystallized, among other aspects, in the attitudes towards Western naval interventions, pitting two diametrically opposed but equally subjective perceptions of their meaning and implications. In the case of the Druse, the memory of foreign naval intervention is rhetorically presented in negative terms even though their community, a heterodox minority theoretically open to offshore balancing, benefited from them to a certain degree. The Druse succeeded in building a loose patron-client relationship with Britain. Moreover, the French mandate in Syria granted them a semi-autonomous state in the southern Hauran region which only reluctantly bowed to reunification with the rest of Syria in 1936.<sup>28</sup> It was the massacres of 1860, the perceived French 'siding' with the Christians, and their negative institutional, political, and economic consequences for the Druse elite, which attributed to western seapower a negative connotation. It is their rivalry with the Maronites which informed Druse hostility to naval

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<sup>23</sup> White, *The Emergence of Minorities*, Chapter II.

<sup>24</sup> Fieldhouse, D.K., *Western Imperialism in the Middle East, 1914-1958*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Chapters 4 & 5.

<sup>25</sup> Fisher, Glen, *Mindsets*, p.4.

<sup>26</sup> Gaskell, George & Wright, Daniel, 'Group Differences in Memory for a Political Event', in Pennebaker, *Collective Memories*, pp.177-9.

<sup>27</sup> Hodgkin, *Contested Pasts*, pp.1-7.

<sup>28</sup> White, *The Emergence of Minorities*, Chapter III.

interventions, superseding all other more rational considerations. Conversely, in the case of the Maronites and most Christian denominations the same 1860 experience, reinforced by the creation first of an autonomous Mount Lebanon and then of the State of Greater Lebanon under French patronage, led to the positive perception of seapower as the source of freedom and independence, and the expression of the protection by France, the 'tender mother' (*Al-Umm Al-Hanun*) in Maronite mythology. Cognitive dissonances such as the role played by the Allied naval blockade of the Ottoman Empire in enabling the famine which killed nearly the third of Mount Lebanon's inhabitants between 1915 and 1918, were swept aside in Christian Lebanese collective memories by solely blaming the Ottomans: Western naval power could only be benevolent.<sup>29</sup> Such cognitive dissonances were also comforted by a powerful European, especially French, scholarly production and media as well as public opinion that 'sanctified the Christians' in Lebanon going as far as presenting them as Frenchmen, heirs to an alleged mixing with Crusaders.<sup>30</sup> France's own actions were presented as Crusading enterprises aiming at throwing Islam back into the desert, beyond the Lebanon's ridge.<sup>31</sup> This 'virtuous' dialectic obscured the realist and less altruistic background of this passionate propaganda and of the naval interventions which they justified, and encouraged selective Christian perceptions and expectations during the Lebanese crises of the Cold War, leading to bitter disillusionments.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.3 Naval Power and the Management of the Eastern Question

While the Crusades were by many aspects a maritime endeavour, from transporting troops and logistics to controlling the SLOCs between the Latin kingdoms of the Levant and Europe, all through the exercise of blockades, they did not produce identifiable naval diplomatic events.<sup>33</sup> Their key contributions to future naval diplomacy was their awakening of Levantine

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<sup>29</sup> The Ottomans simultaneously established a land-blockade of the Mountain to prevent an Allied landing and connection with the Maronites. The French sought to alleviate the sufferings, but the naval blockade was not lifted. See: Farshee, Louis, *Safer Barlik*, (Portland, OR: Inkwaterpress, 2015); Bouyrat, Yann, 'Une Crise Alimentaire Provoquée? La Famine au Liban (1915-1918)', *Congrès National des Sociétés Historiques et Scientifiques* (Rennes: CHTS, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Bouyrat, *La France*, pp.603-20; Arsan, Andrew, 'There is in the Heart of Asia an Entirely French Population', in Lorcin, Patricia & Shepard, Todd, (Ed.), *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), pp.83-6; Ristelhueber, René, *Traditions Françaises au Liban*, (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1918).

<sup>31</sup> Poujoulat, Baptistin, *La Vérité sur la Syrie*, (Beirut: Lahd Khater, 1986, [1881]), p.12.

<sup>32</sup> Arsan, 'There is in the Heart of Asia', p.80.

<sup>33</sup> France, 'The First Crusade as a Naval Enterprise', pp.389-91.

minorities to the protective value of the sea, and their establishment of a permanent maritime flow between Western Europe and the Levant, embodied over the next five centuries in the activities of the Italian merchant city-states of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice.

Despite occasional uses of proto-naval diplomacy in Lebanon by Tuscany and Venice in the sixteenth century and by Russia in the 1770s, it was the end of the French Revolutionary Wars in 1815, the slow emergence of the Eastern Question in the 1830s, and the rise of British naval mastery in the Mediterranean that ushered the golden period of gunboat diplomacy in the Levant.<sup>34</sup> The first significant act of gunboat diplomacy in Levantine crises was the British, French, and Russian interposition naval force sent to separate rampaging Turco-Egyptian troops and warships from Greek independence fighters.<sup>35</sup> However, the show of force intended by the British commander of the Allied task force, Admiral Codrington, by penetrating into the harbour of Navarino on October 14, 1827, degenerated into a devastating battle that left the Turco-Egyptian Fleet in tatters.<sup>36</sup> Intended as a purposeful action and degenerating into a warlike definitive one, the Battle of Navarino is an early example of the escalation potential of naval power, and a sinister illustration of what the Cold War concept of the 'first salvo' could mean.

The Egyptian-Ottoman wars between 1830 and 1840 resulting from the ambitions of Muhammad Ali, the French-backed khedive of Egypt, gave way to an active and sophisticated naval diplomacy by the European powers. The khedive's son, Ibrahim Pacha, overran Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.<sup>37</sup> He threatened the sacrosanct Ottoman *status quo* of the European Concert and constituted a danger to Britain's maritime communications across the Mediterranean as well as to Russia's ambitions in Constantinople.<sup>38</sup> After the signing of the London Convention in 1840 with Russia, Austria, and Prussia, Palmerston obtained free hand to deal with France and her Egyptian protégé.<sup>39</sup> With the cooperation of the Austrian navy, British gunboat diplomacy, definitive in appearance and often taking a resolutely warlike

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<sup>34</sup> Olsaretti, Alessandro, 'Political Dynamics in the Rise of Fakhr al-Din, 1690-1633', *The International History Review*, 30/4 (2008), pp.709-40; Harris, William, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.122-8; Persen, Wm, 'The Russian Occupations of Beirut, 1772-1774', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 42/3-4, (1955), pp.275-86; Anderson, *Naval Wars*, Chapter X.

<sup>35</sup> Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, pp.42-7.

<sup>36</sup> Anderson *Naval Wars*, pp.508-35.

<sup>37</sup> Bouyrat, *La France*, pp.89-108.

<sup>38</sup> Matzke, *Deterrence Through Strength*, pp.159-60.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.164; Graham, Gerald, *The Politics of Naval Supremacy: Studies in British Maritime Ascendancy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp.65-70.

aspect as in the landings in Lebanon and the bombardment of Acre, was in fact fundamentally purposeful and deterrent as its main target was the containment of France. This Oriental Crisis inside the Eastern Question was seminal for naval and diplomatic history because it revealed the full might of the British navy, its capacity to strike at will, and constituted one of the high points of the *Pax Britannica*.<sup>40</sup> The cooperation between British naval officers and mainly Christian highlanders contributed to the establishment of the peculiar Levantine pattern of external protector-protected minorities which would shape the dynamics of the Eastern Question, of local mentalities, and of the future Levantine state system.<sup>41</sup>

The seminal event in gunboat diplomacy in general and in Levantine naval diplomacy in particular was the European *intervention d'humanité* in Lebanon in August 1860.<sup>42</sup> As discussed earlier, the massacres of Christians in Mount Lebanon spread to Damascus, threatening to degenerate into annihilation.<sup>43</sup> Under pressure from their domestic constituencies, the European Powers spearheaded by France launched a multi-national naval rescue mission gathering the navies of Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia. Only the French landed a force of 12,000 men tasked with a mission consisting in rescuing the survivors and compelling the Ottoman authorities to identify the culprits and punish them.<sup>44</sup> The French mission was a mitigated success as it would have needed more than the six months imposed by the other competing Powers for its deployment.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, this first example of humanitarian naval diplomacy, of post-modern *devoir d'ingérence*, gave way to an enterprise of nation-building as the Powers imposed on the Ottoman Empire a special status for the majority Christian Mount Lebanon, a *Règlement Organique* which constituted the legal and administrative precedent for the future Republic of Lebanon.<sup>46</sup>

The 1860 intervention inaugurated a pattern of naval diplomacy which will be experienced again in Lebanese waters during the Cold War. First, European warships appeared off the Lebanese littoral in a catalytic posture at the beginning of the crisis in June

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<sup>40</sup> Anderson, *Naval Wars*, pp.550-66.

<sup>41</sup> Bouyrat, *La France*, pp.201-25; Churchill, Charles, *The Druzes and the Maronites* (Kindle Book, [1860]), pp.31-3.

<sup>42</sup> Heraclides & Dialla, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.2; Rodogno, Davide, 'The 'Principles of Humanity' and the European Powers interventions in Ottoman Lebanon and Syria in 1860-1861', in Simms & Trim, (Ed.), *Humanitarian Intervention*, Chapter 7; Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, p.10.

<sup>43</sup> Heraclides & Dialla, *Humanitarian Intervention*, pp.137-8, Bouyrat, *La France*, pp.519-35.

<sup>44</sup> Bouyrat, *La France*, pp.537-52.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, pp.552-72.

<sup>46</sup> Harris, *Lebanon*, pp.158-61.

with naval infantry occasionally landing to protect and evacuate European nationals, but without intervening to prevent the widescale massacres of Christians.<sup>47</sup> However, their mere presence was probably purposeful in effect as the massacres in the coastal areas stopped from where the warships could be seen, but not in the interior where the worst occurred. The Russian frigate *Vladimir* approached Beirut with 600 marines onboard while the British warship *Mohawk* ferried hundreds of Christian refugees from the southern coast to Beirut.<sup>48</sup> Second, intense diplomatic consultations took place over June and July before launching the expedition *per se*. They were made necessary by the mutual suspicions among the Powers and by the need to maintain the stability of the Ottoman Empire and thus, of the European Concert. At the core of the diplomatic game was British and Russian suspicions of France's ambitions, with Britain teared between the moral duty of intervention and the strategic need to prevent a permanent French military establishment in Lebanon and Syria, a threat to its Mediterranean communications at a time when the drilling of the Suez Canal had just started.<sup>49</sup> Hence, one of the protocols signed between the Powers and the Ottomans to organize the intervention contained an article of '*disinterestedness*' whereby '*the contracting powers*' promised not to seek exclusive advantages and influence onshore.<sup>50</sup> The French landing took place *after* the massacres had been stopped by the Ottomans, fearful of Western retribution. The European naval intervention thus acted in a purposeful and compellent mode rather than in a definitive one. Third, for further insurance the French onshore presence was limited to six months, its mission being defined as '*essentially restorative...assuming the character of an act of justice and humanity*'; hence, mutual neutralisation between the Powers led to the dilution of initial French instincts for forcible intervention into a peacekeeping force devoid of coercive content.<sup>51</sup> Fourth, the diplomatic balance was reflected in the naval deployments. Starting from the end of June, nearly twenty-eight warships from different European nationalities crowded the Lebanese littoral.<sup>52</sup> In naval diplomacy terms, their collective presence constituted an expressive force and an active compellent suasion aimed at the Ottoman Empire (to stop the massacres and punish the

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<sup>47</sup> Rodogno, 'The 'Principles of Humanity'', p.168.

<sup>48</sup> Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, p.99; Churchill, *The Druzes*, p.195.

<sup>49</sup> Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, p.105.

<sup>50</sup> Churchill, *The Druzes*, p.220.

<sup>51</sup> Heraklides & Dialla, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.140.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*.

culprits), and a successively catalytic then purposeful posture as to local developments (compel the Muslims to stop and reassure the Christians). But individually, each country watched the others and especially the French in an expressive posture seeking latent deterrent suasion. Last, with British connivence, the Ottomans were able to outpace any coercive temptation of the French force which had to limit itself to its strictly humanitarian task and to leave Lebanon not without frustration and a vague feeling of humiliation.

Sixty years later, an inverted remake of the 1860 situation occurred on the northern edge of the greater Levant. Following the Ottoman defeat in 1918, the victors' rush for territorial and economic spoils pitted Britain and Greece against France and Italy.<sup>53</sup> The landing of a Greek army at Smyrna in May 1919, Allied occupation of Constantinople, and other schemes for the partitioning of Asia Minor triggered the rise of the Turkish Nationalists led by Mustapha Kemal.<sup>54</sup> The Nationalists' defeat of the Greek army and their occupation of Smyrna in September 1922 set the stage for the burning of the city and for the massacre and expulsion of its Christian population.<sup>55</sup> The Allied and American navies present off Smyrna - more than twenty-one warships including two British battleships - watched passively as the tragedy unfolded.<sup>56</sup> Their interventions were to be strictly limited to the evacuation of their own nationals and they turned away hopeless Smyrnaeans.<sup>57</sup> It was the actions of an American protestant relief worker, Asa Jennings, that finally enabled the dispatching of Greek warships, reluctantly protected by U.S. destroyers, for the evacuation of more than 200,000 refugees.<sup>58</sup>

In naval diplomacy terms, the crisis witnessed a multi-directional messaging. First, the Western navies neutralized each other in an expressive mode, reflecting their respective countries strategic competition. Second, their broad posture vis-à-vis the general events in Asia Minor was catalytic as the strategic landscape was rapidly shifting, generating a host of opportunities and threats. Third, towards the Nationalists, the fleets exuded expressive powerlessness while offering a passive and *de facto* supportive suasion as the Nationalists'

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<sup>53</sup> Daleziou, Elephtheria, *Britain and the Greek-Turkish War*, PhD Thesis, (University of Glasgow, 2002), pp.8-10; Llewelyn Smith, Michael, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor*, (London: Hurst & Co., 1998).

<sup>54</sup> Stewart, Matthew, 'Catastrophe at Smyrna', *History Today*, 54/7 (2004), p.28.

<sup>55</sup> Morris, Benny & Ze'vi, Dror, *The Thirty-Year Genocide*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp.429-67.

<sup>56</sup> Housepian, *Smyrna: 1922*, p.101.

<sup>57</sup> Shenk, *America's Black Sea Fleet*, Chapter 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, pp.231-6.

victory was irreversible. Fourth, a purposeful element of deterrent suasion was present in the case of the Royal Navy as illustrated by the dispatch of the battleship *Ajax* from Smyrna to Constantinople to control the consequences of the impending Nationalist capture of Constantinople and prepare for the armistice negotiations from a position of strength.<sup>59</sup> The tragedy of Smyrna closed the chapter of humanitarian interventions that had opened in the nineteenth century and with it the policies of minorities protection that underpinned the Eastern Question.

### **3.4 The Levant in the Cold War: Naval Diplomacy in Crisis Management**

The choice of the Levant for the study of naval diplomacy during the Cold War derives from the recognition that, as was the case during the Eastern Question, it was in Levantine waters that naval diplomacy experienced developments that were specific to the Cold War and came to characterise its naval signature. In parallel to the first actions of naval diplomacy by the U.S. with the *Missouri cruise*, a muscular British coercive naval diplomacy to prevent Zionist-commissioned refugee ships from reaching the shores of Palestine was particularly active during the last years of the British Mandate. The Palestine Patrol flotilla of two destroyers, a frigate, and two ocean minesweepers had to be expanded to squadron level that included a cruiser to meet special contingencies such as the interception and boarding of the *Exodus 1947* in July 1947.<sup>60</sup> U.S. naval diplomacy was also deployed in these dying days of the British Mandate with the recently formed Sixth Fleet patrolling the waters of the Levant as early as January 1948. The death of the U.S. Consul in Jerusalem by sniper fire in June brought the carrier *Kearsarge* to Palestinian shores with Marines landing to secure American citizens and assets. In support of the U.N. Palestine Truce Commission, three Sixth Fleet destroyers and associated auxiliaries were allocated to the U.N. mediator Count Folke Bernadotte. The Attack Cargo *Marquette* served as a meeting venue in 1949 for Bernadotte with the commanders of the U.S Task Force 167, while the destroyer *Putnam* became the first U.S. ship to fly the U.N. flag.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Daleziou, *Britain and the Greek-Turkish War*, p.260.

<sup>60</sup> Grove, *Vanguard to Trident*, pp.155-8.

<sup>61</sup> Siegel, 'Use of Naval Forces', Table 6/16; *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Naval History and Heritage Command (2015).



These early tensions contributed to a growing Western realisation of the region's potentially dangerous mix of homegrown conflicts with the emerging Cold War. An initially reluctant U.S., geographically and 'mentally' remote from the Mediterranean in general and from the Levant in particular, progressively realised the theatre's potential contributions to the prosecution of the conflict.<sup>62</sup> On the heels of the *Missouri* visit to Greece and Turkey in early April 1946 the light-cruiser *Providence* was dispatched to Alexandria and Beirut later in the month.<sup>63</sup> In December 1946, after visiting Izmir, Special Task Group 125.9 led by the carrier *Randolph* escorted by three destroyers, a cruiser, and a LSD carrying a contingent of U.S. Marines, called at Beirut for a few days before the final French withdrawal from Lebanon. The *Randolph* cruise took place after the decision, in September 1946, to create a permanent U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean, itself following a highly successful visit by the large carrier *Franklin D. Roosevelt* to Greece earlier that month.<sup>64</sup> The realisation that the Eastern Mediterranean could become a key theatre in any future war led to this decision. With its acknowledgment of a Soviet superiority on the European continent, it was in the Mediterranean that the Western Alliance could deploy its strengths in sea and air power.

Starting in mid-1946 with the U.S. originated *Pincher* series of contingency plans for World War Three, British and American planning considered the Middle East, especially the Levantine arc pivoting around the British base of Abu Sueif in Suez, as a springboard for counterattack after the initial Soviet onslaught in Europe.<sup>65</sup> From Suez and from aircraft carriers, strategic bombing would target the Soviet industrial southwest and the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania and in the Caucasus, while Western navies would protect sea and air lines of communications and provide support for Allied ground troops. The defence of the Levant was deemed critical for the preservation of the Suez base and the access to Middle Eastern oil, a key concern for Allied navies.<sup>66</sup> The early development of a specific carrier diplomacy in the region aimed precisely at displaying U.S. and Western capabilities to protect the southern flanks of the European theatre, but also to strike the Soviet Union from Levantine waters

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<sup>62</sup> On America's pre-war involvements in Levantine geopolitics: Patrick, Andrew, *America's Forgotten Middle East Initiative: The King-Crane Commission of 1919*, (IB. Tauris, 2015); Shenk, *America's Black Sea Fleet*; Bryson, *Tars, Turks*; Evans, Lawrence, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey, 1914-1924*, (Baltimore: MD, John Hopkins University Press, 1965).

<sup>63</sup> Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*, p.46.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, pp.76-7; Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers*, pp.286-92.

<sup>65</sup> Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, Chapter II.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, pp.31-8.

while shielding the Middle East and the crucial Suez Canal base.<sup>67</sup> In a confined Levantine basin, aircraft carriers had a special diplomatic resonance that magnified their awe. Taking excuse from demands of enthusiastic host countries during friendly visits by U.S. CTFs, the carriers unleashed spectacular aerial shows above Athens and Beirut which were interpreted correctly by Soviet diplomats and propaganda for what they were - expressive displays of capabilities in commitment to the region's security and for the deterrence of Communist threats, as well as a readiness to use them.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, one of the first effects of the containment was the confirmation of the permanence of U.S. naval presence through the creation in June 1948 of the Sixth Task Fleet with its name to be later changed into Sixth Fleet in February 1950.<sup>69</sup> Six months later, the carriers *Midway* and *Leyte* escorted by the cruisers *Salem* and *Columbus* were invited to Lebanon for a carrier airshow, an event which confirmed the U.S. presence in the Levant despite the Korean war.<sup>70</sup>

During the 1950s, the Western powers resorted to coercive naval diplomacy for the control or prevention of the rise of ideologies and regimes that were deemed detrimental to their regional interests. The Levant is the gateway to the oil-producing Persian Gulf and a maritime outlet, on Lebanese and Syrian shores, to the oil pipelines transporting Iraqi and Saudi Arabian production essential for Western Europe's energy and economic security.<sup>71</sup> It is a communication hub outflanking the Suez Canal and the Turkish Straits - a critical choke-point for Soviet maritime activities - while serving as an air and land terminal for a web of intercontinental and regional routes. And because the Levant is the gatekeeper of the U.S.S.R.'s southwestern industrial and population centres, it became a key theatre for the enforcement of containment. Britain and the United States spent most of the 1950s trying to structure regional alliances to outflank the Communist bloc, prepare for area defence, and thwart what they considered to be Soviet-inspired local political developments. Between 1946 and 1954, successive British and U.S. projects for a regional security architecture were floated. Because they were built on the assumption of Egyptian participation and of guaranteed use of the British base in Suez, they were all compromised by the rise of anti-

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<sup>67</sup> Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*, p.26 & Chapter 4.

<sup>68</sup> On the visit of the carrier *F.D. Roosevelt* to Greece, see Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers*, pp. 307-13; Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*, pp. 76-8.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p.106; Xydis, 'The Genesis of the Sixth Fleet'.

<sup>70</sup> Siegel, 'Use of Naval Forces', Table 6/25.

<sup>71</sup> Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, pp.92-5; Yaqub, Salim, 'Contesting Arabism', *The United States and the Middle East*, YCIAS, Vol III, (Yale MacMillan Centre Online, 2006), pp.116-18.

imperialist, anti-British, Egyptian and Arab nationalist ideologies.<sup>72</sup> The accession of Gamal Abd El-Nasser to power in 1952 led to the re-negotiation under American auspices of the basing agreement with Britain, who would have to evacuate the facilities in 1956 with a right of return in case of a Soviet attack on the region.<sup>73</sup> These complications, reinforced by a growing American realisation that the Suez base was indefensible in the nuclear era, led to a shift of U.S. attention to the Northern Tier, a concept encompassing Turkey and Iran, and extending into Pakistan. Significant American strategic investments in bases and critical military infrastructures in Turkey provided the impetus for the accession in 1952 of both Greece and Turkey to full NATO membership and to the Alliance's security guarantees. The U.S.-led pivot to the Northern Tier encouraged the signing of the Baghdad Pact in February 1955 between Turkey, Iraq, and Iran with Britain joining the club and the U.S. informally participating in its strategic planning. The Pact epitomised a divide between a containment-oriented predominantly non-Arab Northern Tier, and an increasingly Soviet-supported neutralist and anti-imperialist Arab-dominated camp.<sup>74</sup> The tensions between these two broad groupings played out between 1955 and 1958, principally in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. They were aggravated by the enunciation of the Eisenhower Doctrine in March 1957 which promised American military support for countries victims of direct or indirect Communist threats and resulted in an intense naval diplomacy activity that reached its apex in 1957 and 1958.

In the spring of 1957, an Arab nationalist attempted *coup* to topple King Hussein of Jordan led to the deployment by the Sixth Fleet of two CTFs around the *Forrestal* and the *Lake Chaplain* supported by the battleship *Wisconsin*, two cruisers, 24 destroyers, a Mediterranean Amphibious Ready Group (MARG), and submarines.<sup>75</sup> The deployment aimed at deterring possible Syrian and/or Egyptian interventions as well as any Soviet temptation of open meddling and was also supportive as it boosted the King's morale. It also inaugurated a pattern of oversized U.S. naval diplomacy. Gone were the times when a single battleship in the Sea of Marmara was deemed sufficient to communicate the full national power of the

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<sup>72</sup> Ashton, Nigel, 'The Hijacking of a Pact: The Formation of the Baghdad Pact and Anglo-American Tensions in the Middle East, 1955-1958', *Review of International Studies*, 19/2 (1993), pp.123-37.

<sup>73</sup> Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, pp.116-23.

<sup>74</sup> Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, Chapter 2; Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism*, Chapters 7 to 9; Poteh, Elie, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World*, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995).

<sup>75</sup> Siegel, 'Use of Naval Forces', Table 6/43; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, pp.121-38.

United States. In the charged atmosphere of the mid-1950s huge task forces, most often in catalytic mode, responded to limited Levantine crises, a pattern that would culminate in the 1958 intervention in Lebanon. The naval might displayed during the Jordanian episode was expanded during the Syrian crisis in the fall of the same year. Fearing a Communist take-over in Damascus and irritated by Syria's strident hostility to the Baghdad Pact and its enthusiastic allegiance to Nasser, Turkish and Iraqi forces massed on the country's borders following a botched U.S.-inspired *coup*.<sup>76</sup> Concurrently, the U.S. deployed four CTFs, a move that coincided with the first ever visit to Syrian ports by two Soviet warships in September - the cruiser *Zhdanov* and the destroyer *Svobodni* - a fact which acquired an international resonance thanks to the peculiar context and Arab propaganda, and despite a marked Soviet failure to exploit it.<sup>77</sup> Nasser gambled his own naval capabilities by executing a symbolic amphibious landing in Latakia in October, in a show of support for Syrian nationalists.<sup>78</sup> Nasser's move was an attempt at expressive naval diplomacy and active suasion by a minor naval power in clear defiance of an overwhelming naval superiority. Its naval and military value may have been anecdotic but coming on the heels of the Soviet warships' visit to Latakia, it created a dynamic of challenge to Western naval power - symbolically balancing the Anglo-French landing in Suez a year earlier - and it provided a display of a hitherto unforeseen act of Arab solidarity that paved the way for the union of Egypt and Syria in February 1958 in the U.A.R.

As it will be detailed in Chapter 5, the trend which started in Istanbul in 1946 culminated in July 1958 with the American landing in Lebanon, the largest unopposed amphibious operation since the Second World War, essentially in response to the fall of the Iraqi monarchy to what was deemed a Nasserist-Soviet plot, but officially to heed Lebanon's President Chamoun call for assistance against a U.A.R.-supported internal rebellion.<sup>79</sup>

The various Levantine crises that shook the late 1940s and the 1950s share a common thread which is the waning of historical British power in the Mediterranean and the Middle

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<sup>76</sup> Anderson, Philip, 'Summer Madness: The Crisis in Syria, August-October 1957', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 22/1-2 (1995), pp.21-42; Rathmell, *Secret War in the Middle East*, Chapters 4 & 5; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, Chapter 5; Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, Chapter 21.

<sup>77</sup> NYT, October 7, 1957; Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union Quest', pp.243-6.

<sup>78</sup> NYT, October 19 & 20, 1957; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, p.170; Lesch, David, 'Gamal Abd al-Nasser and an Example of Diplomatic Acumen', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31/2 (1995), pp.362-74.

<sup>79</sup> Chamoun, Camille, *Crise au Moyen-Orient* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963); Attie, *Struggle in the Levant*; Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*.

East. The Eastern Mediterranean was to serve as a concentrated case study for the descent of British naval power into secondary status. The decades-long waning of the British political, military, and economic presence in the Levant and the Middle East was pivotal in setting the stage for the deployment of Cold War naval power and naval diplomacy. The pattern of the British retreat was intimately interwoven with the rise of crisis-generating strategic developments, themselves conducive to the deployment of naval diplomacy. The Turkish and Greek crises in 1946-1947, the violent birth of Israel in 1948, the rise of Arab Nationalism and the programmed abandonment of the Suez base in 1954, the tensions around the Baghdad Pact and Syria in 1955 and 1957, the humiliation at Suez in 1956, the threats to Jordan in 1957 and 1958, and the loss of the Iraqi card in 1958, all gave way to the exercise of an essentially U.S.-led naval diplomacy of increasing exclusivity, complexity, and intensity. It was partially to take over regional security from an exhausted Britain that the U.S. deepened its regional involvement.<sup>80</sup> But the Anglo-American dialectic went further than a mere consensual changing of the guard. The U.S. sought to distance itself from the most brazenly imperialistic British initiatives, a policy that underpinned some of the apparently most unorthodox American diplomatic initiatives.<sup>81</sup> U.S. coercive diplomacy was deployed in November 1956 to pressure Britain and her French and Israeli partners to stop their aggression at Suez.<sup>82</sup> In naval terms, the action translated into a delicate game of harassment and disruption of the Anglo-French naval forces. Sixth Fleet warships voluntarily intermingled with the coalition's vessels to complicate their operations, such as the carrier *Coral Sea* cruising in the middle of the British task group.<sup>83</sup> The positioning of US Marines of BLT 3/2 at Alexandria to evacuate American nationals compelled the coalition to halt its attacks on the city, while U.S. submarines and aircraft hindered Anglo-French deployments. U.S. Navy aircraft conducted very low altitude flights over coalition ships, increasing the risk of being confused with

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<sup>80</sup> Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*; Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean*, pp.82-6.

<sup>81</sup> Barr, James, *Lords of the Desert*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 2018), Parts 1 & 3; Laron, Guy, *Origins of the Suez Crisis*, (Washington D.C: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2013), Chapters 1 & 2; Wilford, Hugh, *America's Great Game*, (New York: Basic Books, 2013); Petersen, Tore, 'Transfer of Power in the Middle East', *The International History Review*, 19/4 (1997), pp.852-65; Ashton, 'The Hijacking of a Pact', pp.135-7.

<sup>82</sup> Nichols, David, *Eisenhower 1956*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011); Scott Lucas, *Divided We Stand*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991).

<sup>83</sup> Coles, Michael, 'Suez, 1956-A Successful Naval Operation Compromised by Inept Political Leadership', *Naval War College Review*, 59/4, (2006), pp.1-19; Isenberg, Michael, *Shield of the Republic*, (St Martin's Press, 1991), pp.700-7; Garrett, William, 'The U.S. Navy Role in the Suez Crisis', *Naval War College Review*, 23/3 (1970), pp.66-78.

Egyptian Mig-15s. U.S. naval diplomacy was reinforced and extended following the threatening Soviet diplomatic notes to the belligerents, with Nasser himself asking the Sixth Fleet to help thwart a potential intervention by Soviet 'volunteers'.<sup>84</sup> Soviet naval gesticulations in the Black Sea, with reports that six Soviet ships would enter the Mediterranean through the Straits, led to an increased state of alert of U.S. naval forces in the area and in the western Pacific.<sup>85</sup>

The disaster of the 1956 Suez expedition dealt the final blow to British imperial presence in the region. Starting from this date, Britain seldom deployed significant naval diplomacy in the Levant. In 1958, when Soviet-supported Nasserist insurgencies were endangering the independence of Jordan and Lebanon, MacMillan's grand views of a huge Anglo-U.S. regional sweep to cripple Arab nationalism were rejected by Eisenhower who, in a desire to unbundle the U.S. from a Suez-tainted ally, refused to associate Britain to the landing in Lebanon, limiting her to a parallel paratrooper intervention in Jordan to shore up the beleaguered Hashemite regime.<sup>86</sup> Despite the Royal Navy deploying three carriers between Cyprus and Lebanon - *Ark Royal*, *Bulwark*, and *Albion* - in support of the airborne landings, Britain had to resort to U.S. pressure to convince Israel to grant critical overflight rights as well as to an American logistical air-bridge.<sup>87</sup> The end result was the confirmation of the American take-over of Jordan's military and economic security, already initiated during the crisis of the Spring 1957, closing the chapter of British power in the Levant.

More than 150 years after the rise of gunboat diplomacy in the late eighteenth century in Levantine waters and on the eve of the transformational strategic events of the 1960s and 1970s, the distinct thread that runs through the history of this region is the dominance of crisis management using limited naval force. From Navarino to Smyrna, it was to control and eventually solve the crises generated by the Eastern Question that European naval power intervened. It was also to prevent Communist expansion in this strategic area that U.S. seapower was mobilised to enforce the containment and to control the spread of crises linked to the Cold War and the emergence of a new regional balance of power. Thus, the Levant has been a continuous object of naval power which, more than anywhere else in the world,

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<sup>84</sup> Siegel, 'Use of Naval Forces', Table 6/38; Coles, 'Suez, 1956', p.11.

<sup>85</sup> Siegel, 'Use of Naval Forces', Table 6/40

<sup>86</sup> Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, p.226-27; Grove, *Vanguard to Trident*, p.212.

<sup>87</sup> Grove, *Vanguard to Trident*, p.212.

contributed to the structuring of its state system and of its political mentalities. Another conspicuous thread is the nearly uninterrupted dominance of Levantine waters by Anglo-Saxon maritime powers extraneous to the Mediterranean basin, with Britain and then the U.S. leveraging their naval power to contain and roll back the maritime ambitions of the continental power of the day -successively France, Russia, and the Soviet Union. During the nearly twenty years that followed the end of the Second World War, the Mediterranean was a NATO lake where naval diplomacy was unilaterally exercised by British and American warships to face essentially onshore emergencies. With the return of Russian seapower in the Levant, the next and final three decades of the Cold War will witness the end of this monopoly and the rise of a new and specific Superpower naval diplomacy.

## **Chapter IV – Levantine Conflicts and Superpower Naval Diplomacy (1967-1973)**

This chapter sheds light on a dimension that has been only briefly evoked in the literature concerned with contemporary regional history. No study has integrated historical memories and prejudices, Superpower crisis naval diplomacy, and onshore perceptions in a holistic and dynamic model. The purpose here is to analyse their interplay and effects in terms of state diplomacy and balance of power. If it is difficult to disconnect the waning of British imperial and naval power from the crises that took place during the late 1940s and the 1950s, it is equally difficult to disentangle the emergence of Soviet naval power in the Levant from the crises that shook this region between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s. For the Arabs and especially for the radical nationalist regimes, Soviet naval power would be embraced as the naval protector, balancer of the dreaded but mythicized Sixth Fleet, a revenge through proxy for centuries of Western essentially naval imperialist interventions.

This chapter examines the key role of Arab perceptions and expectations in endowing the Soviet navy with a potential for protection and crisis management it did not possess, whether in terms of force structure or of power projection capabilities. It will highlight a strategic fool's market where the Soviet Union's leverage of Arab defeats for its own strategic interests was matched by the Arabs' instrumentalization of the Soviet naval presence to settle old scores with their imagined nemesis - Western naval power represented by the Sixth Fleet. It will analyse the complex feedbacks between those perceptions and the collective representations which underpinned them on the one hand, and the naval diplomacy deployed by the Sixth Fleet during the wars that occurred over the period spanning from 1967 to 1973 on the other hand, demonstrating the structuring, even distortive impact of these perceptions on the various naval diplomacy actions which were undertaken. It will show how Arab governments manipulated these perceptions depending on their changing strategic interests. In the end, Arab perceptions of Superpower naval deployments contributed to the emergence of a virtual political and military balance of power in the Mediterranean.

### **4.1 The return of Russian Seapower**

The projection of Soviet power into the region took place in two phases. The first, from 1955 to 1964, was essentially diplomatic and reflected Khrushchev's doctrine of 'peaceful



coexistence'. It leveraged the tensions resulting from the rise of Arab nationalism and its clash with Western attempts to organise the region's security in support of containment. It took the shape of landmark arms deals with Egypt and Syria in 1955, technical advisory and development aid as well as noisy political and propaganda support.<sup>1</sup> In naval terms, Soviet initiatives were limited by the country's naval capabilities and doctrines to propagandist gesticulations. In the case of the aforementioned visit by Soviet warships to Latakia during the 1957 Syrian crisis, Marshall Zhukov, the Soviet Minister of Defence who supported this visit, was accused of 'adventurism' and dismissed.<sup>2</sup> This highlighted Soviet unease with, and lack of practical capabilities for, involvement in local conflicts outside their immediate *glacis* and against overwhelming Western power.<sup>3</sup> It came to belie the exaggerated and distorted hopes of Arab nationalist regimes in the rise of a supposedly technologically superior Soviet navy that would sink the arrogant Anglo-Saxon fleets. Reacting to the Soviet visit, the Syrian newspaper *Al Nour* wrote that the U.S.S.R. '*has fleets in the Mediterranean and sufficient intercontinental missiles to wipe out the 85 ships of the Sixth Fleet...*'.<sup>4</sup> Soviet naval powerlessness is reflected in the story of Nasser hurriedly abandoning his official yacht while cruising the Adriatic from Yugoslavia to Alexandria in the midst of the Anglo-American alert ahead of the landing in Lebanon in July 1958, fearing capture or worse, and flying to Moscow from Belgrade to meet Khrushchev. There, the Soviet leader admitted '*frankly*' to him that the U.S.S.R. was '*not ready for a clash with the West*' while simultaneously boasting that '*we have weapons that can turn the American Sixth Fleet into coffins of melting iron...*'.<sup>5</sup> Soviet actions were limited to naval manoeuvres in the Black Sea and to mobilisation of land forces in the Caucasus.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Western tendency to see Moscow's hand everywhere culminated in the 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine and in the 1958 landing in Lebanon, and all but encouraged local nationalists to seek closer relations with the Soviet bloc as a bulwark against Western imperialism.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, pp.9-10; El Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, p.59; Heikal, *Sphinx & Commissar*, Chapters 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> Dismukes & Weiss, 'Mare Mosso', p.3.

<sup>3</sup> McConnell, 'Doctrine and Capabilities', pp.7-10.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in El Hussini, Mohrez, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, p.78.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Ahram*, January 22, 1965.

<sup>6</sup> Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest', p.246.

<sup>7</sup> Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, Chapters 2, 5, & 7; Heikal, *Sphinx & Commissar*, Chapter 4.

The second phase was markedly military and began with the permanent deployment from June 1967 of the Fifth Eskadra. Its rise did not come *ex nihilo*. As discussed, starting from the mid-1950s, realisation of the nuclear threat represented by Western CTFs led to the Soviet adoption of a defensive naval forward presence in the Mediterranean.<sup>8</sup> A first attempt in August 1958 to permanently base a submarine squadron in Albania ended in June 1961 following the political fall-out with the Stalinist Albanian regime.<sup>9</sup> In December 1961, barely six months after the Albanian misadventure, Admiral Gorshkov visited Egypt where he unsuccessfully floated the idea of quasi-sovereign submarine repair and storage facilities at Alexandria.<sup>10</sup> Facing Egypt's refusal, the U.S.S.R. had to settle in 1964 for a first and timidly-sustained deployment using anchorages and floating docks in the southern Aegean.<sup>11</sup> This decision came on the heels of the deployment of U.S. Polaris SSBNs in the Mediterranean during the spring of 1963 which diversified the threat related to the carriers and spurred the Soviets into a propagandist warning to the Arab nations against this alleged new danger to their security, and into requesting, as a self-appointed riparian state, a de-nuclearization of the Mediterranean.<sup>12</sup>

The need to ensure permanence and stability for the execution of strategic defence in the absence of appropriate underway capabilities and CTFs, increased Soviet eagerness for access to naval and air basing facilities.<sup>13</sup> Following his first visit in 1961, Gorshkov would deploy his own naval diplomacy by visiting Egypt four times in five years, the last visit taking place in January 1967.<sup>14</sup> Soviet naval-motivated initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean reflected the dual nature of a Soviet Arab policy which tried to leverage Arab security and economic needs for the prosecution of the Cold War.<sup>15</sup> The June 1967 war brought the strategic bifurcation the Soviet Union was hoping for. First, it propelled what was still a

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<sup>8</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Naval Strategy, 1953-1963'.

<sup>9</sup> Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest', pp.248-9.

<sup>10</sup> El Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, p.98.

<sup>11</sup> CIA, 'The Soviet Mediterranean Squadron', (December 1968), p.10; Goldstein & Zhukov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets', pp.34-7; McCormick, 'Soviet Strategic Aims and Capabilities in the Mediterranean', Part II, *The Adelphi Papers*, 28/229 (1988), p.37; MccGwire, Michael, 'The Background to Soviet Naval Developments', *The World Today*, 27/3 (1971), pp.100-1.

<sup>12</sup> Monakov, 'The Soviet Presence', p.147; Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest', p.253.

<sup>13</sup> Remmeck, Richard, 'The Politics of Soviet Access to Naval Support Facilities in the Mediterranean', in Dismuke et al. (Ed.), *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*, pp.357-92.

<sup>14</sup> El Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, Chapters 7 to 9; Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest', pp.259-66.

<sup>15</sup> Golan, Galia, 'The Cold War and the Soviet Attitude towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict', in Ashton, (Ed.), *The Cold War in the Middle East*, p.60-1.

provisional 'Combined Squadron' to the permanent status of the Fifth Operational Naval Squadron, the Eskadra; and it unlocked the access to Egyptian naval and air facilities through the leveraging of Egypt's security needs following its defeat.<sup>16</sup> The crystallisation of limited naval deployments into a permanent squadron demonstrated the link between Soviet Mediterranean naval strategy and Soviet Arab policies. There is an implicit sequencing between Gorshkov's visit to Egypt in January 1967, the Soviet role in putting in motion the logic of war in May with their dubious intelligence about Israeli troop concentrations, the Arab defeat in June, and the capitulation in July of a devastated Nasser who had no choice but to grant extensive naval and air basing rights to the Soviet Union. Egypt's acquiescence could well have been won thanks to the Eskadra itself. On July 10 eight Soviet warships visited Alexandria and Port Saïd to display commitment, especially following the U.S.S.R.'s reserved posture during the war which had been bitterly denounced by the Arabs, and to show a willingness to take risks for the sake of Arab friendship as Port Saïd was subjected to intermittent Israeli shelling. The move, a tripwire seeking active supportive suasion with the Egyptians and purposeful deterrence against the Israelis was also intended to demonstrate the strategic relevance of a permanent Soviet presence in Egypt and to help overcome residual Egyptian hesitancy.<sup>17</sup> The Soviets won non-sovereign naval access to repair and replenishment facilities in Alexandria, Mersa Matruh, and Port Saïd, and to Cairo-West, Egypt's largest air base. From there, Soviet naval aviation bearing Egyptian markings monitored NATO's naval movements and collected ASW information while Soviet surface warships, submarines, and AGIs trailed their Western counterparts and tried to track NATO's SSBNs.<sup>18</sup>

The use of the Eskadra to build influence and win access to onshore facilities in radical Arab nations would become a pillar of Soviet naval diplomacy, primarily motivated by the strategic defence of the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> The Eskadra was *'the most powerful force of ships which the Soviets have ever [permanently] deployed beyond their own home waters'*.<sup>20</sup> It served as an anti-carrier/anti-SSBNs force and as a projection of Soviet political influence with

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<sup>16</sup> Monakov, 'The Soviet Naval Presence', pp.167-168; Heikal, *'The Road to Ramadan'*, pp.47-8.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Akhbar*, July 10, 1967; Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest', p.267-8; Rubinstein, 'The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship', pp.153-64.

<sup>18</sup> CIA, 'The Soviet Military Presence in Egypt', (February 1975); El Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, pp.177-86; Weinland, 'Land Support for Naval Forces'; Remmek, 'The Politics of Soviet Access', pp.269-73.

<sup>19</sup> CIA, 'The Soviet Mediterranean Squadron', pp. 12-14; CIA, 'Strategic Forces' (June 10, 1975).

<sup>20</sup> CIA, 'The Soviet Mediterranean Squadron', p.12; Goldstein & Zukhov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets', p.38.

one aim being the dislocation of NATO's dominance.<sup>21</sup> The structure of the force evolved with the changes in Soviet naval policy and doctrine, growing into a balanced formation where new surface platforms endowed it with a capacity for naval diplomacy in lockstep with a Soviet newfound willingness, starting in 1966, to accept involvement in risk-laden local conflicts.<sup>22</sup>

The Eskadra became the cornerstone of a strategic power projection embodied from 1969-70 in *Operation Kavkaz*, a deployment of air force and anti-aircraft systems manned by nearly 20,000 'advisors' in support of Nasser's War of Attrition. The Soviets leveraged Egyptian woes to advance their own agenda: *Kavkaz* was primarily an air defence system for the protection of Soviet naval and strategic assets in Egypt and the Levant.<sup>23</sup> The U.S.S.R. established an integrated strategic presence in the Eastern Mediterranean around the Eskadra - an area denial zone that covered the Levantine basin. Of equal importance was the Eskadra's contribution to the emergence of a new kind of naval diplomacy, Superpower naval diplomacy.

Facing the Eskadra, the Sixth Fleet appears as an evolving strategic concept going through different operational eras.<sup>24</sup> These varying strategic postures interacted with the tension that had developed since the Fleet's inception between its stated mission and its actual employment. The tension was aggravated by the force's dual reporting structure inside the Allied command framework. In 1953 NATO agreed on a specific organisation for the naval forces in the Mediterranean by placing the Sixth Fleet under NATO command in wartime while it remained under national U.S. control in peacetime.<sup>25</sup> The national autonomy of the fleet in peacetime did not initially impact its stated primary mission of defending NATO's Southern Flank – Italy, Greece and Turkey. Its deployment pattern reflected this mission as it concentrated in the Western Mediterranean with its employment during the '*eastern swings*' - *only one month, three times a year*' - devoted primarily to exercises with Allied navies in

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<sup>21</sup> Smolansky & Joynt, 'The Political Background', pp.358-81.

<sup>22</sup> McConnell, 'Doctrine and Capabilities', pp.23-8.

<sup>23</sup> Golan, 'The Cold War and the Soviet Attitude', pp.61-3; Adamsky, Dima, "'Zero Hour for the Bears": Inquiring into the Soviet Decision to Intervene in the Egyptian-Israeli War of Attrition, 1969-1970', *Cold War History*, 6/1, (2006), pp.113-36; Ginor, Isabella, 'Under the Yellow Arab Helmet Gleamed Blue Russian Eyes', *Cold War History*, 3/1 (2002), pp.127-56; Rubinstein, *Red Star on the Nile*, Chapters III & IV.

<sup>24</sup> In his thesis, Dur identifies four such phases (until 1967): Control of SLOCs (1948-49), NATO Commitment (1951-53), Nuclear strike (1953-63), General purpose and southern flank tactical air support (1963-67).

<sup>25</sup> NATO Online Archives, Items SGM-529-53 & SGWM-636-54; Bryson, *Tars, Turks*, p.101.

Greece and Turkey and show-the-flag visits to Levantine ports.<sup>26</sup> But the naval diplomatic roots of the fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean - starting with the *Missouri* cruise and the first deployments of carrier diplomacy - structured its identity in a mutually reinforcing relationship with its peacetime national employment.<sup>27</sup> As early as 1948, the assigning to the U.N. mediator in Palestine of U.S. warships by President Truman had resulted in the first tension between the military mission of the Sixth Fleet and its political employment with the JCS criticising the decision.<sup>28</sup> The balance between national uses and alliance commitments started to tilt in favour of the former with the Suez expedition and the recurrent Levantine crises thereafter.

The massive use of U.S. naval power in the Levant and Middle East, with the whole Sixth Fleet dispatched there in April-December 1957 (Jordanian and Syrian crises) and July-October 1958 (Lebanon landing), triggered criticisms of an employment that seemed remote from the Fleet's NATO commitment.<sup>29</sup> Following the landing in Lebanon, *Proceedings* published two articles which subtly pointed at an ongoing debate inside the U.S. naval community. While the first extolled the new employment of the Sixth Fleet as an instrument of U.S. crisis diplomacy in the Middle East, the second reminded that the Fleet's origins – though conspicuously naval diplomatic - were linked to Greece and Turkey and to the wider defence of the south-eastern European theatre.<sup>30</sup> With the arrival of Polaris SSBNs in the early 1960s, the fleet's nuclear strike mission was transformed into a '*general purpose*' one which semantically dampened the distinction between the NATO commitment and U.S. naval diplomacy.<sup>31</sup> To illustrate this evolution, the 1964 Cyprus crisis saw the fleet intervening as a NATO 'interposition' force in what was essentially a crisis opposing NATO partners.<sup>32</sup> Similarly in 1967, it was as a NATO force that the fleet's intervention was unsuccessfully solicited by

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<sup>26</sup> Dur, *The Sixth Fleet*, p.51.

<sup>27</sup> The first article ever published in *Proceedings* in 1952 about the Sixth Fleet opened with the words 'Grey Diplomats'. The article listed the main determinants of the Fleet's primary missions with the NATO commitment coming last and U.S. 'global strategy' first.

<sup>28</sup> Dur, *The Sixth Fleet*, pp.29-31.

<sup>29</sup> See SACEUR General Lauris Norstad's criticism of the Fleet's deployment during the Jordanian crisis and Secretary Dulles' rebuke of it in FRUS, 1955-57, Jordan-Yemen, Vol.XIII, Doc.415; and the firm memorandum from the State Department to the North Atlantic Council justifying the naval deployment off Syria and declaring defiantly that it will continue, in FRUS, 1955-57, Soviet Union, Eastern Mediterranean, Vol.XXIV, Doc.364.

<sup>30</sup> Respectively Hessler, 'Sixth Fleet: Beefed up', and Xydis, 'The Genesis'.

<sup>31</sup> Dur, *The Sixth Fleet*, p.83.

<sup>32</sup> FRUS, 1964-68, Cyprus, Greece, Vol.XVI, Docs.5, 70, 129, 132.

the King of Greece to crush the military plot that would topple him.<sup>33</sup> Two contemporary geopolitical shifts contributed to permanently position one of the Sixth Fleet's CTFs in the Eastern Mediterranean: the rise of the Soviet navy and the Six-Day War. If the U.S. naval response to the first development did not trigger any criticism in NATO circles as it was clearly a collective concern for the Alliance, the U.S. preoccupation with Middle Eastern affairs – where the shadow of the Soviet navy loomed large - and its systematic use of the Sixth Fleet as an instrument of crisis management embarrassed the rest of the Alliance as it implicitly associated it with America's pro-Israel policies, antagonised the Arabs, and threatened to jeopardise its oil security and other trade advantages.<sup>34</sup> On several occasions, NATO non-solidarity with U.S. naval deployments in the Levant only deepened the chiasm between the Sixth Fleet's original NATO 'primary' commitment and its employment as a tool of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>35</sup> In September 1970, the Sixth Fleet was alone as the Soviet Eskadra penetrated its deployment off Levantine coasts during the Jordanian crisis, putting its warships in a dangerously unfavourable position.<sup>36</sup> During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Sixth Fleet had to innovate to compensate for NATO members' refusal to grant overflight rights to U.S. military supplies to Israel, while it was again alone during its most dangerous stand-off with the Soviet navy late October.<sup>37</sup> For the American Administration, the force's dual mission remained a given with an insistence that the preoccupation with Middle Eastern affairs was intimately linked to Soviet naval developments and therefore not antagonistic with the Sixth Fleet's NATO mission...despite CNO Zumwalt opposing, in 1971, the '*theoretical threat to NATO*' to the '*untheoretical Middle East problems...*'.<sup>38</sup>

The Sixth Fleet's strategic posture, its deployment and employment patterns were also the targets of continuous doubts in U.S. circles about its value as a fighting force, its chances of survival to initial Soviet attacks, and the very rationale of its existence. In the early 1950s, concerns about the fleet's carriers' vulnerability to Soviet land-based naval aviation compelled the force to sail in full readiness for its 'eastern swings' with the latter reduced to

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<sup>33</sup> FRUS, 1964-68, Cyprus, Greece, Vol.XVI, Docs.273, 292.

<sup>34</sup> NYT, July 5, 1971 & November 11, 1973; CIA Intelligence Memorandum, January 1969 & FRUS, 1969-76, Western Europe, NATO, Vol.XLI, Doc.48.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, Doc.43; Zumwalt, *On Watch*, pp.298-304.

<sup>36</sup> Dur, 'The Sixth Fleet', pp.20-2; Kidd, 'View from the Bridge', pp.27-8.

<sup>37</sup> Weinland, *Superpower Naval Diplomacy*, pp.30-40.

<sup>38</sup> FRUS, 1969-76, Western Europe, NATO, Vol.XLI, Doc.43; Zumwalt, *On Watch*, pp.353-4.

two shifts per year instead of three to minimise the carriers' exposure.<sup>39</sup> Doubts about the fleet's fighting value 'in a big war' and its permanent Mediterranean deployment were repeatedly aired by Eisenhower who simultaneously acknowledged its diplomatic dimension by hinting at his disagreement with Dulles about this matter.<sup>40</sup> The support of the State Department for the integrity and continuity of the Sixth Fleet would remain constant in time, highlighting its critical diplomatic dimension which superseded discussions about its actual military utility.<sup>41</sup> One height of these discussions was reached during the late 1960s and early 1970s when the Vietnam war and budgetary constraints triggered debates involving Congress, the Navy, and the Executive Branch about the level and employment of naval power. The Sixth Fleet was submitted to a questioning which took several interrelated dimensions. In 1965, Defence Secretary McNamara's attempts at rationalising defence budgeting and planning led to a recommendation to reduce the Sixth Fleet's two CTFs to one. The State Department successfully opposed the move pretexting the two-carriers NATO commitment and leveraging the aggravated Middle Eastern situation.<sup>42</sup> During most of the early 1970s, ignoring the threat of the Soviet navy in the Mediterranean, budget-motivated Congressional committees doubted the fleet's utility and recommended pulling the force out of the Mediterranean.<sup>43</sup> Conversely, other Committees lamented the fleet's '*substandard level*' and pushed for an increase in its funding.<sup>44</sup>

A confused debate unfolded inside the wider naval community. Its main thrust was the fleet's military value for NATO in war, a concern crystallised around the traditional view of the carriers' vulnerabilities, especially to naval aviation and submarines. The quasi-continuous deployments in the Eastern Mediterranean where the fleet faced a formidable and more modern Soviet adversary, were seen as exacerbating these vulnerabilities which, in turn, negatively impacted the credibility of the force as an instrument of crisis diplomacy.<sup>45</sup> Senior Atlantic Fleet officers questioned maintaining the Sixth Fleet '*at its present strength*'.<sup>46</sup> While some writings attempted to justify the existence and employment of the fleet, it was from

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<sup>39</sup> Dur, *The Sixth Fleet*, pp.51 & 67.

<sup>40</sup> FRUS, 1958-60, Western Europe, Canada, Vol.VII, Part I, Docs.229 & 230.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson, *The U.S. Sixth Fleet*, p.9.

<sup>42</sup> Baer, *One Hundred Years*, pp.370-74; Dur, *The Sixth Fleet*, p.90.

<sup>43</sup> Zumwalt, *On Watch*, pp.229-30.

<sup>44</sup> NYT, September 29, 1970.

<sup>45</sup> Wilson, *The U.S. Sixth Fleet*, p.9.

<sup>46</sup> NYT, December 2, 1972.

the Navy's highest authorities that an articulated argument came in its favour, embodied in a series of foundational strategic and conceptual documents.<sup>47</sup> CNO Zumwalt's *Project Sixty* recognised the vulnerability of the Sixth Fleet only to advocate its reinforcement in ASW and air defence as the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean where the Eskadra was concentrated militated for a stronger posture rather than a reduction in force.<sup>48</sup> This came also to contradict Secretary of Defence Schlesinger's ideas about 'variable deployments' which would have left Mediterranean waters to the discretion of the Soviet navy in the absence of a credible commitment by NATO allies to assume part of the burden.<sup>49</sup> In turn, *Sea Plan 2000* (1978) extolled the Sixth Fleet's role in influence projection ('a primary business of the U.S. Navy') and crisis management while noting that recent technological breakthroughs in ASW had reduced the risks for carriers to acceptable levels in a war expected to be global and to involve naval forces in all maritime theatres.<sup>50</sup> And without specifically mentioning the Sixth Fleet, Admiral Turner's 'Missions of the U.S. Navy' promoted 'Presence' as one of the Navy's fundamental missions, thereby indirectly vindicating the use of the Sixth Fleet as an instrument of forward deployment and naval diplomacy.<sup>51</sup>

However, a new polemic erupted as an unsuspected by-product of the U.S Maritime Strategy articulated in the early 1980s. This new set of concepts, whose premises were already present in *Sea Plan 2000*, focused on a resolutely offensive naval posture primarily aimed at the neutralisation of the Soviet SSBN bastions in the Kola Peninsula and the Sea of Okhotsk. The strategy extended to the destruction of the Soviet Eskadra and the Black Sea Fleet by a Sixth Fleet augmented to four CTFs and one Battleship Battle Group.<sup>52</sup> John Lehman, who was instrumental both in the development of *Sea Plan 2000* and the Maritime Strategy, believed that in the event of a war in the Central European front, naval A-6 Intruders launched from the Sixth and Atlantic Fleets, could successfully strike targets in this theatre.<sup>53</sup> This enhanced role for the Mediterranean force did not go uncontested. A *NWCR* article argued that carrier air support from the Mediterranean would test the limits of the A-6 flight range

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<sup>47</sup> Among the writings defending the Sixth Fleet: Lewis, Rivero, 'Why a U.S. Fleet in the Mediterranean?' *Proceedings*, 103/5 (1977), pp.65-89; Dur, 'The Sixth Fleet'; Wylie, J.C., 'The Sixth Fleet and American Diplomacy', *Proceedings of the academy of Political Science*, 29/3, pp.55-60.

<sup>48</sup> *Project Sixty*, in Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1970s*, pp.18 & 29.

<sup>49</sup> Wilson, *The U.S. Sixth Fleet*, pp.35-6.

<sup>50</sup> *Sea Plan 2000*, in Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1970s*, pp.106 & 117-8.

<sup>51</sup> Turner, 'Missions of the U.S. Navy'.

<sup>52</sup> Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the Eighties*, Doc.2 & p.249.

<sup>53</sup> Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, p.39.



and that the fleet's earmarking for a continental war would negate its flexibility as a naval force. The article's final recommendation of '*de-committing*' the Sixth Fleet from the Mediterranean and redeploying it off Western Europe in support of the Atlantic Fleet, merged with a similar one in an article in *Proceedings* which criticised the mere existence of the Sixth Fleet and lamented the burden it represented to the Atlantic Fleet as the latter, under CINCNELM overall command, provided the former with warships, personnel and training. Concluding that the Sixth Fleet had lost its purpose in the Mediterranean where the European NATO partners should take up the burden, the article advocated re-deploying its warships to the Atlantic Fleet which would spearhead the offensive against the Soviet SSBN bastion in the Kola peninsula.<sup>54</sup>

This paradoxically negative literature released at a moment of high naval mobilisation, would be challenged by the massive force projection of the Sixth Fleet during the Lebanon war between 1982 and 1984 and against Libya in 1981 and 1986.<sup>55</sup> As a result, until the end of the Cold War, the literature about the Sixth Fleet abandoned its polemical tone in favour of a more descriptive approach of the Fleet's mission, force levels, and contribution.<sup>56</sup>

The June 1967 war represented a seminal event for Superpower naval diplomacy as a 'discipline'. Even if still limited in types and numbers and devoid of organic aviation, replenishment units or basing possibilities, the Eskadra acted as a fleet-in-being that complicated the movements of the Sixth Fleet and led it to innovate and enhance its role as a '*flexible instrument of diplomacy*'.<sup>57</sup> To avoid misunderstandings, journalists embarked on U.S. ships aired information, implicitly aimed at the Soviets, about the latest American warships movements or augmentations.<sup>58</sup> The U.S. communicated its intentions by fine-tuning the movements and locations of its warships as it happened on June 10, 1967 when the Soviets threatened military action against Israel if it did not abide by the ceasefire on the Syrian front, resulting in the Sixth Fleet moving closer to the Syrian coast from its holding position off Crete in a signal of concern aimed simultaneously at Israel (compellence) and the

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<sup>54</sup> Breemer, 'De-Committing the Sixth Fleet'; Deutermann, 'Requiem for the Sixth Fleet?'

<sup>55</sup> On Lebanon, see Part II of this thesis; On Libya: Butler, William, 'December: North African Odysseys', U.S. European Command Website.

<sup>56</sup> Maiorano, Alan, 'A Fresh Look at the Sixth Fleet', *Proceedings*, 110/2 (1984), pp.52-8; Polmar, Norman, 'The U.S. Navy: The Sixth Fleet', *Proceedings*, 112/2 (1989), pp.127-8; Freedman, 'The Sixth Fleet at Forty'.

<sup>57</sup> Wells, *A Tale of Two Navies*, pp.70-96; Wells, 'The 1967 June War'; Howe, *Multicrisis*, Chapter II.

<sup>58</sup> NYT, June 7, 1967; Wells, Anthony, 'The June 1967 Arab-Israeli War', in Dismukes & McConnell, *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*, p.168.

Soviets (deterrence).<sup>59</sup> For the Soviet Union, the war presented the opportunity to expand and refine shadowing Western warships. Special anti-carrier task groups were created and the word 'tattletales' entered the Western lexicon to designate the Soviet way of naval shadowing.<sup>60</sup>

The interactions between rival fleets contributed to give a continentally focused and stalemated Cold War a dynamic maritime dimension. Fleet-to-fleet naval diplomacy in the Levant in times of conflict became a barometer of Superpower relations. If the Soviet relative naval restraint during the Jordanian crisis of September 1970 corresponded to a phase when Détente was being carefully built, the warlike behaviour of Soviet warships vis-à-vis their Sixth Fleet counterparts during the 1973 October War reflected a growing frustration with Détente and with the feeling that the Soviet Union was being consciously marginalised by the U.S. in any future Arab-Israeli peace process.

But could the Eskadra fulfil all the naval diplomatic actions one would expect from such a powerful formation, especially the use of force short-of-war to shape perceptions and reactions onshore? If one considers that the *raison d'être* of the Eskadra was the anti-carrier/SSBN mission and that the naval diplomatic potential of any fleet is tightly linked to its tactical capacities, then the Soviet squadron's impact onshore should have been *de facto* limited as it lacked power projection capabilities such as tactical airpower and significant amphibious forces.<sup>61</sup> Its tactical rigidity and the importance of submarines in its force structure precluded a graduated use of force as its weapons systems were almost solely oriented towards high intensity action against naval and air threats.<sup>62</sup> The Eskadra was a sea denial force built for the 'first salvo' and for anti-SSBN ASW.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, the credibility of the Eskadra's potential for the neutralisation of the Sixth Fleet *short of total war* during times of crises was lower than what its pure display of grey power implied. This was aggravated by the fact that Soviet Arab interests did not represent core Soviet values conducive to extreme

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<sup>59</sup> Wells, 'The June 1967 War', pp.18-23.

<sup>60</sup> Wells, 'A Tale of Two Navies', p.91; Petersen, Charles, 'Trends in Soviet Naval Operations', in Dismukes & McConnell, *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*, pp.49-53.

<sup>61</sup> Kolnogorov, Vadim, 'To be or not to be: The Development of Soviet Deck Aviation', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28/2 (2005), pp.333-59; Ranft & Tyll, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, pp.199-206; CIA, 'Soviet Global Military Reach', (September 14, 1984).

<sup>62</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Naval Strategy: Concepts and Forces' (January 1975).

<sup>63</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Capabilities to Counter'; Luttwak & Weinland, *Sea Power in the Mediterranean*, pp.21-7.

risk taking.<sup>64</sup> During the Middle Eastern crises of 1967, 1970, and 1973 the Soviet navy was essentially reactive, with its deployments and force level variations paralleling those of the Sixth Fleet.<sup>65</sup> Its surges were motivated by the necessity to maintain a tight watch on Western forces. The posture adopted by Soviet formations was a mixture of expressive and catalytic deterrence and seldom bordered on purposeful compellence. Towards events onshore, it was as if the Eskadra emulated the Sixth Fleet. It was the calculated movements of the latter that marked the tempo of crisis naval diplomacy. Only in extreme emergencies did Soviet warships move independently of the Sixth Fleet to deploy a shore-oriented naval diplomacy. The first case was when the IDF, after overrunning the Golan Heights, ignored the ceasefire on June 10, 1967, and appeared poised to march on Damascus. By threatening Israel with military intervention, the Soviets applied pressure on the U.S. to stop the Israeli onslaught.<sup>66</sup> To put muscle in their diplomacy, they hurriedly mobilised a small *ad hoc* landing force of approximately 500 men made of marines and sailors-volunteers and positioned it in the Bay of Famagusta, while a missile cruiser and submarines sailed to the Syrian coast.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, it was suggested that a Soviet submarine could fire a missile on Tel Aviv. Both moves were in fact purely expressive 'Krushchevian' boasting as the Soviets could not technically execute either of them even if they wanted to.<sup>68</sup> More complications followed when the Sixth Fleet moved closer to the Syrian coast in a clear deterrent mode.<sup>69</sup> Israel finally accepted the ceasefire but for its own reasons, having achieved its goals.

The other two cases occurred during the 1973 October War. Between October 10-12, the IAF bombed Syrian airfields and harbours to disrupt the Soviet air and sealifts. Soviet transport aircraft were damaged and on October 12 a Soviet freighter, the *Ilya Menchikov*, was 'accidentally' sunk in Tartus in the confusion of a naval battle between Israeli and Syrian missile boats.<sup>70</sup> In reaction, and following stiff Soviet warnings, a small task force was immediately positioned between eastern Cyprus and the Syrian coast in a purposeful

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<sup>64</sup> Luttwak & Weinland, *Sea Power in the Mediterranean*, pp.16-19; McConnell, 'Doctrine and Capabilities', pp.12-4; McConnell, 'The Rules of the Game', pp.240-78.

<sup>65</sup> Wells, *A Tale of Two Navies*, pp.66-121; Goldstein & Zhukov, 'A Tale of Two Fleets', pp.45-55; Wells, 'The June 1967 Arab-Israeli War' & Roberts, 'Superpower Naval Confrontations'; Luttwak & Weinland, *Sea Power in the Mediterranean*, pp.55-87; Howe, *Multicrises*, Chapter II; Weinland, 'Superpower Naval Diplomacy', pp.21-65.

<sup>66</sup> Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, p.91; Laron, Guy, *The Six Day War* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), pp.296-304.

<sup>67</sup> Morozov, 'The Soviet Naval Presence in the Mediterranean', pp.165-7.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Wells, 'The June 1967 War', pp.19-23.

<sup>70</sup> NYT, October 12, 1973.

deterrent intent.<sup>71</sup> The impact of this move on Israeli decisions is ambiguous - there were no more public reports of Soviet collateral casualties from Israeli naval and air attacks; and Israeli *Sa'ar* missile boats reduced the density of their strikes anyway because the Syrian naval forces had already been considerably weakened.<sup>72</sup> Despite the silence of accessible contemporary and recent Israeli sources about the incident, the *Ilya Menchikov* affair could possibly be construed as a case of reverse naval diplomacy where a limited use of force was applied by Israel for political purposes to complicate the maritime re-supply of Syria, whether under Soviet or other flags.<sup>73</sup> The next move of the Soviet naval force was to sail south to a point situated north of the Nile Delta, following the U.S. declaration of DEFCON III level of alert on October 25 in a posture like the one adopted off Syria and possibly intended to protect the path of a potential intervention by Soviet airborne troops, which never took place. The force departed a few days later.<sup>74</sup>

If the Eskadra had any capacity to shape perceptions onshore, this capacity was passive and derived from the way perceptions of naval power were structured before the squadron's emergence in the mid-1960s. Arab perceptions of naval power at the dawn of the Cold War were shaped by the rejection of British colonialism brought aboard the Royal Navy. In Egypt, British control of the Abu Sueif base in Suez dramatized this perception.<sup>75</sup> Colonialism and naval power were equated in Arab minds. In his fiery nationalist speeches celebrating the creation of the U.A.R. in February 1958, Nasser attacked colonialism (*Al-Isti'mar*) and its fleets (*Al-Asateel*), going as far back as the Crusades and their naval manifestations, and paying his respects to Saladin's grave in Damascus whose inheritance he symbolically claimed.<sup>76</sup>

The Suez Expedition deepened the association between colonialism and navies which was extended to the Sixth Fleet despite America's condemnation and its actions to stop it, including the deployment of the Sixth Fleet in defiance of British and French naval forces. The U.S was perceived as having taken over the British imperial mantle. Its defence of Israel, its promotion of regional security systems such as the Baghdad Pact that impinged on jealous

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<sup>71</sup> Weinland, 'Superpower Naval Diplomacy', pp.51-2.

<sup>72</sup> NYT, October 30, 1973.

<sup>73</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, October 6-30, 1973; Rabinovich, Abraham, *The Boats of Cherbourg* (Primary Publishing, 2009), pp.241-54.

<sup>74</sup> Weinland, 'Superpower Naval Diplomacy', pp.56-8.

<sup>75</sup> Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, pp.12-27; McNamara, *Britain, Nasser, and the Balance of Power*, Chapters 2 & 3; Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, pp.118-121.

<sup>76</sup> Al-Ahram Publications, *Al-Wahdat Ma'Suria*, Collection of speeches in Arabic around Egyptian-Syrian Unity, *Internet Archives*, pp.9498, 9516-9526, 9567, 9634-9660.

Arab nationalism, and its suspicious look at Nasserist dealings with the Soviet Union explained this shift in perceptions. Moreover, as the U.S. contrary to Britain did not have a significantly visible military and colonial presence onshore, the Sixth Fleet (*Al-Ustul al-Sadess*) became the principal embodiment of Western imperialism in the eyes of Arab leaders, press, and populace. Its visibility, the impressive appearance of its carriers, and its expressive symbolic charge made it a far more potent representative of U.S. power than the Royal Navy was of Britain's imperial hegemony. American spectacular naval deployments and interventions in 1957 and 1958 contributed to the construction of the myth of an all-powerful, malevolent hegemon. The formula 'The Sixth Fleet on the Move' (*Al-Ustul Al-Sadess Yataharrak*) regularly appeared on newspapers' front pages and on radio broadcasts in times of tension. There was no need to mention the United States specifically - readers and listeners understood.<sup>77</sup> In June 1966, the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* wrote that:

*'We shall not let the Sixth Fleet enter our harbours...From our long experience, we have understood that the Sixth Fleet only moves to threaten Arab nationalism. Its official mission...is the defence of Israel.'*<sup>78</sup>

It was in this context of collective representations that the first stints of the Soviet navy into the Mediterranean in the mid-1950s aroused unrealistic Arab expectations which endowed Soviet warships with capabilities they barely possessed. The Syrian boasting following the visit by Soviet warships to Latakia in September 1957 was not an isolated event. The launch of the Soviet *Sputnik* in October 1957 led an Egyptian magazine to extrapolate Soviet superiority in space and long-range rocketry into the naval realm where the Sixth Fleet's '*super carriers and guided missile cruisers lose their capacity to impress...with their intercontinental missiles and Sputniks the Soviets seem to have successfully stolen the Sixth Fleet thunder...[It] has been neutralised without the firing of a single shot.'*<sup>79</sup> There was a need in Arab nationalist circles to find a counterpoint to the Sixth Fleet, a narrative of an Eastern naval hero who would neutralise its dreaded hegemony: '*When the Western fleets steam in the Mediterranean, the*

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<sup>77</sup> Contrary to the Sixth Fleet whose translation in Arabic is literal, the Royal Navy was designated by the Arabic equivalent of the British Fleet or English Fleet (*Al-Ustul Al-Baritany*, or *Al-Ustul Al-Inglisi*).

<sup>78</sup> *Al-Ahram*, June 24, 1966.

<sup>79</sup> 'Gunboat Diplomacy or the Impotence of Sea [Power] in the Eastern Mediterranean', *Egyptian Economic and Political Review*, cited in Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest', p.242.

*Eastern fleets move, too, to maintain the balance of power*'.<sup>80</sup> The nationalists' manipulation of anti-colonialist and anti-Western phraseology and feelings, and their quest for a Soviet offshore balancer exposed them to ideologically unwelcome Communist entreaties for concrete strategic advantages. During the Suez crisis, if Egyptian and Syrian appeals for Soviet direct assistance were carefully shelved by the Soviet leadership, Khrushchev telling a scared Syrian President that '*At present we don't know how to help Egypt*', Moscow preferred to play on the concept of Muslim volunteers from the Soviet Central Asian Republics.<sup>81</sup> Endorsed by Egyptian propaganda during the fighting, the idea of fellow Muslims pouring in for help was sold to the masses. However, following Bulganin's threats to Britain and France, hints of a Soviet intervention through 'volunteers', and rumours about Soviet aircraft having landed in Syria, a worried Nasser insisted on having the Sixth Fleet providing for the security of Egypt and the Canal as an interim force before the U.N.E.F. could deploy.<sup>82</sup> This did not preclude him from dithyrambically thanking the Soviet Union for its support in a press conference with Soviet newsmen.<sup>83</sup> This balancing act lasted a decade before the June 1967 disaster led Nasser to accept what would become a Soviet '*military colonisation*' of his country's defence infrastructure.<sup>84</sup>

Hence, the Eskadra's potential for shaping perceptions onshore was facilitated by Arab nationalists longing for a patron that would strengthen their stand in facing the West. The squadron's relative limitations in terms of power projection were compensated by the Arabs' psychological predispositions and justified by Admiral Gorshkov's prestige-oriented approach to naval diplomacy.<sup>85</sup> Latent supportive suasion was the Eskadra's main impact ashore, symbolising the proximity of Soviet national power to its clients in a clear departure from the powerlessness of the 1950s. Now, the announcements of 'Sixth Fleet on the Move' could be balanced by news of a verifiable surge in Soviet warships. In Arab minds, there was a fantasised possibility of neutralising the Sixth Fleet even if it continued to be endowed with a

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<sup>80</sup> Dragnich, 'The Soviet Union's Quest', p.246.

<sup>81</sup> Heikal, *Sphinx & Commissar*, pp.70-1.

<sup>82</sup> CIA, 'The Suez Crisis: A Test for the U.S.S.R.'s Middle Eastern Policy', (1/3/1957), p.13; Even, Yair, 'Two Squadrons and their Pilots: Syria's 1956 Request for Soviet Military Intervention', *Working Paper Number 77*, Cold War International History Project, Wilson Centre Digital Archives (2019).

<sup>83</sup> Nasser's Press Conference with Soviet Journalists on December 12, 1956, in *Harb Al Sueiss (The Suez War)*, Al-Ahram Publications, *Internet Archives*, pp.2880-2884.

<sup>84</sup> El Hussini, *Soviet-Egyptian Relations*, p.180.

<sup>85</sup> Ranft & Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, pp.56-7.

mythicized 'power to hurt'. This dynamic is best illustrated during the pivotal weeks that immediately preceded and succeeded the June 1967 War.

## 4.2 The Eshkol Syndrome, the Sixth Fleet, and the June 1967 War

On April 17, 1967, Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol declared that Israel was being told by the U.S. that it did not need to buy many expensive weapons: "*Don't waste your money. We are here. The Sixth Fleet is here*".<sup>86</sup> The concomitant news that the Sixth Fleet would make its regular friendly visit to Lebanon at the end of May ignited a relentless campaign by Arab nationalists to have it cancelled.<sup>87</sup> The topic made the headlines of the Syrian press for most of the month that led to the final postponement of the visit on May 18. On May 1, the Syrian Prime Minister delivered a speech in which he expanded the traditional colonialism-fleets equation to a new trilogy of colonialism-Sixth Fleet-Israel, wondering allusively to Israel: '*Don't the United States dispose of a Seventh Fleet in the Near East...?*'<sup>88</sup> *Al-Baath* titled that '*Eshkol confirms that the mission of the Sixth Fleet is the protection of the "gangs state"*' [Israel], and that he '*was concerned that the Sixth Fleet would not be ready...to protect "Israel"*' [sic] *when the time will come*'.<sup>89</sup> In Egypt, *Al-Ahram's* Heikal, labelled the Sixth Fleet the '*strategic reserve*' of Israel.<sup>90</sup> The fact that Eshkol's declaration came amid deadly air battles on the Syrian front partly explains the verbal violence.<sup>91</sup>

The rhetoric was ratcheted up starting on May 14 and the triggering of the logic of war by the Soviet phony intelligence about Israeli concentrations on the Syrian border. On that date, *Al-Thawra* published an editorial titled '*Settling of the Scores*' in which it linked the planned Sixth Fleet visit to Lebanon to Israeli plans to invade Syria and occupy Damascus, adding that '*it means that it is America who want to occupy Damascus...'*'.<sup>92</sup> *Al-Baath* estimated that the fleet's visit was a deception and that the CIA '*was the only American party that was not "annoyed" by the noise around the Sixth Fleet and its suspicious visit to Beirut...In*

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<sup>86</sup> For a full account of the events leading to the June 1967 War, see Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, pp.62-84; Govrin, Yosef, *Israeli-Soviet Relations, 1953-1967: From Confrontation to Disruption*, (London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp.302-7.

<sup>87</sup> *Al-Thawra*, May 5, 1967; *Al-Baath*, May 14, 1967.

<sup>88</sup> *Al-Thawra*, May 2, 1967.

<sup>89</sup> *Al-Baath*, May 2, 1967.

<sup>90</sup> Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, p.47.

<sup>91</sup> NYT, April 8, 1967.

<sup>92</sup> *Al-Thawra*, May 14, 1967.

*the shadows unfold other activities...the toppling of the Syrian regime*'.<sup>93</sup> In Egypt, *Al-Ahram* announced that the country has rejected a demand by the Sixth Fleet for a port visit.<sup>94</sup> The increasing tensions which saw Nasser remilitarising the Sinai on May 16 and blockading, on May 22, the Straits of Tiran, accelerated a joint U.S.-Lebanese decision to postpone the Sixth Fleet visit, an event that was celebrated as a naval victory in the radical press although with a slice of doubt as to the sincerity of a move taken by the Christian-dominated, pro-Western Lebanese government.<sup>95</sup> Some wondered whether the *'Tripartite aggression [of 1956] would not be reactivated with a change in roles: oil would replace the Suez Canal...And America would replace France?'*<sup>96</sup> Almost simultaneously emerged stories about the Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean, presented as *'increasing...[in] concentration'* with the deputy commander of the Sixth Fleet being quoted saying that this constituted a *'great threat'* to the fleet and *'has compelled it into changing its pattern of operations'*.<sup>97</sup> With the 'victory' in Lebanon and the news of the Soviet naval presence, the Syrians felt emboldened to defy the Sixth Fleet-Israel duo repeatedly in their speeches and declarations, even displaying on front pages pictures of the Syrian navy, exclusively torpedo and missile boats, patrolling in the Mediterranean and asking for all Arab ports to be forbidden to the Sixth Fleet.<sup>98</sup> But it was Nasser's decision to close the Straits of Tiran which ushered the crisis into a new and far more dangerous dimension.

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<sup>93</sup> *Al-Baath*, May 15, 1967.

<sup>94</sup> *Al-Ahram*, May 15, 1967.

<sup>95</sup> CIA, Central Intelligence Bulletin (17/5/1967), p.9; *Al-Thawra*, May 14 & 18, 1967; *Al-Baath*, May 18, 1967.

<sup>96</sup> *Al-Baath*, May 18, 1967.

<sup>97</sup> *Al-Baath & Al-Thawra*, May 19, 1967.

<sup>98</sup> *Al-Thawra*, May 19, 1967; *Al-Baath*, May 21, 1967.



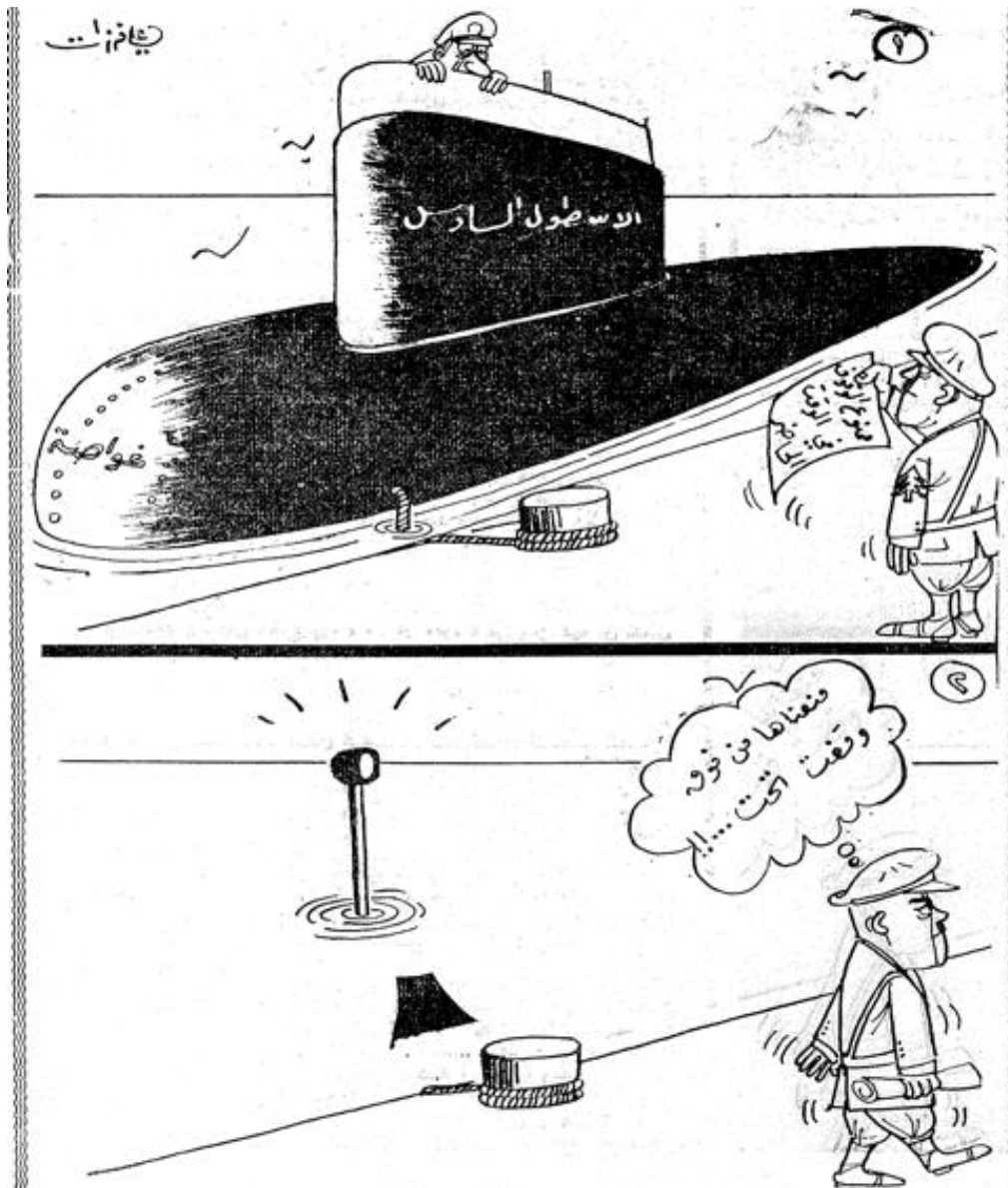


Figure 6 – Nationalists’ doubts about the sincerity of the GOL’s postponement of the Sixth Fleet’s visit. Top square: On the submarine is written ‘Sixth Fleet’. On the quay, a Lebanese policeman shows a paper on which it is written ‘Parking forbidden for the moment’. Bottom square: The policeman thinks: ‘We have forbidden her from parking above, she parked below’, Al-Thawra, May 18, 1967.

For Israel, the Tiran blockade constituted an act of war. In 1957, to obtain Israel’s withdrawal from the Sinai and Gaza which it occupied during its October 1956 offensive, the U.S. undertook to preserve the freedom of passage through the Straits of Tiran.<sup>99</sup> U.N.E.F. was positioned in the Sharm El-Sheikh peninsula that commands the passage. By clearing the U.N.E.F., Nasser declared the blockade of waters he considered being Egyptian territorial

<sup>99</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, ‘Arab-Israeli Dispute’, Vol. XVII, Doc.78; NYT, February 28 & March 2, 1957; Barak, Eitan, ‘Between Reality and Secrecy: Israel’s Freedom of Navigation through the Straits of Tiran, 1956-1967’, *Middle East Journal*, 61/4 (2007), pp.657-79; Fry, Michael & Hochstein, Miles, ‘The Forgotten Middle Eastern Crisis of 1957’, *The International History Review*, 15/1 (1993), pp.46-83.

waters.<sup>100</sup> This set the stage for the Sixth Fleet and the Royal Navy to become the main characters in a drama where naval diplomacy would be hijacked by propaganda, its effects distorted when they were not prevented at inception.

Based on a British idea, the Johnson Administration suggested the creation of an Anglo-American-led international naval force to enforce the right of innocent passage as per Article 51 of the U.N. Charter.<sup>101</sup> Warships dispatched by maritime nations would escort Eilat-bound ships and use force, if necessary, to guarantee their passage.<sup>102</sup> The plan inflamed radical Arab rhetoric which dubbed it 'the Plot' (*Al-Mu'amara*) hatched by the two Anglo-Saxon nations to negate Egypt's territorial rights and outflank it in its struggle with Israel. Commenting on the meeting of 'the Plot' in Washington on June 2, the Egyptian *Al-Akhbar* wrote that '*...the meeting of the plotting parties is the constitution of a colonialist front of maritime nations aiming to launch a naval operation to break the blockade...*'.<sup>103</sup> The Egyptian leadership leveraged collective representations and sensitivities. Attacks on '*Anglo-Saxon maritime piracy*' and reminders that '*The plan to compel [through] nineteenth century gunboat diplomacy*' was a thing of the past, joined the new catch word 'the Plot' which echoed the 1956 Suez collusion.<sup>104</sup> The latter was evoked in *Al-Thawra* which titled '*Johnson 67 = Eden 56*' with '*America [making] all efforts to defend the Zionist aggression*'.<sup>105</sup> Naval movements were propelled to newspapers front pages on an almost daily basis. Two main themes appeared.

The first covered the deployments of the British, American, and Soviet navies in the area extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea. Its main thrust presented the movements of the Western navies as threatening while counterbalancing them with bombastic announcements of Soviet naval deployments. As soon as May 5, *Al-Ahram* had attributed to U.S. Secretary of the Navy Paul Nitze that '*400 Soviet submarines threatened the Sixth Fleet*'.<sup>106</sup> On June 1, *Al-Akhbar's* front page was dominated by naval news where details about the surge of the Soviet Navy were exaggerated. After denouncing '*the American and British naval plot to besiege [the Gulf of] Aqaba...in support of Israel*', the journal triumphally

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<sup>100</sup> NYT, May 23 & 24, 1967.

<sup>101</sup> Howe, *Multicrises*, pp.42-5.

<sup>102</sup> NYT, June 1, 1967.

<sup>103</sup> *Al-Akhbar*, June 2, 1967.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, June 4, 1967.

<sup>105</sup> *Al-Thawra*, May 27, 1967.

<sup>106</sup> *Al-Ahram*, May 5, 1967.

announced that '*20 Soviet warships have crossed the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean*', adding that '*the Soviet navy has penetrated into the heart of the Sixth Fleet deployment*'.<sup>107</sup> In fact, only *ten* Soviet vessels transited the Straits including four major combatants, the latter crossing into the Mediterranean on June 3 and 4, a couple of days later than *Al-Akhbar's* announcement.<sup>108</sup> In an article concerning the Soviet deployment, *Al-Akhbar* cited a U.S. naval commander worried by Soviet warships trailing his vessel, and gave a luxury of details about the Soviet platforms' advanced electronics and weapons systems. The length and depth of this imaginative article contrasts with two succeeding small ones about the Sixth Fleet and about the Royal Navy's carrier *Hermes* having diverted away from her Far Eastern destination to position herself close to the crisis area, off Aden.<sup>109</sup> On page two, *Al-Akhbar* displayed a picture of '*the Soviet destroyer number 210 refuelling at a distance of 12 miles only from the Sixth Fleet*'.<sup>110</sup> The journal adopted the same tone three days later when it titled '*The Soviet navy in full steam towards the Mediterranean*'.<sup>111</sup> From the moment the Soviet navy started augmenting its Mediterranean squadron on June 1, *Al-Akhbar* devoted every day until June 5 a large space on its first page to news about the movements of the Soviet, British, and American navies, with the former being cited first and given the lion's share, in an attempt to symbolically dwarf Western navies and reassure the readers that Egypt was supported by a great naval power. The Syrian press equally gave daily information about Soviet trailing of U.S. ships, using the Arabic *tulâheq*, closer to 'to track' or 'to pursuit' and possessing more aggressive undertones, as an equivalent to 'trailing'.<sup>112</sup> On June 1, *Al-Thawra's* head-title, after announcing that '*Podgorny Confirms Soviet Warning to the Imperialist Not to Aggress the Arab People*', reads that '*6 Units of the Soviet Navy Have Crossed the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean*' and that the '*Commander of the Sixth Fleet Has Declared: Soviet Warships Are Trailing Us (tulahiquna)*'.<sup>113</sup> *Al-Baath* titled its front page, displaying the biggest and

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<sup>107</sup> *Al-Akhbar*, June 1, 1967.

<sup>108</sup> Wells, 'The June 1967 War', pp. 8-14.

<sup>109</sup> *Al-Akhbar*, June 1, 1967; An *ad hoc* task force of six frigates and one minesweeper was formed around the *Hermes*. American and British military planners worked on a scheme where the *Hermes* TF in the Red Sea would cover a small Anglo-American escort force that would probe the blockade, while the main deterrent force in the Eastern Mediterranean would consist of the Sixth Fleet, the British carrier *Victorious*, and the British air force in Cyprus, in Wells, 'The June 1967 War', p.33.

<sup>110</sup> *Al-Akhbar*, June 1, 1967.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, June 4, 1967.

<sup>112</sup> *Al-Baath*, May 31, 1967; *Al-Thawra*, June 1, 1967.

<sup>113</sup> *Al-Thawra*, June 1, 1967.

thickest print ever used by it during the whole crisis, 'Soviet Naval Concentration in the Mediterranean to Confront the Sixth Fleet and to Neutralise its Presence', adding that '6 [Soviet] Warships Crossed the Dardanelles Yesterday...and More will Join Soon'.<sup>114</sup>



Figure 7 – 'Soviet Naval Concentration in the Mediterranean', Al-Baath, June 1, 1967.

The second theme amplified Arab frustrations with Western power in general and the Sixth Fleet in particular. The movements of Royal Navy and Sixth Fleet warships were reported with more than hints at nefarious intentions. Ignoring, voluntarily or not, the consecrated naval practice of not always communicating the destination of one's warships, the Syrian press used this occasional lack of details to communicate a sense of danger and deception, using the Arabic language powerful poetic and evocative potential. Whether the 'unknown destination' of the U.S amphibious force departing from Malta, the 'secret destination' of the Royal Navy's carrier *Albion* labelled as 'suspicious moves' (*taharruqat mashbuhat*), or the 'mysterious' moves of Royal Marines from their base in Cornwall, all were supposed to lead to a plot in the making.<sup>115</sup> *Al-Thawra* titled that 'Washington and London were Preparing the Aggression' while reporting that a British carrier had avoided the Suez Canal and that warships from the Sixth Fleet were conducting a friendly visit to Athens, the latter news being presented in a suspicious sarcastic tone.<sup>116</sup>

While continuing to hammer the 'Plot' theme, Egypt faced the Western navies with steadfastness and contempt. This attitude and ensuing actions emerged after the announcement of the Soviet naval augmentation on June 1, as if the strengthened Soviet presence had emboldened the Egyptians into undertaking some very noisy naval-related

<sup>114</sup> *Al-Baath*, June 1, 1967.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, May 26 & June 2, 1967; *Al-Thawra*, June 2, 1967.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, June 3, 1967.

gesticulations. U.S. circles expressed concern that '*sending a few [Soviet] warships...could mislead the less sophisticated nations it is designed to impress, conveying a suggestion of Soviet military backing that might encourage belligerent moves and precipitate war*'.<sup>117</sup> Denouncing the movement of the Sixth Fleet towards its usual Levant-crisis-times holding station in the Sea of Crete at striking distance from the theatre of operations, the Egyptian press focused on the case of the American carrier *Intrepid*.<sup>118</sup> Bound for Vietnam, she headed towards the Suez Canal away from the Sixth Fleet and its two CTFs built around the *America* and *Saratoga*, in a clear intent to decouple her presence from the fleet's crisis-related deployment.<sup>119</sup> But Egyptian (and Syrian) propaganda, possibly reflecting the Arab leadership suspicions about the carrier's real intentions, unleashed a violent anti-U.S. campaign. While the Egyptian press announced that she was being trailed by two Egyptian submarines - an attempt at a counter-naval diplomacy more expressive than genuinely deterrent - the *Intrepid* was welcomed in Suez on June 2 by a vociferous mob whose picture displaying their shoes in contempt was splashed on the local and Syrian newspapers' front pages (and reproduced by the NYT, see below) shouting insults and anti-U.S. slogans.<sup>120</sup> The Egyptian press proudly reported the humiliating treatment to which the U.S. Consul was subjected the same day. His request to rent a launch from the Port Said Port Authority to visit the *Intrepid* was turned down, forcing him to rent a private launch which sailed to the carrier amid a flotilla of small boats carrying demonstrators chanting hostile slogans.<sup>121</sup> The same scenes were reproduced when the *Dyess*, a Sixth Fleet destroyer, transited the Canal two days later.<sup>122</sup>

The Syrian press reported the *Intrepid* affair, with *Al-Thawra* announcing that '*Soviet Support for Arabs and Soviet Naval Challenge Worries Aggressor Countries*'.<sup>123</sup> Egyptian counter-naval diplomacy did not stop at the submarines trailing the *Intrepid*, *Al-Ahram* announcing that '*Order has been given to Egyptian aircraft equipped with guided missiles to watch the movements of the British carrier Hermes who is present in the Red Sea*'.<sup>124</sup> Egypt threatened Britain and the U.S. of barring their maritime traffic from the Canal if they

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<sup>117</sup> NYT, June 2, 1967.

<sup>118</sup> Wells, 'The June 1967 War', pp.15-7.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p.14; NYT, May 31 & June 2, 1967.

<sup>120</sup> *Al-Baath*, June 1967; NYT, June 2, 1967.

<sup>121</sup> *Al-Akhbar*, June 2, 1967; *Al-Ahram*, June 1967.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, June 4, 1967.

<sup>123</sup> *Al-Thawra*, June 2, 1967.

<sup>124</sup> *Al-Ahram*, June 2, 1967.

attempted at breaking the blockade of Tiran. Finally, Egypt announced that the *Hermes* 'would not be permitted to enter Egypt's territorial waters', effectively barring her from approaching the Gulf of Aqaba.<sup>125</sup> Even if the military credibility of these threats could be debated, the volatile context, the increase in Soviet Mediterranean naval strength, the memories of Suez, and the threat of a disruption in the supply of oil complicated the already hesitant British position and contributed to stall the efforts to structure an international maritime force.<sup>126</sup>



United Press International Cablephoto  
**VOISY PASSAGE: Egyptian staff members of the Suez Canal Hospital wave their shoes to express their contempt for the U.S. aircraft carrier Intrepid as she moves down the Suez Canal past Ismailia, bound for the Red Sea.**

Figure 8 – Shoes challenge a carrier, *New York Times*, June 2, 1967.

All these developments, from Eshkol's declaration to the confused naval diplomacy and propaganda production of late-May-early June morphed, once the Israeli air onslaught had obliterated the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian air forces on June 5, into the fantastic tale which the defeated Arab leaders fabricated in the immediate wake of the disaster. As soon as June 6, *Al-Thawra* splashed on its front page that 'America and Britain are directly participating in Israeli aggression', with allegations that aircraft from Anglo-American carriers had established an 'aerial umbrella' above Israel 'and... had participated in operations against Jordanian territory'.<sup>127</sup> The journal rejected 'Phony American allegations [that] the Sixth Fleet

<sup>125</sup> NYT, June 2, 1967.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, June 4, 1967.

<sup>127</sup> *Al-Thawra*, June 6, 1967.

*had not been placed in a state of enhanced alert'. Al-Baath aired the same allegations in an editorial titled 'We shall Fight America with all Weapons', vowing that 'the fleets and their forces will not extinguish the flames of our struggle'.<sup>128</sup> Fantastic allegations about a downed Israeli pilot's confessions that IAF 'aircrafts were transferred onto Sixth Fleet carriers [while] 400 aircrafts raided the U.A.R. and the air denial force above Occupied Palestine [sic] reached 800 planes' were reproduced in the press whose biggest front titles claimed to reveal 'The Secrets of the New Tripartite Aggression'.<sup>129</sup> But the near-sacralisation of these tales came in Nasser's speech given on June 9 during which he announced his resignation and accused U.S. and British naval air of 'having attacked in broad daylight certain positions on the Syrian and Egyptian fronts', adding that:*

*'The proofs of imperialist collusion with the enemy are clear. It has leveraged the experience of the overt collusion of 1956... American and British aircraft carriers were off the enemy's coasts, supporting its war effort'.<sup>130</sup>*

At the U.N.G.A. debates later in June, Egypt's Foreign Minister repeated Nasser's charges while presenting the *USS Liberty* incident - during which a Sixth Fleet electronic intelligence ship was 'mistakenly' attacked on June 8 by the IAF - as resulting from the ship approaching the Egyptian coast to jam Egypt's radar system and pave the way for Israel's aerial onslaught. For him, 'The stench of American intelligence was clearly felt...[as] the U.S. fleets were close to Egyptian coasts...'; they were joined by the British navy 'who stains the waters of the Mediterranean'.<sup>131</sup> Arab propaganda was fuelled by the Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin, who accused the Anglo-Saxon powers of having encouraged the Israeli pre-emptive attack through their naval deployments or:

*'How else could one qualify the military demonstrations by the American Sixth Fleet off the coast of the Arab states, and the build-up of the British Navy and Air Force in the Mediterranean and Red Sea area...?'<sup>132</sup>*

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<sup>128</sup> *Al-Baath*, June 7, 1967.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, June 10, 1967.

<sup>130</sup> *Al-Ahram*, June 10, 1967.

<sup>131</sup> *Al-Akhbar*, June 22, 1967.

<sup>132</sup> *NYT*, June 20, 1967.

The final word which closed the circle opened by Eshkol's statement in April went to the Syrian President Al-Atassi who claimed at the same U.N.G.A. on June 21 that '*...Israeli authorities did not hide their aggressive intentions...[w]hen they proclaimed they were protected by the American Sixth Fleet*'.<sup>133</sup>

Hence, 'unfortunate' statements and 'routine' naval diplomatic moves contributed to the writing by Arab nationalists of a new narrative where the two Anglo-Saxon navies confirmed their attributed identity as the definitive colonialist villains. The presence of the Royal Navy contributed to solidify local perceptions of a Sixth Fleet heir to colonialism by association and helped build the allegations of a rekindled Tripartite aggression against the Arabs. The 'We are here. The Sixth Fleet is here', possibly intended to underscore the force's deterrent potential, became the cornerstone for the building of that narrative. From the moment it was proffered, Arab anti-Western paranoia started building stories of deception and invasion around it, made more 'credible' by the escalating tensions on the Syrian front. It crystallised the already existing melodramatic relationship between radical Arabs and the Sixth Fleet into one of betrayal and enmity. Added to the re-positioning of the Western fleets at striking distance from the theatre of the crisis, a classical move in naval crisis management, Eshkol's declaration was a godsend which provided stunned Arab leaders with a convenient excuse and an explanation for their extraordinary debacle: The Western fleets were close enough to the theatre to lend their carriers and intelligence ships to the IAF's onslaught.

The June 1967 War led to a clear departure from a traditionally more complex Egyptian attitude towards the Sixth Fleet. As already indicated, in November 1956, Nasser feared an embarrassing Communist embrace and demanded the protection of the Sixth Fleet. To justify the establishment of extensive military and economic ties with the Soviet bloc after 1956, he used to publicly scorn the Sixth Fleet but only up to a certain limit. The constant fear of a malign Soviet takeover made him implicitly count on the '*Sixth Fleet...as a final barrier against overt Soviet action*'.<sup>134</sup> The June War made obsolete this balancing game. In several long articles in *Al-Ahram*, Heikal positioned the alleged intervention of the Sixth Fleet in the war, which he (sincerely?) took for granted, as the natural result of more than a decade of an Egyptian-American relationship, and by extension an Arab nationalists-American one, which

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<sup>133</sup> NYT & *Al-Baath*, June 22, 1967.

<sup>134</sup> Badeau, John, *The American Approach to the Arab World*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p.12-4.



he described as having gone from 'containment' to 'punishment' and 'coercion' - especially after the 1958 landing in Lebanon. Since then, wrote Heikal, *'The American Sixth Fleet rides the waves in anger...filling the skies around it with a fog of thick and sombre black smoke'*.<sup>135</sup>

### 4.3 The Jordanian Crisis: The Sixth Fleet Leads Naval Diplomacy

In September 1970, against the backdrop of recurrent armed clashes with the Jordanian army, Palestinian guerrillas hijacked five airliners bound for New York and, after blowing up one of them in Cairo airport, flew the rest to a desert air strip in Jordan on September 7. Three-hundred passengers, half of them Americans, were held hostage to be released only against a certain number of Arab prisoners in Israeli and Western jails.<sup>136</sup> On September 9, the Sixth Fleet's carrier *Independence* and four destroyers were positioned off Lebanon while intervention scenarios were discussed.<sup>137</sup> After complex indirect negotiations, the commandos freed most hostages on September 12 and blew up the planes.<sup>138</sup> This relatively positive outcome was attributed by the U.S. administration to the movement of the Sixth Fleet, interpreted by it as a purposeful initiative that compelled the hijackers to release the hostages or face the risk of a direct U.S. intervention.<sup>139</sup> The Sixth Fleet move implied active supportive suasion with King Hussein as his army stepped up its operations against the *fedayeen* accused of having undermined the authority of the Jordanian Government. There were two broad regional attitudes towards this situation. Egypt, which had accepted a ceasefire on the Canal in August 1970 and had shown interest in the Rogers Peace Plan, was eager to preserve Hussein's regime, a key element in the American peace initiative. The radical leftist Syrian regime opposed the Rogers Plan and supported the most radical Palestinian factions who were behind the hijackings and were spearheading the fight against the Jordanian army.<sup>140</sup> The respective reactions of the two camps to the Sixth Fleet initial moves were different. While *Al-Ahram* reported in a front-page title *'Important American Military Movements'*, the content and the tone of the article remained close to the neutral ones of its Reuters source. The journal wrote that *'rumours about Sixth Fleet readiness to*

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<sup>135</sup> *Al-Ahram*, April 26, 1967.

<sup>136</sup> NYT, September 7-12, 1970.

<sup>137</sup> FRUS, 1969-1972, 'Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula', Vol. XXIV, Doc.212.

<sup>138</sup> NYT, September 12, 1970.

<sup>139</sup> FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol. XXIV, Doc.233.

<sup>140</sup> Vanetik, Boaz et al., *The Nixon Administration and the Middle East Peace Process, 1969-1973*, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), pp.117-28

*launch a rescue operation spread quickly...but Washington's policy was to free the hostages through diplomacy*'.<sup>141</sup> The next day, reporting on the liberation of most of the hostages, the journal could not help but note that the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister's call for a military operation to rescue the hostages came *'one day only after news about...movement of the Sixth Fleet'*, hence reminding the readers of the traditional Sixth Fleet-Israel association.<sup>142</sup> These mild *piques* contrasted with the more militant tone of the Syrian press. From the onset of the Sixth Fleet movements to the end of the crisis the Syrian regime and its tightly-controlled press would hammer the narrative that, in preparation for the Rogers Plan, the Palestinian Resistance had to be crushed by Hussein and that the Sixth Fleet had come to support him. *Al-Thawra* reported the first movements of the fleet, saying that a White House spokesperson *'admitted'* them (the Arabic word used, *ya'taref*, is here closer to an admission of guilt), and that these moves were *'suspicious'*.<sup>143</sup> The report appeared next to an editorial titled *'Liquidation Plans and the Conscience of the Masses'* in which the alleged tripartite collusion between Hussein, the United States, and Israel, is described.

As the military situation worsened from September 17, the Sixth Fleet moved in force while being continuously reinforced - culminating in three CTFs and two amphibious units massed off Lebanese and Israeli coasts.<sup>144</sup> Fearing Soviet-backed Syrian and Iraqi interventions on the side of the Palestinians, President Nixon ordered the naval concentration, insisting that:

*'We want the Sixth Fleet stuff in the open...I want them to know we're moving...The wear and tear on the nerves of the Syrians and Iraqis is very important'*<sup>145</sup>

After initially considering airstrikes the administration opted for a more nuanced naval diplomacy.<sup>146</sup> The Syrian reaction was to announce that *'Washington and London are Taking Steps to Execute the Plot against the Resistance in Jordan'*, and to reproduce a warning by the Soviet news agency Tass against *'the movements of the Sixth Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean, a force which, as it is well known, had been often used as a weapon against*

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<sup>141</sup> *Al-Ahram*, September 12, 1970.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, September 13, 1970.

<sup>143</sup> *Al-Thawra*, September 12, 1970.

<sup>144</sup> FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol.XXIV, Doc.254.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, Doc.256.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*.

*the liberation movement in the Arab East.*<sup>147</sup> Possibly encouraged by the deployment of the Eskadra's anti-carrier task forces and thinking that it could quickly create a *fait accompli* before eventual U.S. or Israeli responses, Syria unleashed on September 20 the Palestinian armoured brigade *Hattin*, a force embedded in the SAA, into an invasion of northern Jordan. A defiant President Al-Atassi declared '*Let the Decisive Battle Be!*', adding that the '*butchers cannot hide their crime because the fleets who are roaming our waters expose the plot, because the Sixth Fleet which is roaming around us, exposes the plot...*'<sup>148</sup> The Sixth Fleet continued to concentrate while an Israeli option was contemplated with Hussein's prudent acquiescence. The King was opposed to an Israeli land intervention but was willing to contemplate airstrikes against Syrian armour.<sup>149</sup> *Al-Baath* reacted to the fleet's concentration and undecipherable intentions, writing that the West believes that '*[Hussein] is able to continue serving them...therefore they strongly preserve him, concentrating fleets and sending aircraft carriers to protect his throne*', and in another editorial, it vented Syrian frustration with U.S. naval diplomacy, denouncing '*the continuous psychological war which is clear in the Sixth Fleet's movements, its closing on, its shifts, and its states of alert...*'<sup>150</sup> The combined effects of this 'psychological war', of Nixon's intended 'wear and tear', and of the Jordanian Army's fierce counterattack made possible by the abstention of the Syrian Air Force led to an atmosphere bordering on panic. While the Egyptian *Al-Ahram* warned against a U.S. intervention, Arafat cried for help against an imminent U.S. landing, and Syrian newspapers announced that an intervention was imminent '*to finish the job started by Hussein*'.<sup>151</sup> On September 24, Syrian armour retreated to the border and the crisis receded.

During the crisis, the Sixth Fleet took a clearly purposeful posture aimed at several recipients. It was supportive of King Hussein who could hope for direct American intervention; crucially, it was supportive of Israel as it deterred a potential outflanking Egyptian attack in case of an Israeli intervention in support of the King.<sup>152</sup> It deterred Syria from further exploiting its initial advance and compelled it to withdraw by possibly 'encouraging', along with the threat of an Israeli reaction, the Syrian Air Force to abstain from supporting the

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<sup>147</sup> *Al-Thawra*, September 17, 1970.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, September 21, 1970.

<sup>149</sup> FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol.XXIV, Doc. 282, 283 & 311; Riedel, Bruce, 'Fifty Years After Black September in Jordan', *Studies in Intelligence*, 64/2 (CIA, 2020).

<sup>150</sup> *Al-Baath*, September 21, 1970.

<sup>151</sup> *Al-Ahram*, September 20, 1970.; *Al-Thawra*, September 24, 1970.

<sup>152</sup> Blechman & Kaplan, *Force without War*, p.270-1.

ground troops therefore opening the way for a successful Jordanian air and armour counterattack. Finally, it deterred any Soviet temptation to intervene in support of Syria, on the contrary supporting direct diplomatic warnings that compelled the Soviet leadership to put pressure on their *protégé* to desist.<sup>153</sup> The Jordanian crisis illustrated how the Eskadra's naval diplomacy was a by-product of its primary strategic mission and acted indirectly through the Sixth Fleet. It was as a sea denier and spoiler that it hoped to catch onshore attention by demonstrating that the Sixth Fleet had lost its total tactical flexibility. If the sight of the Soviet ships intermingled with the U.S. ones could have been initially perceived as deterring the American carriers therefore reassuring Syria into launching its invasion of Jordan, the dynamics of the battle onshore and the threat of escalation to regional war progressively shifted the Soviet posture towards compellence through proxy. The Soviet leadership was embarrassed by the Syrian intervention which it saw as endangering the ceasefire on the Suez Canal, the diplomatic momentum of the Rogers Plan, and beyond, the spirit of Détente. The combination of pressures exerted by the Sixth Fleet with Soviet backdoor diplomacy in Syria, with the Jordanian counterattack, and with the looming Israeli threat made possible by the Sixth Fleet's very presence, led to the Syrian withdrawal and the defeat of the *fedayeen*. The Soviets openly recognised this diplomatic synergy, hinting that their '*efforts to persuade Syria and Iraq not to intervene...were aided to a considerable degree by the American military build-up in the eastern Mediterranean*', conspicuously ignoring the presence of their own navy.<sup>154</sup>



Figure 9 – The crowding of the 'pond-like' Eastern Mediterranean by U.S. and Soviet warships during Black September. Source: Kidd, Admiral Isaac, *Proceedings*, 98/2 (1972), p.26.

<sup>153</sup> FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol.XXIV, Doc.276; NYT, September 20, 1970.

<sup>154</sup> NYT, September 26, 1970.

The Syrian press, the most concerned with the naval movements, gave a differentiated treatment to the Sixth Fleet and the Eskadra. Apart from the Tass warning about the Sixth Fleet, there was no mention in *Al-Thawra* and *Al-Baath* of the Eskadra or even of the Soviet Union during most of the crisis. The Arab tendency to oppose the two fleets, especially in times when the U.S. fleet is perceived as an imminent menace, had vanished for reasons which could only be hypothesised. Firstly, the militant Syrian regime did not want to implicate the Soviet Union because the threat of Sixth Fleet intervention concerned the Jordanian theatre (where it had allegedly sent only Palestinian proxies to fight) and not Syria proper. Secondly, the Soviet Union had expressed reserves about any active Syrian involvement in the crisis as its priority was the preservation of the *status quo* and *Détente*. Consequently, the Syrian regime could have preferred avoiding embarrassing its patron by refraining from publicly associating him with its adventure. Thirdly, the Syrian strategy was to insist on the link between the Sixth Fleet, Israel, and King Hussein's attempt to crush the guerrillas, at a time when the Soviet Union had a stable relationship with Jordan and had criticised the hijackings and the excesses of the *fedayeen* whom it viewed with circumspection.<sup>155</sup> Associating the U.S.S.R. with attacks on this trilogy risked complicating its Jordanian and Palestinian policies.



Figure 10 – Naval allusion: King Hussein in a boat sailing where the wind of American policy would take him, *Al Thawra*, September 21, 1970.

<sup>155</sup> Golan, 'The Cold War and the Soviet Attitude', pp.63-7.

The strong and successful American display of coercive diplomacy in Jordan culminated in Nixon's visit off Naples to the *USS Saratoga* just returned from the theatre.<sup>156</sup> The visit reflected the changing dynamics of the Levantine scene and the flexibility of naval diplomacy. It was originally planned for the President, who was visiting Italy and the Vatican, to 'watch a demonstration of Sixth Fleet firepower' with probably an eye on the situation in Jordan and on the Suez Canal zone. However, Nasser's sudden death on September 28 led the President to cancel the demonstration and to settle for a simple visit to the *Saratoga* and for a press conference on the fleet's flagship, the cruiser *Springfield*, sending a message of sympathy to the Egyptian people while refraining from strong military signals amid a lack of clarity in the domestic situation in Egypt and its potential impact on regional stability.<sup>157</sup>

#### **4.4 The October 1973 War: Naval Diplomacy's Reduced Visibility Onshore**

'One lends only to the rich' as goes the saying and the relationship between the Arabs and the Sixth Fleet illustrates it well. Despite years of Arab longing for a naval protector against the dreaded Western navies, the focus of all attentions, hatreds, and phantasms remained the Sixth Fleet and its Royal Navy partner, dwarfing the Soviet Eskadra independently from its ever-growing naval capabilities. Nevertheless, significant changes progressively appeared in Arab strategies and perceptions. Arab attitudes towards naval diplomacy were determined by their own diplomatic and political priorities of the day. In the case of Syria, the *coup* that toppled the radical regime in November 1970 brought the more 'rational' Hafez Al-Assad to power and enabled a secret coordination with Sadat's Egypt in 1973 for a limited war to recapture territories lost in 1967 and open the way for peace negotiations with Israel from a stronger position. The key assumption underlining this plan was that the U.S. would then be able to pressure Israel into a peace process co-sponsored by the two Superpowers.<sup>158</sup> This strategy had a significant impact on the way naval movements were reported during the 1973 October War. During the active phase of the conflict between 6-31 October, naval news related to both Superpowers in the Egyptian *Al-Ahram* and the Syrian *Al-Thawra* amounted to less than 10 items per newspaper - mainly reproductions of foreign agencies reports. Early in the war, on October 7, *Al-Thawra* did attempt to build a story where the U.S. and its Sixth

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<sup>156</sup> Zumwalt, *On Watch*, p.302.

<sup>157</sup> NYT, September 29, 1970.

<sup>158</sup> Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, Chapter 4.

Fleet were accomplices in the alleged initial Israeli aggression that led to the Arab 'counterattack'.<sup>159</sup> This allegation of an Israeli attack was used in the first days of the war by Egypt and Syria to (unsuccessfully) cover the fact that they had initiated the hostilities.<sup>160</sup> Initial Arab successes led the Syrian press to drop its nascent anti-Sixth Fleet campaign and refrain from promoting the Eskadra 1967-style for the rest of the war. Totally focused on the battlefields and, especially for *Al-Ahram*, on international diplomatic activities and the oil crisis, Arab governments ignored such spectacular naval diplomacy actions as the Sixth Fleet-supported transfer of combat aircraft to Israel. There were only brief mentions of the fact that F-4s and A-4s had been flown to Israel by U.S. pilots, while Sadat denounced in a speech the U.S. sealift of supplies to Israel; but no connection was established with the Sixth Fleet *per se*. Naval diplomacy could have appeared again on newspapers front pages following Nixon's ambiguous statement on October 15 regarding an eventual U.S. direct intervention in support of Israel where he said that '*American policies in the Middle East were the same as they were in 1958 when the Marines went to Lebanon and in 1970 when they were poised on the ships of the Sixth Fleet to go into Jordan*'.<sup>161</sup> But Arab reaction was muted. *Al-Thawra* ignored the statement while Heikal in *Al-Ahram* used irony, writing that '*Without wanting to insult Lebanon or Jordan, I cannot think that, in Israel, they were happy with this comparison which puts Israel in the situation of Lebanon in 1958 and Jordan in 1970*'.<sup>162</sup> Limited attention to naval news was re-awakened after October 25 and the U.S. DEFCON III alert in response to Soviet threats of unilateral intervention to stop the fighting. But clear nuances appeared again between the Egyptian and the Syrian approaches. While the former adopted a rather neutral tone, reproducing news agencies information about the details of the alert and about the increase in naval concentrations by both Superpowers in the Mediterranean, the latter considered the alert as a support for Israel, writing that '*In the context of its moves inimical to the Arab nation, America threatens force and puts its bases and forces in alert*'.<sup>163</sup> These were to be the last naval related news. Both *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Thawra* as well as *Al-Baath* totally ignored the dangerous naval stand-off between the Sixth Fleet and the Eskadra which took place a few hundred miles off their coasts.

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<sup>159</sup> *Al-Thawra*, October 7, 1973.

<sup>160</sup> Kissinger, *Crisis*, pp.22-30.

<sup>161</sup> NYT, October 16, 1973; CIA, 'Middle East, Situation Report Number 43' (16/10/1973).

<sup>162</sup> *Al-Ahram*, October 19, 1973.

<sup>163</sup> *Al-Thawra*, October 26, 1973.

The marginalisation of naval diplomacy in Arab perceptions during the October War, at least in such 'frontline' countries such as Egypt and Syria, offered a stark contrast with the experiences of former crises. Several reasons could be envisaged. Firstly, the Egyptian plan to create a crisis that would force the Superpowers - especially the United States - to actively work for a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict needed to avoid the inflammatory anti-American rhetoric of which the Sixth Fleet was usually the primary target. Secondly, the war started as an Arab surprise attack. It lacked the long prelude of April-May 1967 with its distinctly maritime dimension during which an anti-Western naval narrative was elaborated. Thirdly, the Arabs were focused on the battlefield where, contrary to June 1967, a relatively long war was prosecuted with initial Arab successes enabling them to maintain a semblance of victory despite later setbacks, and to avoid the need to blame a villain outsider such as was the case in 1967. The Arabs did briefly try to use overflights by two American SR-71 high altitude reconnaissance aircraft to accuse the U.S. of having given Israel crucial information that could have enabled the IDF to successfully cross the Canal and encircle the Egyptian Third Army.<sup>164</sup> But the incident highlighted the marginalisation of naval diplomacy in Arab perceptions. Furthermore, fleet formations such as the one which undergirded the transfer of combat aircraft to Israel, or the American-Soviet stand-off, were not immediately reported even in the Western press because they were either secret or happened far from observers' eyes. Lastly, the rise of the Eskadra and of Superpower naval diplomacy had, at least optically, created the naval balance that the Arabs had long dreamed about. In Arab minds, the presence of the Soviet navy had shifted the naval game well beyond Arab shores, resulting in a *de facto* neutralisation - through diversion - of the Sixth Fleet. The fact that the American-Soviet naval stand-off was completely ignored in Arab communications well into November 1973 confirms the reality of this strategic shift where naval diplomacy was played in *huis clos* between Superpowers. One must wait for the Lebanese War to see naval diplomacy propelled again to the fore of Arab imaginations.

This chapter has shown how the impact of naval diplomacy during the Arab-Israeli wars depended on the perceptions by political actors ashore that were determined by collective memories and immediate political considerations. This impact was dual in nature. The first was immediately visible and was reflected by Arab propaganda which used naval diplomacy

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<sup>164</sup> *Al-Ahram*, October 28, 1973.



for predominantly domestic purposes - to feed a nationalist narrative, invent a Soviet naval champion, and justify defeats. The second was less noisy, but strategically more significant. It consisted in the emergence of a Superpower naval balance but also in a definitive effect on the balance of power ashore. Nothing more illustrates this paradox than the role played by the Sixth Fleet's carriers in October 1973 in transferring to Israel critically needed aircraft. Ignored by Arab propaganda, it strongly contributed to the Israeli counterattack which brought their armies on the verge of defeat.

## Chapter V – The American Landing in Lebanon (July 1958)

Chapter 3 analysed the structuring of the differentiated perceptions of naval diplomacy in Lebanon along sectarian fault lines. It was in a context of civil disturbances with a strong sectarian dimension where these conflicting narratives about Western naval power were exacerbated, that the American landing in Lebanon took place in July 1958.<sup>1</sup> Together with the intervention of British paratroops in Jordan two days later it came to check the apparently irresistible march of Nasser's Soviet-backed Arab nationalism.<sup>2</sup> Uniquely in the historiography, this chapter will not limit itself to an examination of how the events fit into a particular category of naval diplomacy. Rather, it will dissect the complex and continuous interplay between Western strategy, local perceptions and calculations, and naval diplomacy actions. It will show the high degree of fine-tuning in the use of naval force reached by Anglo-American diplomacy through a close coordination between governments, militaries and diplomats on the ground and will highlight how local actors attempted to influence this process and win advantages from it.<sup>3</sup> One of this chapter's principal contributions is to outline the centrality of naval power to crisis management in the Levant during the Cold War.

Exploiting local primary sources in Arabic as well as British, French, and U.S. archives, the chapter will focus on the perceptions and reactions of the different local actors as they faced the prospects and then, the reality, of American naval intervention. It will show how postmemories of past dramatic events instantly resurfaced with each of the local warring parties once they were faced with the possibility of naval intervention. By addressing the period that led to the intervention, it will show that naval diplomacy is not a sudden incarnation but an iterative work in progress intricately linked with the vagaries of diplomacy. Through examining the variations in the use of naval force in response to diplomatic, military and psychological imperatives, this chapter will uniquely highlight the essential flexibility and ubiquity of naval power and its capacity to display overwhelming force while remaining within the bounds of diplomacy.

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<sup>1</sup> On the events leading to the landing, see Chapter I, footnote 102.

<sup>2</sup> On Arab nationalism see Chapter I, footnote 37.

<sup>3</sup> McClintock, 'The American Landing', pp.77-9; Dragnich, *The Lebanon Operation*, p.85.

## 5.1 The Regional Context

The crisis unfolded in the strained diplomatic context that pitted the West against Nasser's radical Arab nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Nasser saw in the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in February 1955 a risk of strategic isolation.<sup>5</sup> Syria became the pivot of his struggle against the Hashemites of Iraq for the control of the Levant.<sup>6</sup> The volatile situation in Syria in late 1957 led Nasser to accept Syrian Arab nationalists' call for a union of the two countries in the U.A.R. on February 22, 1958.<sup>7</sup> In mid-1958 the Levant appeared neatly divided between a radical nationalist bloc around the U.A.R., and a conservative camp around Iraq and beyond, the Baghdad Pact.<sup>8</sup>

After Suez, Eisenhower had acknowledged the existence of a strategic '*vacuum*' following the demise of British power.<sup>9</sup> American leaders alternated between views of Nasserism as a potential obstacle to Communism and conviction that Communism was using Arab nationalism to penetrate the region and threaten Western oil interests.<sup>10</sup> In January 1957, Eisenhower articulated a new doctrine for the Middle East offering American direct military support for countries threatened by '*armed aggression from any nation controlled by international Communism*'.<sup>11</sup> It aimed at the containment of Arab nationalism perceived as a vehicle for Communist expansion, especially in Syria.<sup>12</sup> Despite U.S. diplomatic recognition of the U.A.R., Secretary of State Dulles attributed to Nasser the ambition '*to control Arab oil ...[to] gain control over Western Europe's economy*'.<sup>13</sup> Internal memoranda warned against the UAR's threat to its neighbours.<sup>14</sup> Nasser was now in direct geographical contact with his pro-Western rivals in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. Propaganda and infiltrations of men and materiel from Syria into Lebanon were stepped up and manipulation of Muslim frustrations

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<sup>4</sup> See Blackwell, *British Military Intervention*; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*; McNamara, *Britain, Nasser, and the Balance of Power*.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, *Strategy and Politics*, pp.84-105.

<sup>6</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism*, p.121; Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, see particularly Chapters 16, 17, 20 & 21.

<sup>7</sup> Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, Chapter 22.

<sup>8</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol.XII, 'Near East Region', Doc.266.

<sup>9</sup> NYT, January 1956.

<sup>10</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, 'Suez Crisis', July 26-December 31, 1956, Vol.XVI, Doc.489; FRUS, 1955-1957, 'Near East: Jordan-Yemen', Vol.XIII, Doc.351; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol.XVII, Doc. 340.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, Chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol.XIII, Docs.361 & 369; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, Chapter 4; Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, Chapter 21.

<sup>13</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, 'Arab-Israeli Dispute', Vol.XIII, Docs.196-201; FRUS, 1958-1960, 'Near East Region', Vol.XII, Doc.242.

<sup>14</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, 'Lebanon and Jordan', Vol XI, Doc.163.

gave the U.A.R. a powerful leverage on the domestic Lebanese scene.<sup>15</sup> In parallel, American and British intelligence made Beirut the springboard for their clandestine activities in the Levant.<sup>16</sup>

## 5.2 The March Towards Civil War

In 1958, Lebanon was ruled by President Camille Chamoun who had been elected by parliament in 1952 for a six-year term. His foreign policy was based on solidarity with the Arabs and friendship with the West.<sup>17</sup> Chamoun reaffirmed the country's pro-Western position, declaring to the U.S. *Chargé* in October 1952 that '*if it ever came to war with Soviet Leb [sic] is 100 percent on side of West, our harbours would be open to your ships, our airfields to your planes...*'.<sup>18</sup> Lebanon was a communication node and *entrepôt* for Western businesses in the Middle East, and the terminus for Iraq's IPC and KSA's ARAMCO pipelines.<sup>19</sup>

Fearing Nasserist wrath, Lebanon avoided adhering to the Baghdad Pact.<sup>20</sup> During the Suez Crisis, Chamoun declared Lebanon's solidarity with Egypt but rejected Nasser's demand that it severs its diplomatic relations with Britain and France. Nasser accused Chamoun and his Foreign Minister Malik of '*stabbing him in the back*'.<sup>21</sup> Alarmed at the Nasserist wave, Lebanon sought American protection, becoming the only country to legally endorse the Eisenhower Doctrine.<sup>22</sup> This triggered aggressive Nasserist propaganda and domestic Muslim unrest, fuelled in part from pro-Nasser Syria.<sup>23</sup> In April 1957 Chamoun and Eisenhower agreed that the Sixth Fleet, massed off Lebanese coast owing to the Jordanian crisis, would visit Beirut in a passive deterrent suasion with Nasser and his allies; and supportive suasion with the GOL and the Christians.<sup>24</sup>

The situation was aggravated by the 1957 Syrian crisis and the question of Chamoun's succession, due in September 1958. For Chamoun but also for Britain, France, and the U.S., a

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<sup>15</sup> CIA, 'Near East Developments' (15/10/1957).

<sup>16</sup> CIA, 'The Middle East', (21/11/1957); Eveland, p.245.

<sup>17</sup> Attié, *Struggle in the Levant*, Chapter 3; Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, pp.134-261.

<sup>18</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, 'The Near and Middle East', Vol. IX, Doc.498; Attié, *Struggle in the Levant*, p.81.

<sup>19</sup> Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, Chapters 5 & 8.

<sup>20</sup> Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, pp.272-4.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA /632, AD.; Attié, *Struggle in the Levant*, pp.103-5; Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, pp.306-17.

<sup>22</sup> FRUS 1955-1957, Vol.XII, Doc.211; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol.XIII, Docs.136 & 138; Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, Chapter 25.

<sup>23</sup> CIA, 'Current Intelligence Bulletin', (18/8/1957).

<sup>24</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol.XIII, Doc.18; Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, pp.378-9.

strong president was needed to continue pro-Western policies.<sup>25</sup> Only General Fouad Chehab, the Army's Commander-in-Chief, was deemed suitable but he declined to run, leaving Chamoun and the West contemplating his eventual re-election - a move which would require amending the Constitutional one-term limit.<sup>26</sup> The pro-Nasser opposition anticipated this. During late 1957, terrorist infiltrations from Syria increased the militancy of the opposition and nervousness of the Christian population.<sup>27</sup> In response, Chamoun considered that '*it would be comforting if some elements of Sixth Fleet might be moved to eastern Mediterranean in readiness...*' and was relieved to learn that two British warships would arrive in Beirut the next day.<sup>28</sup> The old Christian reflex to turn to comfort from the sea was re-awakened as concern mounted '*about the impact on the Moslem population of the impending establishment of the [U.A.R.]*'.<sup>29</sup> The proclamation of the U.A.R. in February 1958, enthusiastically welcomed by most Lebanese Muslims, further deepened Christian anxieties.<sup>30</sup> Faced with increased pressures on Lebanon to join the U.A.R., Chamoun obtained Western acquiescence for his decision to seek re-election despite the risks associated with such a decision.<sup>31</sup>

### 5.3 The Crisis and the Phase Before Intervention

The assassination on May 10, most likely by Syrian *agents provocateurs*, of a Communist journalist opposed to Chamoun was the signal for the Nasserists to launch an armed rebellion. They called for the President's resignation, guilty of seeking re-election.<sup>32</sup> But the real struggle

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<sup>25</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs.3,7 & 18; Telegram from Embassy Washington to Quai d'Orsay, April 1, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/625/AD; Letter from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, January 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/626/AD.

<sup>26</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, May 8, 1958, TNA FO/371/134116; FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs.7 & 18.

<sup>27</sup> CIA, 'Central Intelligence Bulletin', (24/1/1958); CIA, 'The Middle East', (21/11/1957).

<sup>28</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. XI, Doc.5.

<sup>29</sup> CIA, 'Central Intelligence Bulletin' (29/1/1958).

<sup>30</sup> Al-Ahram Publications, *Al-Wahdat Ma' Suria*, Internet Archive, pp.9555-9670; CIA, 'Central Intelligence Bulletin', (3/2/1958).

<sup>31</sup> CIA, 'Central Intelligence Bulletin' (12/2/1958); FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs.19 & 20; Telegrams from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, May 7, 1958, and from Embassy Washington to Quai d'Orsay, May 12, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/625/1953-1959/AD; Memorandum from Embassy Paris to Foreign Office, May 9, 1958, TNA FO/371/134118.

<sup>32</sup>Memorandum from Embassy Washington to Quai d'Orsay, May 12, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/1953-1959/AD.

concerned Lebanon's foreign policy and its relationship with the U.A.R.<sup>33</sup> The crisis opposed an 'Arabist' Muslim-led opposition to a Christian-dominated 'Lebanist' camp.<sup>34</sup> On May 12, Chamoun informed the three Western ambassadors that he wanted '*to recall guarantees given to Lebanon...[and]...to consider possibility of landing armed forces...within 24 hours after an appeal...*'<sup>35</sup> The GOL and the West knew that the insurrection was not a strictly internal affair and that it threatened Lebanon's independence.<sup>36</sup> The three powers agreed to Chamoun's request.<sup>37</sup>

Eisenhower and Dulles could not reject the call for assistance from a small pro-Western nation which had embraced the Eisenhower Doctrine and was now threatened by a Soviet-friendly regional hegemon. But they also knew the potential consequences of an intervention which would be perceived by the Arab and Muslim world as supportive of the Christians.<sup>38</sup> They also feared that the Soviet Union would step in in favour of the U.A.R.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the administration was trying to develop an accommodative policy with Nasser and Arab nationalism.<sup>40</sup> A week after the beginning of the disturbances in Lebanon, the U.S ambassador in Cairo deemed reasonable a compromise solution suggested to him by Nasser, consisting in the election of Chehab as new President.<sup>41</sup> Hence, the U.S. answer to Chamoun came couched in a carefully crafted language and opened two tracks, one diplomatic and political, the other military.

On the diplomatic side, Dulles ruled out basing an intervention on the Eisenhower Doctrine as he considered that '*finding that the U.A.R. was a nation controlled by international communism*', would be '[un]helpful'.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the U.S. reply conditioned an intervention on the '(a) [protection] of American lives and property and (b)...the preservation

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<sup>33</sup> Memorandum Quai d'Orsay, May 14, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/626/1953-1959/AD; Abu-Saleh, *The 1958 Lebanese Crisis*, p.89.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, January 2, 1958, TNA FO/371/128035; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, May 31, 1958, TNA FO/371/134120; Baroudi, Sami, 'Divergent Perspectives among Lebanon's Maronites during the 1958 Crisis', *Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 15/1, pp.5-28.

<sup>35</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.27.

<sup>36</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, May 13, 1958, TNA FO/371/134116.

<sup>37</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.31; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, May 13, 1958, TNA FO/371/134116; Internal Memorandum, Foreign Office, May 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134117.

<sup>38</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs.11, 28 & 30.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, Docs.26 & 60.

<sup>40</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XIII, Doc.182-266; Popp, Roland, 'Accommodating to a Working Relationship', *Cold War History*, 10/3 (2010), pp.397-427.

<sup>41</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs.44, 59 & 63.

<sup>42</sup> Telegram from Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, May 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134117.

of the independence and integrity of Lebanon which is vital to the national interests of the United States...'.<sup>43</sup> To avoid international accusations of Western unilateralism, the U.S. requested a preliminary approach of the U.N.S.C. by Lebanon. Last, the U.S. asked Chamoun to renounce re-election'.<sup>44</sup> Chamoun and the GOL publicly declared that they did not intend to modify the Constitution.<sup>45</sup> But the rebels still insisted on Chamoun's resignation and the ending of his 'deviationist' foreign policy.<sup>46</sup>

The U.S. warned that a Western intervention could have '*far-reaching consequences and...should not be lightly requested...*'.<sup>47</sup> This probably came as a reaction to previous warnings by the American ambassador in Beirut, Robert McClintock, that '*both Chamoun and Malik might feel they could whistle up Sixth Fleet any time they found themselves in trouble...*'.<sup>48</sup> These warnings highlighted Christian preconceptions which saw foreign protection as a natural given especially when buttressed with the Eisenhower Doctrine and repeated Western assurances of support for the independence of Lebanon.<sup>49</sup> The experience of past French protection during the Mandate and the tendency to exaggerate the strategic importance of Lebanon also contributed to a Lebanese propensity to 'lightly request' foreign intervention.<sup>50</sup>

On the military side, Washington was not ready to accept a violent alteration of the regional balance of power by the U.A.R. and suspected a Communist hand behind its aggressive policy.<sup>51</sup> Despite the prudence of the U.S. reply to Chamoun, it immediately set in motion a contingency military track. The Sixth Fleet and two battle groups from the U.S. 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division with the 7<sup>th</sup> Army in Germany were put on alert.<sup>52</sup> Order was given to '*Sail amphibious forces towards Eastern Med...*'.<sup>53</sup> To underline the seriousness of the situation, the normal rotation of the Marine battalion attached to the Sixth Fleet was interrupted, and

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<sup>43</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.31 & FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XIII, Doc.208.

<sup>44</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.31.

<sup>45</sup> *An-Nahar*, May 22, 1958; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, May 27, 1958, TNA FO/371/134119.

<sup>46</sup> *Le Monde*, June 2, 1958.

<sup>47</sup> Telegram from Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, May 15, 1958, TNA FO/371/134117; Chamoun, p.424; FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.31.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, Doc.9.

<sup>49</sup> Telegrams from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, May 13 & 16, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/1953-1959/AD; Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, p.414.

<sup>50</sup> Gerges, 'The Lebanese Crisis of 1958', pp.85-87.

<sup>51</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.29.

<sup>52</sup> Telegram from Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, May 15, 1958, TNA FO/371/134117; Gray, David, *The U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, 1958* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), pp.10-2.

<sup>53</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.31.

both it and its relief were kept as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Provisional Marine Force.<sup>54</sup> As is usual in crisis naval diplomacy, the U.S. Navy referred to “*routine*” U.S.-British ‘*manoeuvres in the central Mediterranean*’.<sup>55</sup> These NATO-linked manoeuvres were ostensibly shifted to the Eastern Mediterranean a few days later.<sup>56</sup> British Prime Minister McMillan worried on May 14 that the Sixth Fleet was ‘*still in the Western Mediterranean*’, a hinderance given Chamoun’s request for a response ‘*within 24 hours after request...*’.<sup>57</sup> British military planners advised the ‘... use [of U.S.] *Army troops in Germany*’, while British forces in Cyprus, including one carrier, could act within 24 hours.<sup>58</sup>

A joint U.S.-British intervention plan codenamed BLUEBAT was devised. It drew on a pre-existing U.S. contingency OP PLAN (November 1957) for combined operations in Lebanon.<sup>59</sup> The primary aim would be ‘*to support or...to re-establish the authority of the Lebanese Government*’, and its execution was put under U.S. overall command.<sup>60</sup> After U.S. Marines had secured a beachhead in the Beirut area, British forces from Cyprus would be flown in, while U.S. airborne and other forces would be mobilised.

It was also agreed that a French participation would be unwelcome. France’s colonial war in Algeria made its participation unpalatable to pro-Western Hashemites.<sup>61</sup> French historic association with the Lebanese Christians could strengthen Muslim allegations that they were facing a new Crusade in favour of a ‘*narrow Christian minority*’.<sup>62</sup> As the Sixth Fleet roamed East Mediterranean waters, the Royal Navy reinforced its area presence with four additional destroyers. The state of alert was relaxed after May 24 as the crisis entered a dominantly diplomatic phase with Lebanon’s first approach to the U.N.S.C. on that very day.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Bryson, *Tars, Turks*, p.126.

<sup>55</sup> NYT, May 15, 1958.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, May 20, 1958.

<sup>57</sup> Record of Meeting, British Cabinet, May 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134118; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, May 13, 1958, TNA FO/371/134116.

<sup>58</sup> Telegram from Ministry of Defence, London to Military Attaché, Washington, May 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134117.

<sup>59</sup> Gray, *The U.S. Intervention*, p.4.

<sup>60</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.40; Record of Meeting, British Cabinet, May 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134118.

<sup>61</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs. 29-31; Telegram from Foreign Office to Embassy Washington, May 13, 1958, TNA FO/371/134116; Telegram from Embassy Baghdad to Foreign Office, May 16, 1956, TNA FO/371/134117; Telegram from Embassy Amman to Foreign Office, May 18, 1958, TNA FO/371/134118.

<sup>62</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, May 14, 1958, FO/371/134116; FRUS, Vol.XI, Doc.28.

<sup>63</sup> NYT, May 25 & 29, 1958; Gray, *The U.S. Intervention*, p.8.



Fearing global consequences, the West sought a political solution to avoid intervention despite repeated calls for the latter by the Baghdad Pact countries and Jordan.<sup>64</sup> On June 11, the U.N.S.C. dispatched an observer body, the UNOGIL, to 'ensure' that there were no hostile infiltrations from the U.A.R. into Lebanon.<sup>65</sup> Devoid of resources and access, the report it published in early July minimised the extent of foreign infiltrations.<sup>66</sup> Malik warned about the presence of a current in the U.S. administration favourable to a compromise with Nasser.<sup>67</sup> The unsympathetic attitude of the U.N.S.G., of the U.S. ambassador in Beirut, and the general tone of the Western press indicated a change of tack vis-à-vis Chamoun, now deemed to be 'too much pro-West'.<sup>68</sup> In mid-June, Dulles declared the situation to be 'serious but not alarming' while units of the Sixth Fleet began re-deploying to the central Mediterranean, a move well noted by Chamoun in his memoirs.<sup>69</sup>

The West insisted that Lebanon solve the crisis on its own thinking that an eventual intervention would be easier to justify if the LAF at first did its best to suppress the rebellion.<sup>70</sup> But General Chehab alleged that the multi-sectarian army would split if sent to deal with Muslim rebels.<sup>71</sup> The LAF actions were essentially defensive, limited to preventing the rebels from seizing critical infrastructure.<sup>72</sup>

An illustration of how this conundrum impacted naval diplomacy was displayed in mid-June when the rebels launched attacks that threatened the Presidential palace.<sup>73</sup> The LAF subdued reaction drew Western doubts about its motives and potential attitude in case of intervention.<sup>74</sup> On June 14, the GOL hinted at a possible call for Anglo-American intervention suggesting the deployment of Sixth Fleet units "strictly for protection of American lives and

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<sup>64</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.58; Telegram from Embassy Baghdad to Foreign Office, July 13, 1958, TNA FO/371/134130; Telegram from Embassy Baghdad to Foreign Office, May 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134117; Telegram from Embassy Ankara to Foreign Office, May 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134117.

<sup>65</sup> NYT, June 12, 1958.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, July 5, 1958; FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs. 106 & 116; Telegram from Foreign Office to Embassy Washington, July 4, 1958, TNA FO/371134130.

<sup>67</sup> Attié, p.190; Chamoun, pp.417-8; Telegram from Embassy Washington to Quai d'Orsay, June 20, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD; An-Nahar, July 6; Letter from Lloyd to Hammarskjöld, July 14, TNA FO/1958, FO/371/134131; *Le Monde*, July 5, 1958.

<sup>68</sup> *Le Monde*, July 3, 1958; *The Times*, June 30, 1958; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, July 3, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>69</sup> NYT, June 15, 1958; Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, p.417; NYT, July 2, 1958.

<sup>70</sup> Telegram from Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, June 20, 1958, TNA FO/371/134124; FRUS, Vol.XI, Doc.80, 84, 85 & 111.

<sup>71</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.77.

<sup>72</sup> Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, pp.406-10; FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.80.

<sup>73</sup> *Al-Massa*, June 13; FRUS, Vol.XI, Doc.72 & 76; FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs. 63, 64, 67 & 69.

<sup>74</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.75.

property'". McClintock recommended the positioning of two Sixth Fleet destroyers at '30 miles off Beirut'.<sup>75</sup> While accepting that the '*presence of destroyers is needed...for psychological purposes...*', Washington insisted that '*only stated purpose*' for their presence '*would be for...evacuating American citizens*' and '*not...for protection of American property*', a more intrusive operation akin to intervention.<sup>76</sup> This restrained initiative echoed Eisenhower's '*little, if any, enthusiasm for our intervening at this time*', and reflected the administration's suspicion that Chehab '*probably wants Chamoun to fail, since he probably wants his job...*'.<sup>77</sup> But Chehab saw in the despatching of the destroyers an indication that the intervention was '*inevitable*', adding that LAF '*would not oppose landing and would probably cooperate in lukewarm way*'.<sup>78</sup> Concurrently with the U.S. move, Britain readied a CTF around the *Eagle* in Cypriot waters for the eventual evacuation of British subjects.<sup>79</sup>

The divide grew between Western hesitations and Christian expectations. Reacting to a message from Washington that an intervention would aggravate Muslim hostility to the Christians and to the West and '*would be viewed with repugnance even by many Lebanese Christians*', Chamoun disagreed, saying that '*99 percent of Christians...would welcome [it]*'.<sup>80</sup> Britain's ambassador acknowledged that the Powers saw '*the dangers inherent in [an]...intervention. We have told Chamoun we do not want him to ask for it...*', and a top-secret note considered that '*plans for...intervention are perhaps now rather academic*'.<sup>81</sup> However, the West refrained from publicly ruling out intervention. Dulles's press conferences constantly toyed with such a possibility, while local and international attention to the movements of the Sixth Fleet and the Royal Navy was leveraged to keep a psychological pressure on all involved parties by creating a sense of a looming threat in case an unspecified red line was trespassed. Active deterrent suasion was at play. For the British ambassador, '*the presence of strong military forces in the Eastern Mediterranean is an important restraining factor, and it would be psychologically a step backwards if we were to make it publicly evident that we no longer*

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<sup>75</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.76.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, Doc.90; Telegram from Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, June 15, 1958, TNA FO/371/134122.

<sup>77</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.84.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, Doc.80.

<sup>79</sup> Telegram from Admiralty to Naval Attaché-Paris, June 18, 1958, TNA FO/371/134123.

<sup>80</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.98; Telegram from Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, June 21, 1958, TNA FO/371/134123.

<sup>81</sup> Telegram from Foreign office to Washington, June 23, 1958 & Top-Secret Note, June 24, 1958, TNA FO/371/134124.

*intended to intervene...*<sup>82</sup> This naval diplomatic backdrop to the pre-intervention phase of the crisis contributed to the crystallisation of local and regional perceptions of naval power and triggered a set of deeply differentiated reactions.

Each party tried to buttress its own political narrative with a perception of foreign intervention and naval diplomacy that often resorted to self-deceptive wishful thinking. Two days after Chamoun's probing of Western intentions, the Nasserist opposition newspaper *Beirut Al-Massa* warned against '*calling the Sixth Fleet in application of the Eisenhower Doctrine*', reminding that the U.A.R. and the Soviet Union '*would not remain passive...*'<sup>83</sup> Its rival, the Christian Phalangist *Al-'Amal*, declared that the three Western nations '*have confirmed...their...readiness to protect the independence...of Lebanon*', announcing on May 16 that '*Lebanon's Events are Behind Western Naval Movements in the Mediterranean*'.<sup>84</sup> *Al-Massa's* same-day edition linked Eisenhower's theory of the 'vacuum' to Western naval preparations and to the Eisenhower Doctrine which justified sending the fleet to protect '*a corrupt regime*'. Declaring not to be frightened by the Sixth Fleet, it mocked Christian leaders' addiction to French and American '*milk*' in an allusion to the *Tender Mother* (of the Maronites) nickname of France. In a new hint at the Soviet Union, it reminded America that '*local wars cannot remain limited*' and that '*Washington itself would face destruction at the hands of nations more powerful...than America*'.<sup>85</sup> In this, *Al-Massa* was duplicating the already discussed Arab nationalist technique of using a fantasised Soviet power to conjure an imminent Western naval threat. Reacting to the rumours of a Sixth Fleet intervention, Sunni politicians and clerics accused the regime of plotting with the West to re-new its 'occupation' of Lebanon, hinting at the French Mandate accused of having created an artificial country hostile to Arabism.<sup>86</sup> Nasser accused the '*agents to great powers*' of having '*stabbed [him] in the back... in times of danger*', repeating his labelling of Chamoun's refusal to cut links with Britain and France after Suez.<sup>87</sup> Conversely, *Al-'Amal* displayed Christian impatience by asking, on May 18, '*When Will American Forces Intervene in Lebanon?*', declaring that '*America Helps Lebanon in Crushing the Rebellion and Preserving Security*'.<sup>88</sup> It reminded the predominant

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<sup>82</sup> Telegram from embassy Beirut to Foreign office, July 2, 1958, TNA FO/371/134128.

<sup>83</sup> *Al-Massa*, May 14, 1958.

<sup>84</sup> *Al-'Amal*, May 15 & 16, 1958.

<sup>85</sup> *Al-Massa*, May 16 & 19, 1958.

<sup>86</sup> *An-Nahar*, May 16 & 17, 1958; *Al-'Amal*, May 19, 1958.

<sup>87</sup> *Al-Ahram*, May 17, 1958.

<sup>88</sup> *Al-'Amal*, May 18 & 19, 1958.

Egyptian dimension of the crisis and the role of naval power in the protection of Lebanon in an article about the Oriental Question and Lebanon's struggle, with the help of the Royal Navy, against Muhammad Ali's Egyptian domination.<sup>89</sup> As for the centrist *An-Nahar*, while warning about the dangers of foreign occupation as '*the Sixth Fleet will not distinguish between Christian and Muslim when it will fire its guns and land its armies*', it anticipated an intervention in case of a repetition of the massacres of 1860.<sup>90</sup>

From the beginning, *Al-Ahram* followed the movements of the western fleets, announcing the '*sudden sailing from Gibraltar to the Eastern Mediterranean*' of '*twelve American warships*'.<sup>91</sup> Increasingly alarmist news was balanced by reporting real or imaginary Soviet naval countermoves. On May 19, *Al-Ahram* headline announced that '*Russia Warns the Sixth Fleet to Sail Away from Lebanon's Coast*'. Transferring to the Soviet navy the expression usually applied to the Sixth Fleet, the journal announced that the '*Soviet Navy is on the Move*' (*al-Ustul al-Soviety yataharrak*). The latter information was semi-imaginary. Indeed, several units of the Baltic Fleet did start sailing towards the North Atlantic, but there was no indication that they were bound for the Mediterranean.<sup>92</sup> Not deterred by creative journalism, *Al-Ahram* announced the next day that the Soviet and U.S. Fleets were facing off 200 miles from the Lebanese coast. But apart from its enticing title, the rest of the article was void.<sup>93</sup> A month later, *Al-Massa* proudly displayed the magic expression: '*The Russian Navy on the Move*'. But the fleet in question consisted of a dozen units sailing pass Norwegian coasts with no indication about their ultimate destination.<sup>94</sup> *Al-Massa* added as if to highlight the power of this force, that '*A Strike Force of the Soviet Navy was Moving Towards the Mediterranean...with submarines*'<sup>95</sup>.



Figure 11 – *Al-Ustul Al-Russi Yataharrak (The Russian Fleet on the Move)*, Beirut *Al-Massa*, June 25.

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<sup>89</sup> *Al-'Amal*, May 20, 1958.

<sup>90</sup> *An-Nahar*, May 20, 1958.

<sup>91</sup> *Al-Ahram*, May 15, 1958.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, May 19, 1958.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, May 20, 1958.

<sup>94</sup> *Al-Massa*, June 25, 1958.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, June 24, 1958.

In turn, the Christian Phalangist press attempted to toy with naval news, ending up reflecting Western hesitations as to intervention. More than once did *Al-'Amal* announce in its headlines the '*Massing of Armies and Fleets in Preparation for Intervention*', only to witness its hopes remaining unfulfilled.<sup>96</sup> Below is a sequence of three *Al-'Amal* headlines which illustrate the confusion about the possibility of intervention and the Christian longing for it. The concentration of fleets announced in the mid-June headlines was probably an amplification of the despatching of the two U.S. destroyers and of news about U.S. manoeuvres in the Aegean and the British CTF deployment in Cyprus.



Figure 12 – Fleets and Marines Concentrate in the Mediterranean Because of the Lebanese Crisis, *Al-'Amal*, May 26, 1958.



Figure 13 – Probable Intervention to Protect Lebanon's Independence, *Al-'Amal*, June 17, 1958.



Figure 14 – Massing of Troops and Fleets in Preparation for Intervention, *Al-'Amal*, June 18, 1958.

On June 21, reacting to the U.S. Defence Secretary's declaration that the U.S. would not hesitate to use nuclear strikes in a local war, *Al-Ahram* titled that '*America Threatens to Strike us with Nuclear Bombs*', explaining that the Sixth Fleet carried nuclear weapons and noting that such a force was disproportionate when considering Lebanon and was rather aimed at

<sup>96</sup> *Al-'Amal*, May 26, June 17 & June 18, 1958; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, June 10, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

the destruction of Arab nationalism.<sup>97</sup> Unsurprisingly, on the same day *Al-Massa* announced '*Nuclear War in Lebanon*'.<sup>98</sup> The news was correspondingly ignored by *Al-'Amal*. During the tense days of mid-June, *Al-Ahram* reported about British paratroopers in Cyprus and U.S. aircraft landing in the island, warning about the danger of world war '*from the moment the first shell is fired from the sea*'.<sup>99</sup> The journal exploited the British theme with an editorial about the Royal Navy titled '*Towards a New Humiliation*'. In it, while promising the fleet a new defeat as in Suez, it accused it to come '*to protect Chamoun...as it protected Ben Gurion*', asking '*What does the British fleet seek in Lebanon? Does it want...to create a base for colonialism?*'; and concluding that '*This is...the fleet that has been used to sail towards defeat...*'.<sup>100</sup> Coincidentally, *Al-'Amal* started a new series of articles about Lebanon's struggle for liberation from Egyptian occupation in 1840-41. The series demonstrated how Lebanon's specificity was guaranteed by friendly foreign powers. In the first article, the journal extolled the then liberating role of the Royal Navy, describing in detail the British naval campaign of 1840 and its smashing of Egyptian defences along the Lebanese coast down to Acre, and linking the fall of this city to the memory of the Crusades and King Richard the Lionheart.<sup>101</sup>

*Al-Ahram's* allegations that Britain sought a base in Lebanon must be considered in the context of a wider exchange of accusations between the Nasserist and the pro-Western camps, the former accusing the latter of working to facilitate, as it was deemed having always done, Western intrusion in Arab lands. In a violently sectarian editorial, *Al-Massa* denounced ideas of reverting to the '*old [Christian] Lebanon*', declaring that '[Christian strongholds] were [not] *Lebanon's capital to justify it becoming a military base for colonialism...*'<sup>102</sup> In a series of articles in *Al-Ahram*, Heikal denounced Dulles' '*brinkmanship*' and accused the U.S. of having covertly introduced troops in Beirut to prepare for its occupation of Lebanon, a '*Western base since 1956*'.<sup>103</sup> Conversely, *Al-'Amal* requested an international guarantee to protect Lebanon as a '*land of freedoms in a region of dictatorships*'.<sup>104</sup> It is in this atmosphere of high

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<sup>97</sup> *Al-Ahram*, June 21, 1958.

<sup>98</sup> *Al-Massa*, June 21, 1958.

<sup>99</sup> *Al-Ahram*, June 16, 1958.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, June 19, 1958.

<sup>101</sup> *Al-'Amal*, June 16, 22 & 30.

<sup>102</sup> *Al-Massa*, June 11, 1958.

<sup>103</sup> *Al-Ahram*, June 15, 17, 20 & 21; FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XII, Doc.208.

<sup>104</sup> *Al-'Amal*, June 5 & 20.

expectations and radicalised perceptions that the long-expected intervention finally took place but for equally unexpected motives.

## 5.4 The Intervention

On July 14, 1958, an Arab nationalist military coup toppled the Iraqi Hashemite monarchy. As soon as the news broke on Radio Baghdad, Chamoun summoned the three Western ambassadors and requested immediate intervention. He saw in the Iraqi coup an acceleration of a Nasserist-inspired take-over of the region, with Lebanon and Jordan being next in line.<sup>105</sup> The Baghdad Pact was badly destabilised and its Muslim members requested Western decisive action.<sup>106</sup> In Beirut, *'a certain apprehension [is] evident among the Christian population.'*<sup>107</sup> For the West, even if Chamoun was using this opportunity to finally obtain 'his' intervention, his appeal appeared *'sincere'* and sound because he shrewdly positioned it in a wider regional problematic.<sup>108</sup> His move pre-empted the U.S. envoy's who felt *'decision on military intervention can only be taken in light of broader...considerations affecting the entire Middle East'*.<sup>109</sup> The same analysis was made in a telephone conversation between Eisenhower and McMillan where they agreed that intervention was unavoidable given that the Iraqi revolution threatened the security of oil and the Gulf.<sup>110</sup> McMillan had in mind a broad Anglo-American military sweep the primary focus of which would be the oil-rich Gulf area. Eisenhower, pretexting the need for specific Congressional approval, rejected this suggestion and informed McMillan that the U.S. would land alone in Lebanon while Britain would deal with Jordan who had also called for help, or possibly, with Iraq.<sup>111</sup>

In Washington, it was assumed that Iraq had fallen to a Nasserist-inspired revolution and that the need to intervene stemmed from the fact that *'Nasser would take over the whole area...[and] the United States would lose influence...and our bases in the area would be in jeopardy'*.<sup>112</sup> U.S. concerns seemed more focused on the Northern Tier and the preservation

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<sup>105</sup> Chamoun, *Crise au Moyen-Orient*, pp.423-425; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, July 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134129; FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.121; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, July 14, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>106</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.129.

<sup>107</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, July 14, 1958, TNA FO/371/134130.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, July 14, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>109</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.125.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, Doc.131.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, Doc.132.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, Doc.123.

of U.S. bases in Turkey than on the Arab part of the region. Eisenhower stated that while the possibility of losing the Arab world had always been recognised, the preservation of America's relationship with the Northern Tier superseded all other regional considerations.<sup>113</sup> This was a display of strategic consistency with the American decision which, following the Anglo-Egyptian 1954 Suez-base agreement, shifted the region's strategic centre of gravity to the Northern Tier and led to the creation of the Baghdad Pact. But the administration was also conscious of *'the strategic position and resources of the Middle East'*. An intervention would constitute *'the last chance to do something in this area...'*<sup>114</sup> It would belie the *'sentiment [which] had developed in the Middle East, especially in Egypt, that Americans were capable only of words, that we were afraid of Soviet reaction...'*<sup>115</sup> The Soviet menace was deemed manageable by the JCS which said that *'if we do not accept risk now, [the Soviet] will probably decide that we will never accept risk...'*<sup>116</sup> Finally, acknowledging that the intervention cannot be a U.S.-led version of Suez, Eisenhower *'commented that the most strategic move would be to attack Cairo...but of course, this cannot be done'*.<sup>117</sup> If Lebanon was not the real reason for intervening, the fact that it was the most pro-Western state that was threatened to fall to Nasserism made the landing on its shores highly symbolic of Western resolve to contain the nationalist wave.

After informing a joint-Congressional panel of his decision to intervene, Eisenhower ordered the *'landing of [an] advance Marine contingent at 3PM [July 15]'*, the movement of all Sixth Fleet units to the Levant - the force had dispersed away from Levantine coasts when the need for intervention was downgraded in June - and of two battle groups from Germany.<sup>118</sup> He hesitated about the style of the landing, deeming a beach landing too warlike and preferring one on the docks of Beirut harbour, before settling for the former approach. Only a 1,800-strong Marine battalion - BLT 2/2 - embarked aboard the five ships of TransPhibron 6 was near the Lebanese littoral and executed the landing on July 15 as planned, establishing a beachhead on RED BEACH west of the airport and south of Beirut before being progressively joined by the rest of the Sixth Fleet forces and airborne battle groups from

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<sup>113</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.122.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, Doc.124.

<sup>115</sup> Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, p.485.

<sup>116</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.124.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, Doc.128.



Germany and the U.S.<sup>119</sup> Simultaneously, 'the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets were ordered on a four-hour alert...and the Strategic Air Command...on improved readiness condition', while amphibious unit BLT 3/3 was ordered to sail from Okinawa to the Persian Gulf.<sup>120</sup>

Over the following weeks, an uninterrupted flow of ships, men, aircraft, and materiel resulted in the entire Sixth Fleet - more than 70 warships - being deployed in an arc covering the whole Lebanese territory from the sea. Approximately 14,000 Marines and U.S. Army troops with their armour were positioned between the airport, the city of Beirut and its harbour, as well as in its northern and north-eastern approaches after a second Marine landing there on YELLOW BEACH on July 18.<sup>121</sup>

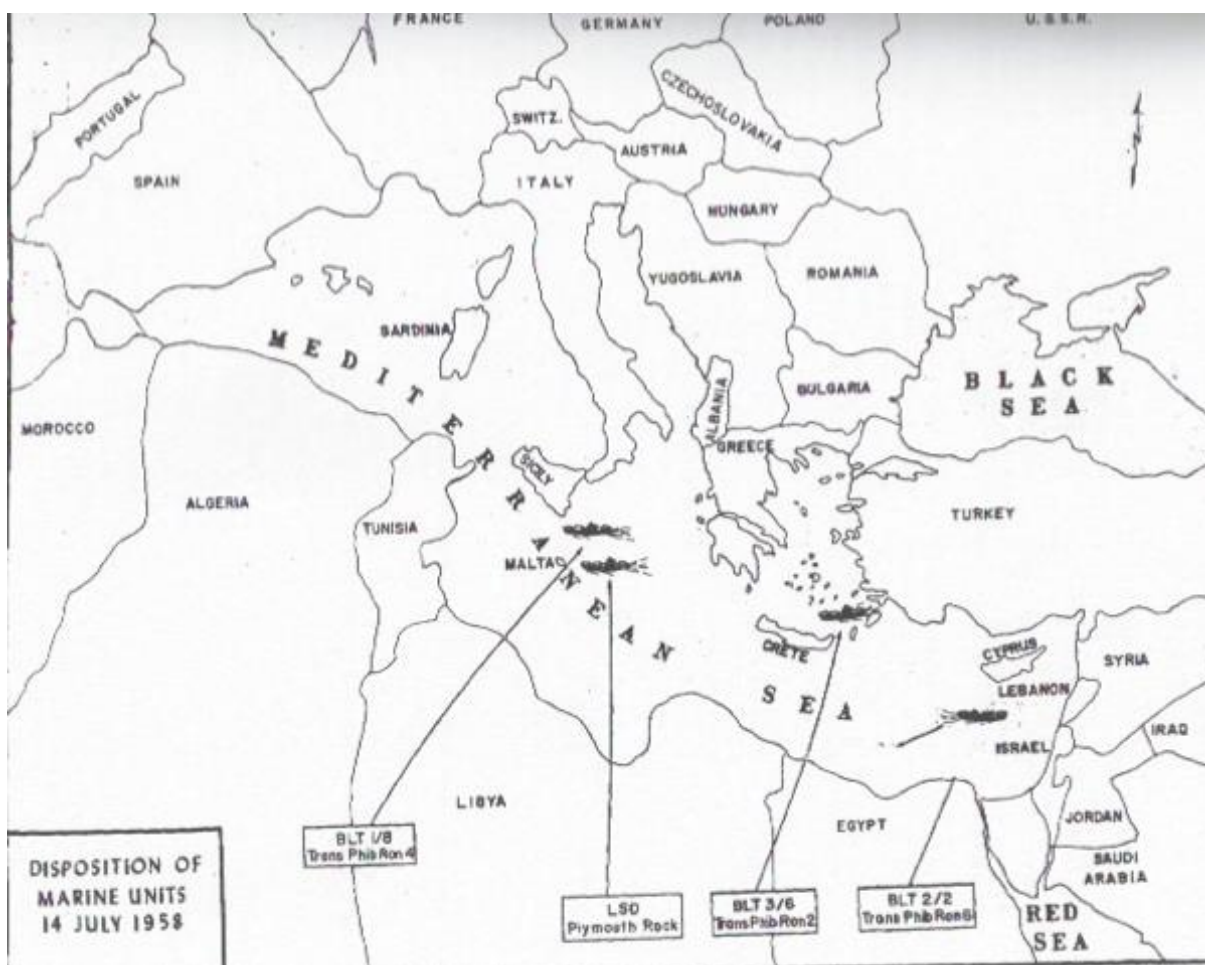


Figure 15 – BLT 2/2 was the nearest to the Levantine coast. Source: Shulimson, p.11.

In naval diplomacy terms, the operation had the hallmarks of an 'expeditionary' force. The beach landing, carrier aircraft swoops, and progressive fanning of the troops inland evoked

<sup>119</sup> Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, pp.11-2.

<sup>120</sup> NYT, July 16, 1958; Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, p.26.

<sup>121</sup> Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, pp.22-32; Wade, pp.12-22; Spiller, "Not War but Like War", pp.25-39.

images of Korea and Overlord. But the landing was unopposed and not a single shot was fired. For Cable, BLUEBAT was a catalytic endeavour as a *'threat existed...formless...and the outcome seemed likely to be more favourable with the Marines than without them'*. Cable bases his analysis on the intricacies of Lebanese politics and on such statements as Eisenhower's *'vague'* instructions to his Special Representative in charge of negotiating a solution to the crisis, Robert Murphy, *'to promote the best interests of the United States ...'*.<sup>122</sup> In a statement released to coincide with the landing, Eisenhower declared that

*'...in response to [an] appeal from the government of Lebanon, the United States has dispatched a contingent of...forces...to protect American lives and by their presence there to encourage the Lebanese government in his defence of Lebanese sovereignty and integrity. These forces have not been sent as any act of war'*.<sup>123</sup>

Eisenhower's wording aimed at positioning the intervention in the context of Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, avoiding any hint at the Eisenhower Doctrine. But it also added nuances. The forces came to be 'present' and not to fight, a fact reaffirmed in the last sentence which anticipated the Cablesian 'short-of-war' of naval diplomacy. Building on this expression, a Pentagon spokesman would describe the huge deployment of forces as *'not war, but like war'*.<sup>124</sup> For Cable, the essential catalytic feature resided in the relative imprecision of the objectives. However, access to Western archives since the writing of *Gunboat Diplomacy* enables us, without denying the overall initial catalytic colour of the intervention, to attribute to it a clear purposeful dimension which emerged and solidified over the course of the mission. As discussed, the objectives of the intervention, though broad and essentially diplomatic, were sufficiently clear and only a purposeful posture could make their realisation possible. It would be deterrent for any further Nasserist action, freezing the military situation in Lebanon (and Jordan) by discouraging further infiltrations and by deterring the 1<sup>st</sup> Syrian Army massed on the Lebanese border from any hostile move against the country.<sup>125</sup> By its 'disproportionate' size it represented a credible direct threat to U.A.R. territory in Syria and potentially Egypt but also to Iraq, and provided an appreciable card in the negotiations that

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<sup>122</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.58-60.

<sup>123</sup> Eisenhower, Dwight, *Waging Peace*, 1956-1961, (NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), p.274.

<sup>124</sup> NYT, July 16, 1958.

<sup>125</sup> Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon*, 1958, p.11.

Murphy later opened with Nasser in search of a *modus vivendi*.<sup>126</sup> It reassured the Northern Tier by displaying the resolve and the full might of Western power which totally dwarfed Soviet power projection capabilities in the region. No Soviet warship was seen cruising in the Eastern Mediterranean despite the usual bragging in the Nasserist press, and no ‘volunteers’ were pouring in Baghdad, Damascus or Cairo. On the contrary, as discussed, Nasser had to literally escape an encounter with western warships and fly to Moscow for urgent and disappointing consultations with Khrushchev. It is against this backdrop of naval diplomacy that local perceptions and reactions are better understood.

## 5.5 Reactions to the Intervention

In analysing the perceptions and reactions to the landing, the existing literature concentrates on the initial 48 hours. Two diametrically opposed reactions are described. The first type of reactions occurred simultaneously to the landing of the Marines on RED BEACH. U.S. forces landed at 1500 on a popular beach full of bathers and refreshment-selling beach-boys. Marines’ memories of ‘*bikini-clad women*’ and a whirlwind of young men rushing to help them push their materiel over the sand and to sell them...Coca Cola, ice cream, and chewing gum.<sup>127</sup> In fact, the Americans were expected as their warships appeared on the horizon around 1345, triggering an influx of civilians in their cars, some even on horseback, curious to watch the widely anticipated landing.<sup>128</sup> The same surrealistic show occurred again on July 18 on YELLOW BEACH where ‘*landing craft had to swerve in order to avoid some children swimming in the water*’.<sup>129</sup> Given the geographical locations of the two landing beaches, the civilians should have been roughly from both sides of the Lebanese divide, with a possible Christian majority. They were mostly cheerful, even enthusiastic.<sup>130</sup> But beyond the beaches, the shock from the landing led to rather muted reactions that evening, with ‘*some of the barricades being taken down...[and] people doing their best to get rid of arms and ammunitions* [in the

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<sup>126</sup> On the disproportionate size of BLUEBAT: Dougherty, *The United States Military in Limited Wars*, pp.39-41; Spiller, “*Not War but Like War*”, pp.26-36 & 42.

<sup>127</sup> Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, pp.12-3.

<sup>128</sup> *Al-'Amal*, July 16, 1958.

<sup>129</sup> Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, p.23.

<sup>130</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d’Orsay, July 16, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

Muslim half of Beirut].<sup>131</sup> This came in contrast with *'feux de joie from the Christian quarters of the town and the ringing of church bells'*.<sup>132</sup>

The second type of reaction was less folkloric and more dangerous. Following the July 15 landing the Marines proceeded to take immediate control of the nearby Beirut International Airport. The next day, a U.S. armoured column headed for Beirut to take control of its harbour. But some LAF Arab Nationalist officers' decision to save the 'honour' of the army led to a tense face-off between the Marines column and a squadron of LAF tanks.<sup>133</sup> The situation was diplomatically defused with the on-site intervention of the U.S. CINCNELM & CINCSPECOMME Admiral James Holloway, McClintock, and Chehab.<sup>134</sup> The Marines then entered the city, greeted by *'shaking fists, mostly from the Moslem population'* and headed for the port and the U.S. and British embassies.<sup>135</sup> An imminent military coup against Chamoun was defused after McClintock's warning to Chehab to stop it and the deployment of Marines in the U.S. Embassy ward close to the Presidential palace.<sup>136</sup> Chehab later admitted to Murphy that all these hostile LAF actions were *'...motivated largely by Moslems who were quite prepared to die at their guns as a symbolic gesture of defiance'*.<sup>137</sup> Starting from July 17, the cooperation between the LAF and the U.S. troops rapidly improved to friendly and business-like levels.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, July 15, 1958, TNA FO/371/134131.

<sup>132</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, July 16, 1958, TNA FO/371/134130 & July 30, 1958, TNA FO/371/134131.

<sup>133</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, July 16, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>134</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, July 16, 1958, TNA FO/371/134131; FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs.146 & 147; Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, pp.14-21; McClintock, *The Meaning of Limited War*, pp.110-4.

<sup>135</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, July 30, 1958, TNA FO/371/134131.

<sup>136</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.142; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, July 16, 1958, TNA FO/371/134131.

<sup>137</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.154.

<sup>138</sup> Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, pp.22-3.

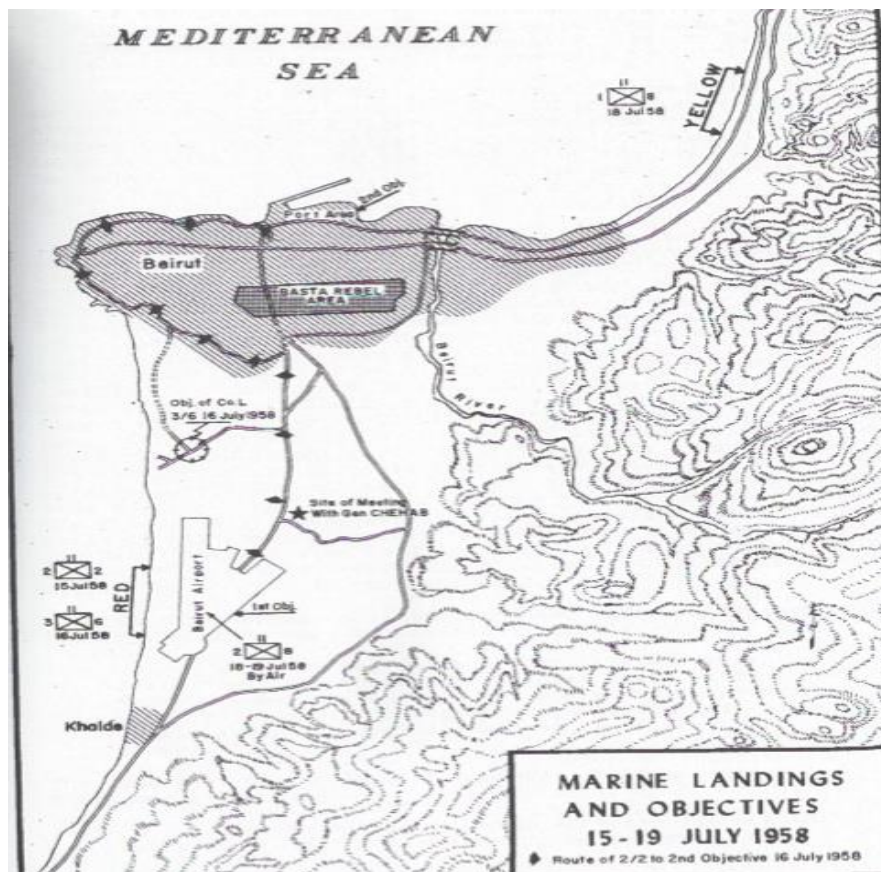


Figure 16 – The landing areas and the City of Beirut. Source: Shulimson, p.13.

Another naval diplomatic act discreetly played out during the night of July 17. As discussed, the two Anglo-Saxon powers had decided against French participation in an intervention. France nevertheless deployed the cruiser *De Grasse* and two destroyers in Levantine waters. This task force closed on Lebanese coasts during the tense days of mid-June when the two U.S. destroyers were deployed and the British CTF assembled in Cypriot waters.<sup>139</sup> Diplomatic despatches show a French concern with the country's prestige and position in its former Lebanese mandate as well as the continuation of the old Anglo-French competition in the Levant.<sup>140</sup> An illustration of the latter aspect is provided by the French ambassador in Beirut - a strong proponent of French participation - who, after learning that Britain would not intervene in Lebanon, suddenly considered that sending in the *De Grasse* task force would bear more downsides than advantages and advised Paris against such a move.<sup>141</sup> But he was

<sup>139</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Paris to Foreign Office, TNA FO/371/134123.

<sup>140</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, June 16, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD; Memorandum from Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, June 17, 1958, TNA FO/371/134123.

<sup>141</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, July 16, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

overruled by the new Gaullist government.<sup>142</sup> The *De Grasse* approached Beirut on July 17. The ambassador told Chamoun that the warship was not coming for a ‘*real official visit*’ but for a ‘*communication*’ between her commander and the embassy.<sup>143</sup> During the night, with American authorisation, the cruiser entered the Beirut harbour where she hosted the French and U.S. Ambassadors, Admiral Holloway, and the British *Chargé*. The task force departed at dawn.<sup>144</sup> This episode illustrates the marshalling of naval diplomacy not only to assert actual prestige but also to settle scores with old allies/rivals. In its conspicuous avoidance of any Lebanese representative, the *De Grasse* visit was primarily an expressive action by France vis-à-vis its Anglo-Saxon partners. Having made its statement, the French task force left at dawn and in an ultimate expressive gesture of defiance, sailed in full visibility northward along the coast.<sup>145</sup>

Chamoun’s reaction to the landing was consistent with his regional approach when he requested it on July 14, saying that Americans were welcome to bring into Lebanon any number of forces they liked to “*maintain peace in the Middle East*” and may move wherever they wanted.<sup>146</sup> U.S. concentrations near Beirut answered Chamoun’s request to create a psychological shock in the city.<sup>147</sup> He then asked Holloway to deploy troops to secure Lebanon’s borders, a move the latter declined pretexting unconvincingly the threat to U.S. lines of communication from the Basta rebel-held quarter in Beirut.<sup>148</sup> This did not prevent speculations about the transformation of Lebanon into a U.S. base for further operations in the Middle East.<sup>149</sup>

Beyond the narrow circle of Lebanese political and military leaderships, the perceptions of the landing followed the expected differentiated pattern between the two camps but varied in their nature with the three phases of the intervention: the landing, the presence, and the withdrawal. Reacting to the landing, *Al-‘Amal* announced that ‘*Citizens Flocked to the Shore to Greet [U.S. forces]*’. An editorial titled ‘*Neither Foreigner nor Coloniser*’ affirmed that the U.S. forces came under the U.N. Charter to protect Lebanon, summing up the Christian

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<sup>142</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d’Orsay, July 17, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>143</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Quai d’Orsay, July 18, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, July 17, 1958, TNA FO/371/134131.

<sup>147</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d’Orsay, July 16, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>148</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.207.

<sup>149</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d’Orsay, July 16, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LIBAN/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

worldview: Western naval intervention is not ‘foreign’ because Lebanon is part of the West and of the wider U.N. family; and it is not a ‘coloniser’ because the U.S. is a protector acting under international law.



Figure 17 – U.S. Forces have Landed in Lebanon, Al-‘Amal, July 16, 1958.

On the opposite side, *Al-Massa* announced that ‘*War is at the Gates*’, accusing the Sixth Fleet of ‘*invading*’ Lebanon in collusion with Chamoun. It also warned that ‘*The Syrian Army is in State of Alert*’ and repeated the mantra that ‘*Russia Threatens and Moves its Fleet*’. An editorial considered the landing as a ‘*challenge to the U.A.R....an act of despair after the fall of the Baghdad Pact...*’, displaying a good understanding of the underlying motives of the Western intervention. The combination of all the articles published that day by *Al-Massa* reflected the Arab nationalist regional priorities of the rebels.<sup>150</sup> This fact, in stark contrast with *Al-‘Amal’s* primary focus on the preservation of Lebanon’s independence, highlights the antagonistic outlooks of the two Lebanese cultural blocs, the ‘Arabist’ and the ‘Lebanist’: when the former saw in the Western naval action an *invasion* and a threat to the wider Arab realm, the second saw in it an *intervention* for the protection of Lebanon.



Figure 18 – War at the Gates, Al-Massa, July 16, 1958.

<sup>150</sup> *Al-Massa*, July 16, 1958.

The opposition's shock and sheer fright of the naval force are confirmed by Lebanese secret police reports which collected propaganda messages destined to beef up morale with announcements ranging from a Soviet landing in Syria to Nasser's coming military offensive, and where the American forces are collectively referred to as 'the fleet', indicating the potency of the naval perception.<sup>151</sup> Publicly, the opposition's initial disarray expressed itself in a stepped-up propaganda aimed at conjuring the peril and at confirming its Nasserist belonging. Two days after the landing, *Al-Massa* displayed two triumphant headlines. The first announced that '*100,000 Syrian Soldiers are Marching...to liberate Lebanon from the Pirates*', adopting this naval-related term to designate the U.S. forces. The second headline repeated the '*Russia Threatens America*' mantra while adding that the '*Pirates have begun their Invasion Operations*'. The journal added that '*any Arab is an Abd El-Nasser. So, know that there are one hundred million of Nasser, and your dollars and your fleets will not suppress their freedom...*'.<sup>152</sup>

A comparison with the Syrian and Egyptian press confirms a shared perception of Western naval diplomacy. On July 17, the Syrian *Al-Ayyam* announced the '*Start of a World War*', inventing a '*first clash in Beirut between the people and the forces of occupation*', highlighting the '*Russian Warning to America*', and alleging that '*Aircraft from the Baghdad Pact and shells from the Sixth Fleet have hit and destroyed peaceful villages...including a mosque...*'. This attempt to toy with the sectarian dimension is also found in the way the journal reported the Soviet warning. It allegedly extracted from the Soviet *communiqué* a sentence about '*The Protection of Minorities as Pretext Used by Colonialists to Justify their Abject Aggression*'. This clear allusion to the Lebanese Christians is contradicted by a careful reading of the fully Arabic-translated Soviet text which does not even allude to minorities. Hence, the Syrian newspaper was trying to present the Sixth Fleet as a force which destroys mosques in defence of Christians, the latter being the Trojan horse through which Western colonialism invades the Arab realm.<sup>153</sup>

In Cairo, *Al-Ahram*'s headlines announced that '*American Forces Occupy Lebanon*' immediately followed by the Soviet warning for their '*immediate withdrawal*'. An article

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<sup>151</sup> Emir Farid Chehab Collection, Police Reports (in Arabic), July 15-22, 1958, Wilson Centre Digital Archive.

<sup>152</sup> *Al-Massa*, July 17, 1958.

<sup>153</sup> *Al-Ayyam*, July 17, 1958.



commented that *'America wants to inspire terror with its naval forces'*.<sup>154</sup> The next day, *Al-Ahram* cited Nasser saying that *'any Aggression against the Iraqi Republic is an Aggression against us'*, betraying Egypt's suspicion that the intervention's real aim was to restore the Iraqi monarchy. *Al-Ahram* also announced that *'U.S. Forces had occupied Beirut'* and that Robert Murphy was the *'governor of Lebanon'*.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, two days after the landing, a Nasserist narrative had crystallised. Across the three Lebanese, Syrian, and Egyptian mouthpieces the same concerns but also, fantasies, were aired: The Sixth Fleet was an invading force geared for combat which had occupied Lebanon as a beachhead before moving against the Arab nationalist movement in Iraq and the U.A.R.; but the Soviet Union stood ready to go to war to protect its Arab friends. As discussed, the latter allegation was wrong. This did not deter the U.A.R. leadership's and the Nasserist press' escalating campaign of posturing against the Sixth Fleet's intervention articulated along two main themes: the Arab nationalist camp was ready to fight; and the Soviet Union is supporting it, with the associated risk of general war. The rhetorical escalation was pegged to the continuous inflation in the numbers of Sixth Fleet warships and of U.S. forces arriving in Beirut as well as to the British landing in Jordan on July 17. These developments confirmed the U.A.R. in its fear that the intervention's first aim was to attack it and the new Iraqi republic. On July 18, Nasser left Moscow and landed unexpectedly in Damascus where, in a defiant show of support for the Iraqi revolution, he met Iraq's new vice-president. Nasser's choice to land in Damascus instead of Cairo reflected his perception that the interventions in Lebanon and Jordan aimed at outflanking Syria and Iraq and isolating them from Egypt, and that his place as leader of the Arab nationalist camp was there, on the frontline with imperialism.<sup>156</sup> In a fiery speech rhythmised by the incessant invocation of the words 'fleets', 'colonialism', and 'imperialism', Nasser declared that *'40 Million Arabs Stood in One Front'*, adding that *'We Stand Ready for the Worst'* and that *'Fleets do not Scare us'*.<sup>157</sup> His next move was to ostensibly *'Inspect the Defences on the Front'*, meaning the Lebanese border where the Syrian 1<sup>st</sup> Army stood massed while *Al-Ahram* threateningly announced that *'Eisenhower was Playing with Fire'* after U.S. aircraft over-crossed the Lebanese-Syrian border, triggering an official U.A.R. protest.<sup>158</sup> As

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<sup>154</sup> *Al-Ahram*, July 16, 1956.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, July 17, 1958.

<sup>156</sup> *Al-Ayyam*, July 21, 1958.

<sup>157</sup> *Al-Ahram*, July 19, 1958 & *Al-Ayyam*, July 20, 1958.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, July 21, 1958; *Al-Ahram*, July 26, 1958.

for the dual theme of the Soviet protection and the risk of global war, it continued to be manipulated. Even empty, the theme of Soviet naval power was still necessary as an imaginary counterpoint to the Sixth Fleet with *Al-Ahram* titling on July 21 '*Order to the Soviet Fleets and Air Force to Prepare for Combat*', adding that '*Western circles expected Soviet [naval] attacks on sensitive naval installations*' and that '*Soviet submarines were equipped with secret features unknown to the West...*'.<sup>159</sup> The recurrent Arab references to Soviet submarines indicate an understanding of the submarine-reliant Soviet naval doctrine and also probably a fascination with the submarine's stealth, a feature assumed to cancel the supremacy of the Western fleets. Equally, a visit to Latakia by three Soviet submarines late May could have fuelled Nasserist imaginations.<sup>160</sup> Triumphant announcements of Soviet troops concentrations on the Iranian and Turkish borders alternated with warnings about global war and accusations that the U.S. was '*playing with the world's fate*', while Heikal started a series of articles in *Al-Ahram* titled '*I Watched the World on the Brink of the Precipice*', in an allusion to Dulles' supposed brinkmanship.<sup>161</sup>

In Beirut, *Al-Massa* generally articulated the same themes mixed with local considerations.<sup>162</sup> It (falsely) accused U.S. forces of establishing roadblocks jointly manned with Christian militias and denounced the constant buzz of carrier aircraft flying reconnaissance missions.<sup>163</sup> Further developing the theme of the U.S.-Christian collusion, it alleged that Chamoun was implementing a Western plan for the creation of a Christian state which would become Israel's ally. In a violent editorial '*Leave us Alone, you Pirates!*', the substitution of the Sixth Fleet for the U.S. is near complete: '[U.S.] *colonialism...pretends that the Pirates of the Sixth Fleet, messengers of Chicago gangsters, came to defend Lebanon's independence...ô Pirates of the Sixth Fleet get out from our country and go to hell with your fleets and warplanes...*'<sup>164</sup> Drawing from Arab memories of Crusades and colonialism, a Sunni cleric asked rhetorically '*What do the American Pirates want from Lebanon?*', praising '*the Jihad of the courageous people*' and warning that '*this fleet...came to control and to dominate...*'.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *Al-Ahram*, July 21, 1958.

<sup>160</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, May 26, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>161</sup> *Al-Ayyam & Al-Ahram*, July 20, 1958; *Al-Ahram*, July 21, 22, 24-27.

<sup>162</sup> *Al-Massa*, July 18-21.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, July 18, 1958.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, July 22, 1958.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, July 19, 1958.

Conversely, *Al-'Amal* continued to defend the intervention, reproducing a declaration by Pierre Gemayel, leader of the Phalange, that '*we have repeatedly warned that we were ready to cooperate with the devil in defence of our independence...*'.<sup>166</sup> *Al-'Amal* completely ignored news about the Soviet navy and seldom reported about Soviet land manoeuvres on the Iranian border. On the contrary, news about the build-up of Western forces in the Middle East dominated its front page with a headline on July 18 announcing that '*U.S. forces in the Middle East, reinforced with the super-carrier Saratoga, are equipped with nuclear weapons*'.<sup>167</sup> The same insistence on the presence of American nuclear weapons is found in other editions of the newspaper juxtaposed to articles announcing that '*America warns U.A.R. that any attack against its forces in the Middle East and Lebanon...will have dire consequences*'.<sup>168</sup> Summing up in a soberer style the global situation, centrist *An-Nahar* wrote that '*America has scored a victory with the diplomacy of fleets. It remains to be seen whether [Khrushchev] would be able to score a victory with a diplomacy of words*'.<sup>169</sup>

As the U.S. forces dug in and as continuous reinforcements discouraged any resistance, the presence phase begun. In fact, the presence and withdrawal phases can be considered in conjunction as the pull-out was progressive and took place between mid-August and the last week of October 1958. After the initial landing of BLT 2/2 and the tense first two days, the situation rapidly routinised but only to a certain extent. Despite U.S. planes showering one million leaflets containing a message from Eisenhower in which he justified the intervention by concern for Lebanon and promised withdrawal as soon as the situation permitted, sniper fire from rebel-held areas was regularly directed at U.S. forces without American casualties. Rebel machinegun fire hit U.S planes which overflew the Lebanese territory in support of BLUEBAT and in execution of an extensive aerial photographic mission.<sup>170</sup> U.S. reinforcements continued to flow reaching approximately 10,000 personnel barely five days after the initial

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<sup>166</sup> *Al-'Amal*, July 18, 1958.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*; The nuclear rumours stemmed possibly from two elements. The first was the effective presence on U.S. carriers of nuclear weapons. In his memoirs, Admiral Holloway III recalls two nuclear-equipped *A4D-2s* readied on the *Essex* catapult. The second was a short polemic inside U.S. Army about the wisdom of deploying *Honest John* ballistic missiles with both nuclear and conventional payloads. The missiles were not deployed. See: Holloway, *Aircraft Carriers at War*, p.141 & Spiller, "*Like war, but Not War*", p.37.

<sup>168</sup> *Al-'Amal*, July 20, 1958.

<sup>169</sup> *An-Nahar*, July 24, 1958.

<sup>170</sup> Gendzier mentions 11,000 sorties between July 15 and September 5, see Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, p.313. Dragnich cites 6,985 sorties from the *Essex* and *Saratoga* alone, see Dragnich, *The Lebanon Operation*, p.61; Little, Robert & Burch, Wilhelmine, *Air Operations in the Lebanon Crisis of 1958*, (USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, 1962), Chapter IV; NYT, July 21, 1958; Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, p.22.

landing and 14,000 mid-August, split between 8,000 Army soldiers and 6,000 Marines.<sup>171</sup> Despite this numerical imbalance in favour of the Army, the Lebanese continued to refer to these forces as the 'Sixth Fleet', or simply, 'the fleet'. American forces established fortified positions in Beirut and '*forward positions*' on the roads and bridges commanding access to it from the northeast and the Damascus highway, in a deterrent posture against the Syrian 1<sup>st</sup> Army.<sup>172</sup> U.S. forces left the LAF as buffer between them and the rebel-held areas to deprive Nasserist propaganda from any pretext to further denounce U.S. aggression.<sup>173</sup> U.S. patrols were authorised in the Christian areas north of Beirut where forces were greeted enthusiastically: '*Monks, children, and oldtimers [sic] came running out to greet us...All of them showered us with hospitality. We've never seen anything like it*'.<sup>174</sup> This apparently one-sided sympathy led the U.S. ambassador to declare that '*My government is interested in the Muslim side of Lebanon as much as it is interested in the Christian one*'.<sup>175</sup>

Two weeks after the initial landing liberty was granted to U.S. personnel, to the delight of Lebanese tourism.<sup>176</sup> This relaxation coincided with the election of Chehab as President on July 31. U.S. troops did not move to the borders and their operations in Beirut were relatively static. As Eisenhower defined it in his July 14 statement, they were '*present*'. Just that. But this seemingly passive presence of thousands of troops, dozens of warships with three carriers, and hundreds of armoured vehicles, despite sometimes giving local observers the impression that they did not know why they came for, had a decisive impact on the strategic and political outlook.<sup>177</sup>

Naval diplomacy was a defining element in the political compromise reached in Lebanon and in the region. In Lebanon, the presence of the fleet and the troops ashore acted as a constant pressure on the different players and were a powerful weapon in Murphy's hands. Not only did he threaten while negotiating with rebel leaders to unleash against them the Sixth Fleet's full power, but the presence of Admiral Holloway in many key political meetings alongside Murphy and McClintock acted as a clear personification of the potency of

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<sup>171</sup> Spiller, "*Not War but Like War*", p.34.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p.40.

<sup>173</sup> Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, p.22.

<sup>174</sup> NYT, July 19, 1958; Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, p.28.

<sup>175</sup> *Al-'Amal*, July 25, 1958.

<sup>176</sup> Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958*, p.32.

<sup>177</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, July 27, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

the fleet's presence.<sup>178</sup> As an example, the three Americans met Prime Minister Solh on the eve of the Presidential election. In an unexpected twist, Solh declared that he would not call Parliament to meet and that he would not resign because he opposed seeing Chehab elected. To this, Murphy answered that he and '*...the fleet came at the request of the Lebanese authorities to solve a crisis, and that they were not ready to let those who called for them hinder the efforts at a solution...*'. Turning to Admiral Holloway, Murphy added: "*I fear, Admiral, that you will find yourself obliged to leave this beautiful land sort out its mess on its own*". Solh relented.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, the fact that the election took place while U.S. forces were present was a defeat for the rebels and some centrists who had argued that the new President should not be elected '*in the shadow of the [U.S.] armies*'.<sup>180</sup> Not only was Chehab elected while U.S. Marines secured the city, but his election echoed the compromise agreed between the U.S. ambassador in Cairo and Nasser earlier in May and June.

Beyond the presidential election, naval diplomacy structured the post-intervention domestic debate along two main themes: the withdrawal of the fleet; and the guarantees requested by the Christians to replace the U.S. forces. The first theme was a demand constantly repeated by the rebels. Chehab positioned himself as a centrist and declared in his inaugural address that his top priority was to obtain the withdrawal of 'foreign' forces from Lebanon, the use of the term 'foreign' being a deliberate ploy to distinguish himself from the Christian camp who had adamantly refused to label them that way.<sup>181</sup> The opposition saw his election as a victory with *Al-Massa* writing that '*the Sixth Fleet could not salvage Chamoun, Solh, [and] Malik...*'.<sup>182</sup> However, Chehab '*...did not wish American forces to depart until he had security situation well in hand...*'.<sup>183</sup> This concern was fully shared by U.S. policymakers who ruled out total withdrawal as long as the American fleet was needed for the support of British troops in Jordan.<sup>184</sup> Rather, a phased withdrawal of U.S. forces became a tool for political leverage. Chehab, Holloway and McClintock agreed on a first '*token withdrawal*' that '*would have political advantages...opposition forces would find themselves undercut...*'. Occurring just prior to the U.N.G.A. session, the symbolic withdrawal '*would disarm criticism*

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<sup>178</sup> Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, pp.493-4.

<sup>179</sup> *An-Nahar*, August 1, 1958.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, July 24, 1958.

<sup>181</sup> NYT, August 6, 1958; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, August 7, 1958, TNA FO/371/134133.

<sup>182</sup> *Al-Massa*, July 31, 1958.

<sup>183</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs. 244 & 255.

<sup>184</sup> *An-Nahar*, July 26, 1958; NYT, August 6, 1958.

of US by Russian and Cairo Radios...'.<sup>185</sup> The highly symbolic re-embarkation on August 13 of the 1,800 Marines of BLT 2/2 fulfilled these calculations with *An-Nahar* displaying a good understanding of naval diplomacy when it wrote that:

*'It is true that the 1,800 soldiers are a fraction of the fourteen or fifteen thousand who landed. Their withdrawal is a symbolic gesture of goodwill...But it remains true that the dispatch of American troops to Lebanon, whatever their numbers, was... the manifestation of a symbolic power. Those who sent them never intended them to fight, whether inside or outside Lebanon'*.<sup>186</sup>

Hence, whether in deployment or in withdrawal mode, naval diplomacy still inspired policymakers in Lebanon and impacted political events. This pattern continued, BLT 1/8 departing on September 16 as a gesture coordinated with Chehab before his taking office on September 24.<sup>187</sup> Anticipating that a new Chehab-appointed, rebel-dominated GOL would ask for the withdrawal of all U.S. forces, American policymakers wanted to pre-empt such a call and avoid a loss of face. A compromise was found whereby a U.S. communiqué was issued stating that *'by agreement with the government of Lebanon'* American forces would completely withdraw by the end of October *'...barring unforeseen developments...'*.<sup>188</sup> Despite this conditional wording which gave the U.S. strategic flexibility and highlighted their effective control over the political and military agenda, the pull-out was completed on October 25, 1958.<sup>189</sup>

The discussions about the American pull-out also fostered an anxious debate in Christian circles about their original expectations from the intervention and the need for a permanent guarantee for the independence of Lebanon. Reflecting these anxieties, *An-Nahar* spoke about the *'Great Fear'*, asking *'Why did the Sixth Fleet come to Lebanon? Did it come for Lebanon or for Iraq? Or did it come for Jordan?'*.<sup>190</sup> Chehab's rebel-dominated government triggered Christian fury, threatening to re-ignite the crisis.<sup>191</sup> These events questioned the definitive nature of American naval diplomacy and fuelled Christian reluctance to accept a

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<sup>185</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.259.

<sup>186</sup> *An-Nahar*, August 13, 1958.

<sup>187</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Docs. 274 & 307; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, August 16, 1958, TNA FO/371/134133.

<sup>188</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.346.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, Doc.357; *An-Nahar*, October 26, 1958.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, July 26 & August 20, 1958.

<sup>191</sup> Telegrams from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, September 22 & 24, 1958, TNA FO/371/134134.

withdrawal of the Sixth Fleet without international guarantees.<sup>192</sup> *Al-Amal* clamoured that 'because Lebanon, country of freedoms in this Orient, is a humanitarian necessity...its entity should be secured by serious international guarantees'.<sup>193</sup> It added: 'International guarantees before anything. Before the withdrawal of the American forces....'<sup>194</sup> Conversely, *Al-Massa* claimed that only Nasser's guarantees were valid.<sup>195</sup> Rival petitions by the Phalange and the opposition, for or against international guarantees, were submitted to the U.N.<sup>196</sup> Summing up the debate *An-Nahar* recalled that in 1943, on the eve of independence, Sunni renunciation to unification with a larger Arab entity was the condition for Christian acceptance of the French withdrawal. Therefore, only new guarantees could lead them to accept the departure of the Sixth Fleet.<sup>197</sup>

Christian fears were heightened by the collision between their expectations from the naval intervention and the reality of the American diplomacy on the ground. If the deployment of naval power resonated with their historical memory and assuaged their fears, Murphy's diplomatic initiatives dampened their initial enthusiasm.<sup>198</sup> This is well reflected in Chamoun's bitterness about Murphy's negotiations with the rebels, American snubbing of him, and their initial welcoming of Chehab's first, 'all-rebel' government.<sup>199</sup> If the Christian populace still cheered American forces, disillusion grew from their apparent inaction and from their diplomats' tortuous game. 'Tell the Americans to help the Christians. Why else did they come here?' clamoured some citizens.<sup>200</sup> Chamoun also had no illusions, cynically telling the French ambassador that 'Lebanon nearly escaped. It was the coup in Baghdad which brought the American intervention and saved the country'.<sup>201</sup> 'Hostages to the West', the Christians were paying the price of the U.S.-led adjustment to Arab nationalism, with their hold on the levers of power weakened in favour of the Sunni element.<sup>202</sup> Nothing better illustrated this

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<sup>192</sup> *An-Nahar*, July 29, 1958; NYT, August 19, 1958; *Al-'Amal*, July 25 & 27, 1958

<sup>193</sup> *Al-'Amal*, July 25, 1958.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid*, July 27, 1958.

<sup>195</sup> *Al-Massa*, July 29, 1958.

<sup>196</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 12, 1958.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, July 23, 1958.

<sup>198</sup> McClintock, *The Meaning of Limited War*, p.118.

<sup>199</sup> NYT, October 4, 1958; Chamoun, pp.429-30; Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, August 13, 1958, TNA FO/371/134133.

<sup>200</sup> NYT, October 9, 1958.

<sup>201</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, August 6, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>202</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, August 27, 1958, TNA FO/371/134133; FRUS, Vol.XI, Doc.355.

'hostage' status than their reluctance to see the withdrawal of a fleet that at the same time brought to them Robert Murphy. They were also victims of the transfer of power in the region from Britain and France, two countries intimately linked to their history, to a new power with global priorities who had still to fully understand Levantine intricacies. Some American initiatives for the resolution of the Lebanese political crisis denoted an utter ignorance of local sensitivities and customs and were rebuffed by their two European partners.<sup>203</sup> In a meeting with Murphy, British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd reminded him that *'In 1860 West intervened in Lebanon and many Lebanese especially Christians might feel safer if there were some international arrangements now'*.<sup>204</sup> But U.S. attempts to reach an arrangement with Nasser led them to tepidly push for an international guarantee. An Arab League-sponsored U.N. resolution, probably co-inspired by the U.S. and Nasser, reaffirmed the adherence by Arab states to the principles of mutual non-interference and was voted by U.N.G.A. on August 21, 1958, providing a shaky compromise on the issue of international guarantees for Lebanon and Jordan.<sup>205</sup>

Lebanese considerations looked vain because what was more important was the reaching of an acceptable accommodation with Arab nationalism, as it conditioned the rapid and orderly withdrawal of the Western forces.<sup>206</sup> Following Chehab's election, Murphy met Nasser in Cairo.<sup>207</sup> Nasser displayed his puzzlement about the size of the U.S. landing, saying that *'as a military man he just could not believe...that US military intervention [was] limited to Lebanon. He honestly believed...we originally intended to attack Iraq...'*<sup>208</sup> For Murphy, the intervention of the Sixth Fleet had produced a *'temporary if precarious balance of power between the determination manifest [sic] by the United States and United Kingdom...and the popular dynamism of Arab unity as symbolised by Nasser...'*<sup>209</sup> A NIE dated October 28, 1958 recognised that the intervention in Lebanon and Jordan *'slowed down [but]...has not...changed basic trends...in the direction of neutralism and accommodation with Pan-Arab nationalism'*.<sup>210</sup> On this 'precarious' base, the U.S. would initiate a policy of accommodation

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<sup>203</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, April 11, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.

<sup>204</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.265.

<sup>205</sup> Yearbook of the United Nations, 1958.

<sup>206</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.278.

<sup>207</sup> Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, pp.499-500.

<sup>208</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.260.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, Doc.275.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, Doc.359.



with Nasserism symbolised by the election of Chehab, a compromise candidate who rebalanced his country's foreign policy toward more openness to Egyptian influence and Arab nationalist sensitivities while keeping a pro-Western stance in the Cold War.<sup>211</sup>

This chapter has for the first time shown the capacity of naval power during the Cold War to respond to the varying demands of diplomacy and strategy over the duration of a five-month crisis. The movements of the Sixth Fleet towards then away from the theatre, the dispatching of warship formations (Cable's 'simple ship' operation) in response to GOL's requests, and the apotheosis of the massing of the 'superior fleet' off Beirut testify that crisis naval diplomacy is a continuum of actions correlated with the vagaries of crisis management. In the context of the contemporary debates opposing New Look's massive retaliation to the reality of limited wars, the Lebanon operation revealed the definitive role of naval diplomacy in the management of the Cold War's limited conflicts.<sup>212</sup> Western naval diplomacy structured the local political debate: To each of its stages - pre-intervention, intervention, presence, and withdrawal - corresponded a local political discourse and re-positioning.

The American landing in Lebanon was, at the operational level, an 'expeditionary' operation designed to remain within the bounds of naval coercive diplomacy. It came as a milestone in a trend which saw the progressive building of an Arab nationalist narrative based on the opposition to the malevolent trilogy of colonialism-imperialism-western fleets. The crumbling U.S.-Egyptian relationship after Suez and the Syrian Crisis of the Summer of 1957 had positioned the U.S. in Arab minds as a member of the trilogy. Even before the landing in Beirut and resolutely thereafter, the Sixth Fleet had become the symbol that subsumed the trilogy. This perception of the fleet was fuelled by a fundamental transformation. Since its foundation, the Sixth Fleet had adopted an overall catalytic posture with brief forays into active suasion. Except for the Suez crisis, it had avoided deploying inside conflict zones. Its coercive and war fighting value was threatened with dilution. Lebanon offered it the opportunity to display its capacities for combined operations in a posture poised for kinetic action. For the Sixth Fleet Lebanon was its epiphany as a fighting force, a revelation which further strengthened its credibility as an instrument of coercive diplomacy.

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<sup>211</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XI, Doc.359; Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, October 1, 1958, TNA FO/371/134134.

<sup>212</sup> Dragnich, *The Lebanon Operation*, p.85.

The landing was a cathartic event that unleashed long-repressed Arab frustrations toward Western naval power. It also accelerated the polarisation of the Levant on a Cold War level, accentuating the Arab nationalist drift towards the left. In Lebanon, the Sixth Fleet re-awakened the syndrome of 1860, revealing the permanence of the conflicting perceptions of Western naval diplomacy by the two Lebanese cultural groups. By playing a definitive role in the resolution of the crisis, the fleet confirmed the maritime nature of the Lebanese entity and its dependency on foreign naval interventions to guarantee its political and cultural specificity. For nearly a decade, until Eshkol's infamous declaration analysed in Chapter 4, the Sixth Fleet became a regular visitor to Beirut where sailors exercised their liberty and America displayed its naval dominance highlighting Lebanon's belonging to the Western camp. However, in 1958 American diplomacy altered the perception many Christians had of Western naval interventions. Their realisation that the West intervened only in reaction to the Iraqi revolution and that the compromise America sought with Nasserism was being built, at least partially, at their expense led them to develop a certain mistrust towards the U.S.<sup>213</sup> The historical association of naval intervention with protection and with the continuous improvement in Christian fortunes was weakened. The naïve belief that the 'Christian West' would always rush to save them had received a first, powerful blow. Wrote the British ambassador: *'It is at least clear that the Lebanese can no longer count on being the undisputed favourite of the West by sole reason of their Christianity. This particular Crusade is over'*.<sup>214</sup> The irony of this result is that the West did not even win the trust of the Muslim side of the population.<sup>215</sup>

Lastly, the presence-based intervention meant that the U.S forces did not come to the Middle East to fight but to deter and compel a regional foe and its Soviet support. Despite the accumulation of huge offensive naval and land forces, U.S. policymakers rejected all calls to deploy them to the borders with Syria, even for monitoring purposes. The disproportion between the deployed firepower and its actual non-use left local and international actors wondering about its real purposes. Intentional or not, this confusion served well the aims of naval diplomacy. It contributed to the sense of irrationality and imminent danger, including

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<sup>213</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, July 19, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/625/AD.; Abadi, 'Perception and Reality', pp.310-13.

<sup>214</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Office, August 27, 1958, TNA FO/371/134133.

<sup>215</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, October 13, 1958, FR/AFRIQUE-LEVANT/LIBAN/LA/628/AD.

nuclear, that compelled these actors - the Soviets, Nasser and his proxies - to opt for words instead of actions and seek compromise. Twenty-five years later, the conditions facing Western naval diplomacy in Lebanon would be completely different.

## Chapter VI – The Lebanese War of 1975-90: The Multinational Force (MNF), The Presence Phase

This chapter and the following two will focus on the dual MNF experience in Lebanon, the MNF1 in August-September 1982 which oversaw the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, and particularly the MNF2 which between September 1982 and February 1984 attempted to assist in the stabilisation and restoration of Lebanon. As discussed, the existing literature about these events ignores their naval diplomatic dimension and its perception onshore. The following chapters will provide a comprehensive account of the naval activities and of their interactions with onshore perceptions.

This chapter will show how traditional Lebanese expectations of naval interventions were challenged and confused by Western passivity during the first seven years of the war when even naval latent suasion seemed absent. It will analyse the strategic effects of this unprecedented absence of Western naval power. It will measure the impact of the belated deployment of the MNF on the conflict ashore and how it leveraged the flexibility of warships. To what extent did it confirm or shape onshore perceptions and understanding of the contribution of naval power? How did it re-ignite Christian overestimation of their own importance and their wishful thinking about the reliability of the West's engagement? Why did it adopt an apparently non-coercive formula and what views of coercive naval diplomacy did it reflect? The chapter will also present the first in-depth analysis of French naval diplomacy, in contrast with Coutau-Bégarie's diachronic-only study.

The MNF experience, its length, its changing complexity, and apparent failure display the image of a powerless Western naval diplomacy going through all the declinations of escalatory naval power against a minor Soviet-backed would-be regional hegemon and its local militias proxies - to no avail. This raises the question of the limits of naval diplomacy and of its very justification for conflict management in local wars. If the '*power to hurt*' incrementally cannot be made credible because of an intolerance to losses and domestic pressure, then coercive diplomacy is demonetised from the onset.<sup>1</sup> Syrian President Hafez El-Assad understood it all too well when he said that '*if 500 Syrian soldiers are killed, their*

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<sup>1</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp.1-34.

*families would not even know about it; but if only one U.S. Marine is killed, then it is on TV that very day'.<sup>2</sup>*

Remarkably, while the naval diplomacy events which came in response to Levantine crises during the Cold War were pure offshore deployments, they were bracketed by the two onshore projections in Lebanon in 1958 and 1982. This begs the question of why did tiny Lebanon benefit from the exclusivity of onshore power projections? It is a specificity that derives from several interrelated parameters. First, contrary to June 1967, October 1973, and September 1970 the Soviet Union was not materially engaged in the two Lebanese instances, clearing the field for Western power projection. In 1958, the Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean was marginal while other means of power projection were dwarfed by America's. In September 1982 Moscow, in the twilight of the Brezhnev era, was reeling from the defeat of Syria and its Soviet-supplied weapons at the hands of the IDF the previous June, creating a window of opportunity for the injection of Western naval power in Lebanon which had never been a vital Soviet interest. Second, the strong local and sectarian roots of the Lebanese crises required 'hands-on' interventions of the peacekeeping/interposition type rather than for a pure display of grey power offshore, notwithstanding the fact that the Lebanese minorities, especially the Christians, needed to be reassured by a tangible international presence prior to their eventual acceptance of compromises. The fact that regional powers such as the U.A.R. in 1958, and Syria, the PLO, and Israel in 1982 had already deployed military forces in the country facilitated Western intervention. Third, the nature of the Lebanese crises highlighted the weakness of the state, creating an additional opportunity for external forces to intervene, manipulate Lebanon's institutions, and use it as a theatre for their own strategic endeavours. Finally, Western naval onshore projections came in response, at least cosmetically, to appeals from the GOL for assistance in stabilising a chaotic situation more than for a clear combat mission.

Another remarkable feature of the Lebanese naval diplomacy operations is their duration. The two operations, admittedly of unequal length (three months in 1958 against nearly one year and a half in 1982-84), dwarf in duration all the other deployments which responded to two Arab Israeli wars (June 1967 and October 1973) and the Jordanian crisis of 1970. This feature is interrelated with their onshore dimension and the nature of the crises.

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.

It is because the Lebanese conflicts were protracted, involving a fluid and catalytic tactical and strategic landscape, that they necessitated an onshore presence which could only be of a certain duration until the crisis was resolved (1958) or was deemed unsolvable after a heavy price had been paid (1982-84).

Another peculiarity of the Lebanese naval interventions is their clear kinetic component. If one excludes the October 1973 stand-off between the Sixth Fleet and the Eskadra, an event justified more by global than regional considerations, the deployments related to the Arab-Israel wars of 1967 and 1973 were essentially catalytic and remained relatively far from the theatre of operations. We now know that the U.S. quickly dropped the option to directly intervene in Jordan, opting instead for an eventual Israeli air strike against Syrian armour. On the contrary in July 1958, the Marines landed in Beirut expecting opposition and even if they did not come to fight, the maritime and land theatres were saturated by the entire Sixth Fleet and 14,000 troops, a posture which suffered no discussion whatsoever by any international and regional challenger. In addition, exchange of fire, limited to automatic rifles and machine guns, did regularly occur when U.S. troops responded to rebel fire and aggressively moved armour when required. In the MNF case, Western forces would engage in land-based artillery duels, naval air strikes, and naval bombardments by a Second World War vintage battleship.

Drawing on recently available governmental archival material, local press sources, and interviews, this chapter and the following two will show how Western naval diplomacy continuously caught up with events onshore instead of shaping them, becoming victim of a '*confusion of tactics with strategy*' and of a disagreement, inside Western policymaking circles, about the meaning of a diplomacy of force.<sup>3</sup> They will show how the 'hostages to the West' syndrome played again in 1982-84 when the Christians found themselves torn between an increasingly fantasised Western protection - a tendency reinforced by the sight of the armada massed offshore and the sound of its giant guns - and the crude reality of their abandonment to domestic electoral concerns and wider strategic interests. Conversely, it will show how Muslim politicians, including allegedly secular Arab nationalists in Syria and Lebanon, manipulated the traditionally hostile attitude to Western interventions of their

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

populace into a sectarian-loaded narrative which did not hesitate to mobilise old historical references.

### **6.1 The March to War, Western Neglect, and the Pre-eminence of Land Power**

The Lebanese internal consensus started to unravel following the June 1967 War.<sup>4</sup> Attacks by Palestinian guerrillas against Israel from Lebanese territory triggered Israeli reprisals against Lebanon. For the Christians, the combination of the presence of hundreds of thousands of mainly Sunni Palestinian refugees with the armed guerrillas and with a Lebanese Muslim population in majority supportive of them, threatened the country's stability and demographic balance. For the Muslims, the Palestinians, and other Arab countries Lebanon had the duty to open its territory to the Palestinian struggle. Their claim merged with calls for socio-economic reforms coming from the domestic Left. The first clashes which opposed the LAF to the Palestinian *fedayeen* in the fall of 1969 witnessed the intervention of embryonic Christian militias in support of the army. Agreements which regulated the activities of the *fedayeen* were constantly violated by the latter, leading to ever harsher Israeli reprisals and heightening internal polarisation. Sectarian militias stepped up their preparations for a conflict which finally ignited on April 13, 1975.

During the pre-war phase, Christian anxieties translated into demands for Western assistance. During the clashes of 1969, the Soviet Union warned against any 'third party' intervention, forcing the U.S. to adopt a prudent naval signalling through a CTF positioned 400 miles off Lebanon while pondering whether to delegate the burden of an eventual intervention to Israel.<sup>5</sup> This U.S. attitude foresaw what would be, ten months later, the crux of U.S. naval diplomacy during the Jordanian crisis. It also showed how Western naval flexibility was impacted by the increasingly assertive Eskadra. Another feature of this period, with bearings on future perceptions of naval diplomacy, is that despite the timid naval deployment in 1969 the U.S. remained generally aloof of Lebanese affairs, responding negatively to requests from the GOL for Sixth Fleet interventions and from Christian militias for arms. The U.S. Embassy in Beirut wrote that America should '*not encourage the Christian*

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<sup>4</sup> On the march to war: Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention*, Chapters 1-5; Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, Chapter 7; Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, pp.141-210; Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, Chapters 1 & 2; El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State*, Parts IV-VII.

<sup>5</sup> Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention*, pp.60-7.

leaders to assume...[a] special protective relationship...'.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the mounting danger of an Arab-Israeli conflagration triggered by unchecked *fedayeen* actions from Lebanon led Henry Kissinger to tolerate channelling weapons to the Christians through third-party arms dealers, while the U.S. delivered weaponry to the LAF with the knowledge that part of it would be diverted to the Christian militias.<sup>7</sup>

The first two years of the war pitted the PLO, Lebanese Muslims, and Leftists - supported by Syria, against the Christians while the LAF quickly split along sectarian lines. After preventing a Christian tactical victory in early 1976, Syria switched sides to prevent a too successful counter-offensive by the rival faction. Assad feared that the Christians could be tempted to take shelter in partition, creating a mini-state allied to Israel on Syria's western flank. He considered Lebanon as part of Greater Syria and ambioned integrating it into his sphere of influence. Thus, Assad deployed the SAA which after defeating his former allies, became the backbone of an Arab League-sponsored Deterrent Force which legalised its presence. Syria switched sides again, leading to a showdown with the Christian militias in 1978 that transformed the Lebanese War into an essentially Christian-Syrian one and led to a noisy but ineffectual international reaction.<sup>8</sup>

During all this period, the Christians had waited for tangible Western intervention that could restore the internal balance as a prelude to negotiations. The West wanted them 'to compromise' while avoiding 'break[ing] their back' and seeing them 'collapsing on [the U.S.]'.<sup>9</sup> No movements of the Sixth Fleet came to signal U.S. concern during the most awkward military situations for the Christians, while Arafat regularly bragged that he 'will sink [the] Sixth Fleet in Lebanon'.<sup>10</sup> Western diplomacy hid behind the fig-leaf of the Syrian intervention which came after a tacit understanding with Israel that Syrian troops would not trespass a 'red line' running roughly from the city of Sidon eastward, and that no Syrian air power or anti-aircraft systems would be introduced in Lebanon.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention*, pp.50-5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp.72-4.

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, pp.194-241 & Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, pp.34-60.

<sup>9</sup> Kissinger cited in Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention*, p.181.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Marwan Hamadé.

<sup>11</sup> Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention*, Chapter 8; Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, pp.210-3; Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, pp.47-57.



In the Levant of the late 1970s, the view the elite had of foreign interventions was marked with realism, if not cynicism. From the war's onset, Christians hoped for Western political intervention, labelled internationalisation, that was considered by their Palestinian-Muslim adversaries as a prelude for a military projection that would favour the Christians.<sup>12</sup> However, Christian leaders were *'freed from the illusions'* that the West would intervene to save them. They were conscious that their strategic weight was light and that only alternative narratives such as the danger of seeing Lebanon slipping into the pro-Soviet camp or the one stemming from Muslim fundamentalism, could attract Western attention. They insisted on shared *'liberal and democratic values'* hoping that by their resistance to what was presented as an assault by Soviet clients, *'they have earned a status of credible partners'* worthy of Western support.<sup>13</sup>

*'Deep inside'*, many leaders believed that in the end the West would intervene, even militarily.<sup>14</sup> For former President Chamoun and his former Foreign Minister Malik, the two key local characters during the 1958 crisis, the U.S. would waver but would finally come as they then did.<sup>15</sup> As then, they would come for over-arching regional and global reasons, but they would ultimately land on Lebanon's beaches. They would act as an 'offshore balancer' and *'restore stability; and stability is always beneficial to the Christians'*.<sup>16</sup> All the Levant's history with foreign interventions displays the same pattern: a phase of neglect followed by the realisation that much more was at stake than mere local killings. This was the case in 1860, in 1918, and in 1958. It would also be the case in 1982. These expectations were shared, though for inverted reasons, by the Muslim side. Muslims of all denominations saw the Levant's history as a long string of Western interventions that frustrated them from their victories.<sup>17</sup> They were bent to prevent history from repeating itself.

Western prevarications initiated a mental and strategic shift in the Levant when the traditional role of naval interventions is considered. Between 1975 and 1981, Western navies intervened only twice in instances seemingly disconnected from the plight of the GOL and the Christians. The first intervention occurred in June 1976 with Sixth Fleet units evacuating U.S.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni; Interview with Lucien George.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel; Interview with Fouad Abou-Nader.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Marwan Hamadé.

nationals from Lebanon; and the second took place in the Summer of 1978 when French naval forces landed the French contingent of the newly established UNIFIL that would monitor the Lebanese-Israeli border in the wake of Israel's first invasion of Lebanese territory. Feeling abandoned, the Christians turned to Israel for succour, meaning that land and air power would replace naval power for their protection. This was to be demonstrated in April 1981 during the so-called 'Missile Crisis'.

During the winter of 1980-81, fighting broke out between the LF and the SAA for the control of Zahle, a Christian city located in the Beqaa not far from the Syrian border. To prevent the LF from building a strategic road linking Zahle to the Christian heartland, the Syrians employed helicopter gunships for the first time. The IAF reacted by downing two Syrian gunships, leading Assad to deploy SAM batteries in the Beqaa. Israel considered it a violation of the 'red line' agreement of 1976 and threatened to destroy the batteries, opening the gates on a potential Syrian-Israeli showdown with dangerous Superpower reverberations. The Reagan Administration sent a Special Envoy, Philip Habib, who was able to defuse the crisis.<sup>18</sup>

The heightened international attention could only please the Christians and annoy their foes. This led the local newspapers, especially the Christian-leaning ones, to closely follow the discussions about the internationalisation of the Lebanese crisis, linking them to the movements of fleets in the Mediterranean. For the Christian camp, internationalisation meant Westernisation and the chance for direct intervention and guarantees. On April 3, 1981, the Israeli Vice-Minister of Defence '*warned against any attempt at genocide of Christians ...*'<sup>19</sup> On April 4, Pierre Gemayel, the head of the Christian Phalange, declared that '*the Lebanese crisis needs to be dealt with at an international level*'.<sup>20</sup> Gemayel's declaration was reinforced on April 5 by the Assembly of Maronite Bishops who asked for '*an international force to restore order in Lebanon*'.<sup>21</sup> On April 7, U.S. Secretary of State Haig denounced Syrian '*brutality against Christian minorities*' and, on April 12, OLI's front page was titled '*Internationalisation on the March*' while the Christian clergy doubled down and requested '*an international patronage for Lebanon*'.<sup>22</sup> Muslim reaction came through the

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<sup>18</sup> Ménargues, *Les Secrets de la Guerre du Liban*, Vol.I, pp.106-46; Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, pp.114-9.

<sup>19</sup> OLI, April 3, 1981.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, April 4, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, April 5, 1981.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, April 7 & 12, 1981.

Lebanese Sunni Prime Minister on April 12, who summoned the French ambassador and rejected internationalisation.<sup>23</sup> Pro-Syrian sources accused the LF of escalating the fighting to pave the way for a U.S.-French military intervention.<sup>24</sup> The latter was called for by Israel to 'protect the Christian minority'.<sup>25</sup>

Naval diplomacy hit the headlines on May 16 with articles on a 'U.S.-Soviet confrontation off the Lebanese coasts.' The press of both warring camps cited the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonoth* describing the task force around the *Moskva* helicopter carrier 'patrolling between Cyprus and Lebanon'. It then quoted the Pentagon announcing that the *Independence* and the *Forrestal* CTFs were on their way to the Eastern Mediterranean and cited Turkish Bosphorus authorities about movements of Soviet vessels.<sup>26</sup> On May 17, OLI's front page displayed a picture of the *Forrestal* leaving Naples as well as information about the concentration of 35 U.S. warships and an equivalent number of Soviet ones. Symbolically, the article ended on a comment by Camille Chamoun: 'These movements have no importance and no military objective', hinting at their Superpower-centred diplomatic nature and implicitly recalling memories of 1958 when his calls for intervention went unheeded for weeks until the Iraqi *coup* convinced the U.S. to act.<sup>27</sup>

Over the next days, newspapers front pages remained devoted to naval movements. French manoeuvres with the *Clemenceau* CTF were signalled while excitement about a possible intervention, but also a potential Superpower clash, increased.<sup>28</sup> U.S. Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger was quoted saying that 'we have decided of not being precise about the exact number of warships', a typical naval diplomacy ploy.<sup>29</sup> Naval matters, very accurately reported, continued to fill front pages until well into July 1981 when they culminated on July 6 and 7 in the combined Syrian-Soviet manoeuvres and a Soviet Marines landing in Northern Syria.<sup>30</sup> During these manoeuvres - motivated by the Israeli threats to Syria and the Israeli raid against the Iraqi *Osirak* nuclear reactor in June - Soviet warships fired warning shots, 18km south of Cyprus, at a small Cessna aircraft carrying CBS cameramen

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<sup>23</sup> *As-Safir*, April 12, 1981.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *As-Safir*, April 13, 1981.

<sup>26</sup> OLI, May 16, 1981; *As-Safir*, May 16 & 19, 1981

<sup>27</sup> OLI, May 17, 1981; *As-Safir*, May 17, 1981.

<sup>28</sup> OLI, May 19, 20, and 23, 1981.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1981.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 6, and 7, 1981.

reporting on the drills.<sup>31</sup> The manoeuvres added to the general nervousness with '80 Soviet units' allegedly gathered off Latakia under the watch of the Sixth Fleet.<sup>32</sup> The crisis abated afterwards.

For the Powers, the naval instrument was still the most immediate tool to express concern and send signals while preparing for the worst. This organic link between diplomacy and naval power was instinctively foreseen by the Christians and their foes. Despite feeling estranged from the West since the beginning of the war, the Christians' reflex to turn to the sea was re-ignited by the hope that the Missile Crisis could result in naval-backed international guarantees. However, the discrepancy between these local expectations and the Powers' own motives was blatant. Christians hoped for a Western move, Muslims dreaded it but the whole international drama was not about them, rather about the escalatory potential of the Israeli Syrian standoff around the SAMs. Once more, the Sixth Fleet was not coming to the rescue of the Christians but for the balance of power in the Middle East. By abdicating the traditional balancing role of naval power in Lebanese conflicts and renouncing its prophylactic effects on Christian anxieties and hence, on their flexibility for compromise, the Western Powers would only further cement the Christian reliance on Israeli land and air power.

## **6.2 *Peace in Galilee* and the Structuring of MNF1 and MNF2**

In June 1982 Israel launched *Operation Peace in Galilee*. The plan was to push north to Beirut, destroy the PLO infrastructure, expel the SAA, and foster the revival of a strong GOL led by Israel's Christian allies with Bashir Gemayel at their helm. After an Israeli siege of West Beirut where most of the PLO forces were holed up alongside Syrian troops and Lebanese Muslim militias, Philip Habib produced a formula for an essentially seaborne evacuation of the PLO fighters, supervised by a U.S.-led MNF1. Concurrently, Bashir Gemayel was elected President of Lebanon. However, once the PLO was gone and MNF1 pulled-out Gemayel was assassinated on September 14. In response, the IDF occupied West Beirut and organised the mopping up, by Lebanese militiamen, of Palestinian refugee camps in search for hidden weapons and fighters. The operation degenerated into mass killings which triggered the

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<sup>31</sup> *As-Safir*, July 7, 1981.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, July 6, 1981.

return of a new, U.S.-led MNF2 later in September. Moreover, U.S pressures on Israel had frustrated the IDF's final push against the battered SAA. The Reagan Administration, fearing escalation at Superpower level but also backlash from moderate Arab states, pressured Israel to stop its offensive. The result was that a Syrian-occupied area covering Eastern and Northern Lebanon survived the Israeli onslaught. This represented the single most important factor in the final failure of MNF2.

MNF1 came 'to assist' – for a limited period of thirty days - the LAF during the withdrawal of PLO fighters from Beirut on board ICRC-chartered ships.<sup>33</sup> It comprised French, Italian, and U.S. personnel. It represented an interposition force between the Palestinians and the Syrians on the one hand, and the IDF and their LF allies on the other. The earlier than expected completion of the evacuations from the harbour on August 30 led to the U.S. unilateral decision to pull out the Marines prematurely (they landed in Beirut on August 25).<sup>34</sup> Weinberger's and the Pentagon's hostility to U.S. troop deployments was the principal factor behind the decision. Ironically, Weinberger announced it from Beirut on the same day when the ambitious Reagan initiative for peace in the Middle East (RPI) was unveiled. U.S. action prompted Italian and French withdrawals, with the latter pulling last but fatefully on the very same day of Bashir Gemayel's assassination and the subsequent killings which brought back MNF2 on September 29.

Like MNF1, MNF2 comprised American, French, and Italian troops albeit in higher numbers (around 4,000 men in September compared to circa 2,000 men in August) with more equipment and suited to a longer stay.<sup>35</sup> The type of troops varied between contributor nations. Whilst the French and Italian units were *ad hoc* forces made of different arms (paratroopers, naval infantry, elite ground forces and, in the case of the Italians, a civilian-medical party), the Americans relied exclusively on the Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) structure acting as the onshore projection of the Sixth Fleet.<sup>36</sup> In February 1983, Britain

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<sup>33</sup> *Lebanese Proposal for a U.S. Contribution to a Temporary Multinational Force in Beirut, August 18, 1982*, American Foreign Policy Current Documents, Doc.389, (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1982), Hathi Trust Digital Library.

<sup>34</sup> *As-Safir*, September 2, 1982; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp.209-10; Korbani, *U.S. Intervention in Lebanon*, p.87.

<sup>35</sup> Nelson, Richard, 'Multinational Peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations Model', *International Affairs* (1984), 61/1, p.74.

<sup>36</sup> Brouillet, Alain, 'La force multinationale d'interposition à Beyrouth (21 août-13 septembre 1982)', *Annuaire français de droit international* (1982), Volume 28, p.320-1 & Brouillet, Alain, 'La seconde force multinationale à Beyrouth (24 Septembre 1982-31 mars 1984)', *Annuaire français de droit international* (1985), Volume 31, pp.132-6.

contributed 80 lightly armed Queen's Dragoons Guards - BRITFORLEB.<sup>37</sup> The most important characteristics of MNF2 laid in the definition of its mission and in the role of the naval forces that accompanied it.

The mission was defined in the initial *Letter of Request* sent by the GOL.<sup>38</sup> It reflected the GOL's wish to 'restore its sovereignty and authority over the Beirut area'.<sup>39</sup> The mandate of MNF2 was defined as 'to provide an interposition force...and...the Multinational presence requested by the [GOL] to assist it and the [LAF] in the Beirut area...[to] facilitate the restoration of [GOL] sovereignty and authority...'.<sup>40</sup> The U.S. and French Governments' answers acknowledged this wording, with the U.S. referring to the 'establishment of an environment which will permit the [LAF] to carry out its responsibilities in the Beirut area'.<sup>41</sup> The use of the notion of *presence* echoed Eisenhower's words in his announcement of the American landing in Lebanon in 1958.<sup>42</sup>

The 1958 presence formula may have been considered passive enough to avoid embroiling U.S. forces into active kinetic interposition as the 1973 WPR submitted the administration's ability to send troops into combat situations to Congressional authorisation.<sup>43</sup> The 1958 landings represented an implicit benchmark for any new naval venture in Lebanon. References to 1958 are found in the administration's internal papers as reminders that America could not renege on its engagements towards friendly countries.<sup>44</sup> Reagan felt 'deeply committed' to the restoration of Lebanon, a 'noble attempt'.<sup>45</sup> In his

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<sup>37</sup> Hughes, Geraint, 'A Forgotten Intervention: Operation Hyperion and British Peacekeepers in Lebanon, 1982-1984', Defence-In-Depth (London: King's College Online Resources, 2017).

<sup>38</sup> *Lebanese Request for a U.S. Contingent in the Second Multinational Force & U.S. Agreement to Participate in the Second Multinational Force, September 25, 1982*, American Foreign Policy Current Documents, Docs 408 & 409, (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1982), pp.867-9, Hathi Trust Digital Library; Telegram from Direction Afrique du Nord/Moyen-Orient to French Embassy in Beirut, September 23, 1982, 1835INVA Box 398, AD.

<sup>39</sup> *Lebanese Request for a U.S. Contingent*, p.867.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p.867-8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p.868; Telegram from Direction Afrique du Nord/Moyen-Orient, September 23, 1982, 1835INVA Box 398, AD.

<sup>42</sup> Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p.274.

<sup>43</sup> *War Powers Resolution, November 7, 1973*, U.S. Library of Congress Online Catalog; *Use of U.S. Armed Forces in Lebanon, September 29, 1982*, Doc.411, p.871 & *Congressional Responsibility Under the War Powers Resolution with Respect to U.S. Troops in Lebanon, December 15, 1982*, American Foreign Policy Current Documents, Doc 420, (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1982), p.883, Hathi Trust Digital Library; NYT, September 3, 1983.

<sup>44</sup> Telegram from Robert McFarlane to Richard Fairbanks, August 28, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject File, Lebanon, Box 55, RRL.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

memoirs, Weinberger contrasts the success of 1958 with the difficult situation of the 1980s to better lament the lack of judgment of his colleagues in the State Department and the NSC.<sup>46</sup> Operationally, the Marines landed in September 1982 at the same location used in 1958, then dubbed 'Red Beach' and re-named 'Green Beach'. Similarly, they chose to locate their main base around the airport for security and logistic reasons. Lebanese observers quickly noted that the first aircraft carrier to be used in direct support of the MNF was the *Eisenhower*.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, these were different times. Despite Eisenhower declaring a presence mission, the 1958 U.S. landing was primarily an 'expeditionary' operation with a clear combat posture which saturated the theatre with personnel and weaponry.<sup>48</sup> In 1982 however, the initial peacekeeping-presence approach was reflected in the force structure: barely 4,000 personnel of four nationalities, with no unified command, essentially equipped with light weapons, and corseted inside strict ROE. The discrepancy between the ambitious local and regional objectives of MNF2 and the symbolic force projected ashore, would lead Reagan to ask the NSC and later Sixth Fleet Commander Rear Admiral Philip Dur 'how many troops were committed in 1958?'. Upon hearing the impressive figures, Reagan stared across the window of the Oval Office and thought loudly: '14,000 troops...but then Ike didn't have to worry about being impeached for breaking the [WPR]...'.<sup>49</sup>

This brief historical comparison highlights the paradox that lay at the heart of the concept of peacekeeping-presence for MNF2. Whilst the military and political conditions were more benign in 1958, the U.S. military projection was massive because it integrated an unstable and unpredictable strategic regional environment. In 1982, Lebanon was occupied by three foreign powers - Israel, the Palestinians, and Syria - who had just fought a large-scale war that threatened to drag in their respective Superpowers patrons. It was also a land where an ethno-religious local war had laid waste to institutions and infrastructures. Nonetheless, the U.S.-led MNF2 selected the most minimalist approach hoping that by showing the flag, all these compounded problems would suddenly dissolve.

The operational translations of a peacekeeping-presence posture varied according to nationality. First, in terms of mobility, whilst French and Italian troops patrolled some city

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<sup>46</sup> Weinberger, Caspar, *Fighting for Peace*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1990), p.95.

<sup>47</sup> Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon*, p.27; OLI, August 31, 1983.

<sup>48</sup> Dougherty, *The United States Military*, pp.39-41.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

areas and manned roadblocks jointly with the LAF, the Marines remained around the airport only venturing out for limited, highly publicised patrolling.<sup>50</sup> Their perimeter, a flat landscape situated southwest of Beirut beneath dominating hills, was a tactically exposed location chosen for its proximity to the airport for logistical reasons, and for a symbolic interposition between the IDF and the southward approaches to the city, a political choice.<sup>51</sup> Second, strictly defensive ROEs applied to all Western contingents. However, while French and Italian forces could use their weapons to thwart an impending attack, the Marines were told to carry unloaded weapons and were confined to a return fire policy.<sup>52</sup> The Western contingents' ultimate defence laid with their respective navies. For the Marines, EUCOM and USCINCEUR acted through the Sixth Fleet which would intervene in support and for extraction.<sup>53</sup>

### 6.3 Western Calculations and Local Perceptions

Internal and strategic reasons ruled out a combat-ready peace enforcement mission. Domestically, the WPR was compounded by Weinberger's and the Pentagon's reluctance to put boots on the ground. This '*new Never Again Club*' put '*herculean conditions, which became the Weinberger Doctrine after the withdrawal [from Lebanon], to any significant engagement of U.S. forces.*'<sup>54</sup> They advocated - as did the Navy - keeping the Marines on their ships and using naval guns and air '*in support of the LAF and the Christians*'.<sup>55</sup> On the other side, the State Department and the NSC promoted a coercive diplomatic approach based on a significant and forceful military presence that would compel the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. Secretary of State George Shultz is scathing about Weinberger's feet-dragging that led the U.S. '*to conduct a diplomacy without strength*' while Philip Habib cursed the Pentagon's '*bunch of pussies.*'<sup>56</sup> Habib's successor, Robert McFarlane, accused Weinberger of ignoring the use of coercive diplomacy in history, starting with the 1958 landing in Lebanon.<sup>57</sup> Lebanese officials who closely worked with them were struck by this tug-of-war. Former President Amine Gemayel remembered that '*Weinberger considered that*

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<sup>50</sup> OLI, November 2, 1982; *Al-Amal*, Nov 4, 1982; NYT, November 4 & 5, 1982.

<sup>51</sup> Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon*, pp.23-8 & 162.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pp. 17 & 24; Brouillet, *La Seconde Force Multinationale*, p.158-61.

<sup>53</sup> Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon*, p.22; Brouillet, *La Seconde Force Multinationale*, pp.160-1.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Admiral Dur.

<sup>55</sup> Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, pp.105-6; Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>56</sup> Schultz, George, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp.107-8; Boykin, *Cursed is the Peacemaker*, pp. 136-7.

<sup>57</sup> McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p.248.



*Shultz's approach was wrong in that he wanted to achieve purely tactical objectives through the use of naval force' and that he made it repeatedly clear in front of his Lebanese interlocutors that the U.S. 'would not go to war.'*<sup>58</sup> The issue is even more central in the recollection of Gemayel's former Foreign Minister, Elie Salem, who remembers a tense breakfast with Reagan, Shultz, and Weinberger during which *'Shultz wanted to use the Navy for his diplomacy and talked as if defence was part of foreign policy'*. Salem added that *'Reagan would then look at Weinberger who would interject: "We have our naval presence, but we will avoid military action...We will not engage"'*.<sup>59</sup> The views of the Navy itself were more nuanced than those in Pentagon circles. It was ready to contemplate boots ashore provided they were deployed in appropriate numbers - which was not the case. Former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman recalled that *'had it been a naval operation, we would have put more than this small force. The Navy would have been able to carry out a much more intrusive operation...but Washington made the worst possible decision'*.<sup>60</sup>

It was therefore a debate about the very philosophy of coercive diplomacy and consequently, about naval diplomacy, that laid at the heart of the U.S. choice of a limited military footprint with stringent ROE. As late as December 1983, the President was being told that *'your advisors have a basic disagreement on how we should use our military power in Lebanon and off-shore in support of our preferred diplomatic strategy'*.<sup>61</sup> The debate bordered on a dialogue of the deaf. While Shultz or McFarlane spoke of the need for *'an effective political-military strategy'*, Weinberger retorted that, without a *'diplomatic success...there was no military action that could succeed unless we declared war and tried to force the occupying forces out of Lebanon'*.<sup>62</sup> This clash of conceptions would bedevil U.S. and, by extension, the MNF2 action and would materially shape the local perceptions of naval diplomacy.

Western circles were sceptical about the geopolitical value of Lebanon. The war had started in 1975 attracting relatively scant attention from those Western powers traditionally close to the country. The West became concerned with Lebanese fighting only when it

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with Amin Gemayel.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>61</sup> Talking points for Robert McFarlane, NSPG Meeting, December 1, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSPG60-85A, Box2, RRL.

<sup>62</sup> McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p.249; Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, p.109.

degenerated into an Israeli-Syrian confrontation. This was particularly the case of the 'Missile Crisis'. To Philip Habib, then Lebanese President Elias Sarkis angrily intimated to '*rather work to help solving the Lebanese crisis instead of worrying only about Israel, Syria, and the Palestinians*'.<sup>63</sup> It was naturally even more the case following the June 1982 Israeli invasion. Both MNFs were established in relation with the pan-Arab sensitivity to the Palestinian cause - MNF1 to oversee the evacuation '*in dignity*' of PLO fighters, and MNF2 in response to the killing of Palestinian civilians, a deed far from being the first (and the last) to hit a community in Lebanon's long litany of massacres.<sup>64</sup> The insistence of President Amine Gemayel, freshly succeeding his murdered brother, that MNF2 remain in Beirut to assist in the re-building of the LAF and the extension of the GOL's sovereignty over the Greater Beirut, was heeded only because the wider geopolitical stakes started to take roots in Western minds.<sup>65</sup>

The Reagan administration's strong desire to bring a Republican equivalent to the Carter-brokered Camp David Accords, materialised in the form of the RPI of September 1, 1982. This was facilitated by the defeat of the PLO and Syria and with it, the retreat of the Arab 'radical camp' and its sponsor, the Soviet Union.<sup>66</sup> The latter aspect is key as U.S. peace-making in the region had been characterised since at least the October 1973 War by a desire to marginalise the Soviet Union's influence. This Cold War dimension was fundamental for what was in fact a NATO-sponsored intervention in Lebanon. The Israeli invasion had rolled-back Syrian and Soviet influence and opened an opportunity for Western power projection in the Levant under the apparently benign peacekeeping form of MNF2.

Hence, Western powers sought to reap the potential strategic benefits of a stabilised region that would start with the evacuation of foreign forces from Lebanon. The U.S. wanted to use a successful resolution of the Lebanese problem as a showcase for the RPI and an encouragement to Arab moderates to support it. Administration internal documents regularly repeat that the U.S. objectives - Lebanon's sovereignty, Israel's security, success of the RPI, and marginalisation of the U.S.S.R. - are '*interrelated*'.<sup>67</sup> A peacekeeping-presence formula

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni.

<sup>64</sup> France's insistence for a 'dignified' exit for the PLO in August 1982 earned her the hostility of the Israelis and Lebanese Christians. See: Memorandum from Paul-Marc Henry (French Ambassador to Lebanon, 1981-1983), p.25, Direction ANMO, 1835INVA, Liban, Box 410, AD.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Amin Gemayel; Interview with Fouad Abou Nader.

<sup>66</sup> NYT, July 4, 1982 & August 31, 1982; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Statement by President Reagan-The Reagan Plan-September 1, 1982*, Historical Documents, Vol. 8 (1982-1984).

<sup>67</sup> NSDD 103, September 10, 1983; Memorandum from George Shultz to the President, October 13, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSPG 60-85A, Box2, RRL.

would suffice to capitalise on the new strategic paradigm that emerged from the Israeli invasion and to pre-empt potential Arab and Soviet criticism of a Western 'aggressive imperialist' projection. The interweaving of an international dimension with the local one only hid the relative marginality of the latter in Western strategic thinking. As a Phalangist official analysed, for the Powers, Lebanon was more a *'theatre, a geography to manage than a nation to save'*.<sup>68</sup>

The operational role of the navies differed between MNF1 and MNF2. In MNF1 the naval aspects were threefold. Firstly, MNF1 troops landed from ships (French troops were ferried by plane to Cyprus from where they boarded their LPDs).<sup>69</sup> Secondly, warships steamed off Lebanese coasts as back-ups to the troops onshore, and thirdly, American and French warships escorted the ICRC-commissioned vessels once in the high seas to the destinations chosen by the PLO.<sup>70</sup> But the purely naval element was operationally independent from the MNF1 *per se*. The foundational agreements as well as related official statements never mention the naval side, even when describing the evacuation process.<sup>71</sup> This was an apparent paradox because the first time the idea of the international intervention was aired by President Reagan on July 6, 1982, it triggered confused exchanges and interpretations regarding the role devoted to the Sixth Fleet.<sup>72</sup> While the President did not specifically mention the navy in his address, speculations immediately started about its role.

Arafat, in one of his usual anti-Sixth Fleet outbursts, declared that *'the weapons and the Sixth Fleet which [killed] our wives and children cannot protect us'*, amid a general confusion about whether the guerrillas would board Sixth Fleet vessels or chartered ships to be escorted by her.<sup>73</sup> He had previously bragged that *'[he] will sink the First Fleet, the Second Fleet, the Third Fleet, repeating his vow until he reached the [imaginary] Twentieth Fleet'*.<sup>74</sup> However, while White House clarifications ruled out transport on American vessels, the PLO was

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni.

<sup>69</sup> *Le Monde*, August 21, 1982.

<sup>70</sup> Telegram from U.S. Embassy Damascus (Philip Habib) to Secretary of State, July 24, 1982, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records: System Files, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RAC Box 3, RRL.

<sup>71</sup> *Plan for the Departure of the PLO from Beirut & Announcement by President Reagan of an Agreement for the Withdrawal of PLO from Beirut, August 20, 1982*, American Foreign Policy Current Documents, Docs. 391 & 392, (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1982), pp. 837-840, Hathi Trust Digital Library.

<sup>72</sup> NYT, July 7, 1982.

<sup>73</sup> *Le Monde*, July 8, 1982.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Marwan Hamadé.

sending parallel back-messages approving the principle of evacuation under U.S. auspices.<sup>75</sup> The press started following the movements of Western ships as soon as Reagan made his announcement.<sup>76</sup> The Lebanese press signalled the movement of the 32<sup>nd</sup> MAU and the names of its ships on July 7 when the PLO was still ridiculing the U.S. evacuation proposals.<sup>77</sup> A Christian-leaning newspaper fondly remembered the 1958 landing 'to protect the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon'.<sup>78</sup> Recalling the Syrian-dominated camp's constant rejection of an internationalisation of the crisis, it noted that the 'internationalisation was now requested by the [pro-Syrians] who wanted to be protected from Israel...'.<sup>79</sup> Christian-leaning newspapers covered 1958 over the next days while the Syrian press thundered against the 'Sixth Fleet, accomplice of the Zionist invasion'.<sup>80</sup> On July 12, the Egyptian press spotted U.S. and French warships transiting the Canal into the Eastern Mediterranean and on the 13, its Lebanese counterpart recalled again 1958 and announced that U.S. Marines were in a state of alert off Lebanon, with a photograph of the *USS Guam* - an LPH attached to the 32<sup>nd</sup> MAU - cruising 90km off Beirut.<sup>81</sup> The Pentagon was cited announcing the presence of the carriers *Independence* and *Forrestal* along with approximately 40 warships. But the officially sanctioned flow of information and its reflection in the press dwindled to insignificance once the movements of warships off the Lebanese coasts and their escort duties are considered. Data collected for this work gives an idea of the magnitude of the operation and of the types of warships involved. On the French side, four frigates were mobilised. On the U.S. side, no less than a guided missile cruiser, nine destroyers and frigates were earmarked for the task of escorting ICRC-ships.<sup>82</sup> Just a month earlier, most of these warships were part of an armada of more than 50 U.S. vessels that, with four U.S. aircraft carriers, participated in NATO manoeuvres called *Daily Double* in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>83</sup> The exercise displayed the capacity of the alliance's naval air to threaten Soviet territory while simultaneously enhancing the defence of Western Europe's south-eastern flank.<sup>84</sup> They were part of the ramp up of the

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<sup>75</sup> NYT, July 8, 1982.

<sup>76</sup> *Le Monde*, July 8, 1982.

<sup>77</sup> OLI, July 7, 1982.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, July 9, 1982.

<sup>80</sup> *Tishreen*, July 8, 1982.

<sup>81</sup> *Al Ahram*, July 12, 1982; OLI, July 13, 1982.

<sup>82</sup> Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Meilleur*, p.117; Appendix B.

<sup>83</sup> Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, p.108.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

new American Maritime Strategy based on a forward, aggressive posture and manifested through increasingly intense naval manoeuvres ever closer to the Soviet heartland, encircling it from all its maritime façades.<sup>85</sup> Thus, the warships' switch to the evacuation operation was an illustration of their versatility in terms of perceptions management. The focus was shifted to peacekeeping and rescue operations with only minimal manifestation of 'raw' naval power. It probably contributed to a decrease in Soviet nervousness which had been raised by the NATO exercises (the 5<sup>th</sup> Eskadra was increased from 30 to about 40 ships during the manoeuvres).<sup>86</sup> But it did not alleviate the overall Soviet strategic concerns about the unprecedented, since 1958, NATO power projection in the Levant '*close to the Soviet borders*.'<sup>87</sup>

The evacuation attracted contrasted perceptions ashore. The pro-Syrian, Arab nationalist *As-Safir* daily devoted several pages of photographs and emotional articles around the departure of the PLO.<sup>88</sup> These reports dwarfed the coverage of the landing of the U.S. Marines with only a single, small picture of a warship being displayed to illustrate an article in which the landings of 1958 were coldly recalled.<sup>89</sup> Contrary to its Christian OLI colleagues, *As-Safir's* coverage generally ignored the naval aspects, conspicuously devoting more attention to Weinberger's announcement of the accelerated withdrawal of the Marines.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, the Christian Phalangist *Al-'Amal* overflowed with unhidden enthusiasm. Apart from an ad of the World Maronite League thanking Reagan for sending U.S. forces to Lebanon, several articles were built around very symbolic pictures: a smoking ship chimney with the caption '*The [Palestinian] terrorists are gone and with them the black smoke of war*'; another ship with the caption: '*In this ship, seven years of suffering sail away*'; and a symbolic arrangement where a picture of a desecrated Christian cemetery stands close to one of a U.S. Marine watching with his binoculars.<sup>91</sup>

Following the completion of MNF1, the different contingents pulled out under the close protection of their warships. The French took the opportunity to stage a show of force where

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>86</sup> NYT, June 24, 1982.

<sup>87</sup> OLI citing TASS, August 26, 1982.

<sup>88</sup> *As-Safir*, from August 21 to August 28, 1982.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, August 26, 1982.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, September 2, 1982.

<sup>91</sup> *Al-'Amal*, July 8 & September 2, 1982.

warships, flanking the carrier *Foch*, paraded parallel to the coast.<sup>92</sup> This was intended as much for local consumption as for the Americans. The French role and position had been uneasy. Apart from traditional Gallic reservations about appearing subordinated to the Americans, the French socialist government had inherited and further expanded a pro-Arab policy sympathetic to the PLO and the Lebanese Muslim-dominated 'left'. This was a historic and strategic *volte-face* away from France's traditional role as 'protector' of the Christians. France's odd position during the siege of Beirut, seeking constantly to gain advantages for the Palestinians, estranged her from the Christians who now saw their position greatly strengthened following the Israeli invasion.<sup>93</sup> This was reflected in the press coverage and multiple declarations around the evacuation operations. The traditional Levantine perceptions of Western interventions were distorted in the case of France. While *As-Safir* devoted comparatively more detailed and illustrated articles about the French (and Italian) landing than about the arrival of the U.S. Marines, *Al-'Amal* took the opportunity to publish scathing articles about France's '*cheap strategy of striptease over the graves of [Christian] Lebanese*' and its '*trading of the blood of the Lebanese in the bazaar of oil and investments*'.<sup>94</sup> Having lost faith in France, in Europe in general, and even in the Vatican, the Christians turned to new 'protectors', Israel and chiefly, the U.S.. President-elect Bashir Gemayel and his successor, his brother Amine, put all their bets on America. Bashir wanted to anchor Lebanon to the U.S. and offered American officials all what was needed to make sure that the U.S. would stay after the evacuations.<sup>95</sup> He thought that the Christians and Lebanon needed a permanent Western presence to guard them from their voracious neighbours and internal strife. He identified optimal spots in the Christian heartland north of Beirut for a possible U.S. dual naval-air base which he then discussed with high-ranking American officials.<sup>96</sup> According to contemporary Lebanese witnesses, the Americans were '*very happy*' about the proposals.<sup>97</sup> Elie Salem, Lebanon's Foreign Minister, said that Bashir '*was willing to go far with the United*

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<sup>92</sup> Telegram from Admiral Klotz, CTF 452 to French Ambassador in Beirut, September 14, 1982, Direction ANMO, Situation Militaire, 1835INVA, Liban, Box 398, AD.

<sup>93</sup> Naaman, Boulos (Abbott), *Mémoires du Père Abbé Boulos Naaman*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016), pp.356-8; Interview with Fouad Abou-Nader; Kimche, *The Last Option*, p.149.

<sup>94</sup> *Al-'Amal*, July 3 & 24, 1982.

<sup>95</sup> Interviews with Karim Pakradouni and Fouad Abou-Nader.

<sup>96</sup> Interviews with Karim Pakradouni, Fouad Abou-Nader, and Amin Gemayel.

<sup>97</sup> Interview of Karim Pakradouni.

States', writing that *'somehow, this young Francophile had fallen in love with the USA, and love is often blind'*.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, in his memoirs, Weinberger gives a more qualified testimony:

*'He made a strange proposal to me: the US should consider and use Lebanon as its strategic outpost in the Middle East. Lebanon was not quite to be our 51<sup>st</sup> state but would have a similar relationship...From my point of view, however, it would have committed us far too permanently to a presence (and a responsibility) in that powder keg.... Lacking any real leverage, Bashir Gemayel put forth the political equivalent of a 'blank cheque', saying, in effect, 'Do anything you want with Lebanon-just save us''*.<sup>99</sup>

Despite later denegation by former U.S. officials, other testimonies confirm that the possibility of a military base in Lebanon was evoked and briefly examined.<sup>100</sup> It was probably pure Lebanese wishful thinking to believe that their war-torn country could constitute a safe and stable location for a U.S. base.<sup>101</sup> For Rear Admiral Dur, the possibility of a base in Lebanon was indeed:

*'discussed but typically dismissed because, from a naval standpoint there was no need for a base in the Eastern Mediterranean...The fear was that a base in Lebanon would be subject to quick interdiction and destruction in case of a clash with Syria and the Soviets...'*.<sup>102</sup>

For John Lehman, a naval base in Lebanon made no sense as *'the Sixth Fleet was essentially a deployed fleet...and Naples was enough for that'*.<sup>103</sup> The question of the base offered by the Christians and declined by the U.S. provides a stark example of the disconnect between a 'protected' would-be client's anxieties and the rational calculus of its hoped-for 'protector'. Similarly, Amine Gemayel wanted *'to bond the US to Lebanon...He had repeatedly told local US officials that Lebanon will become America's best Middle East ally.'*<sup>104</sup> In August 1983 he told U.S. Special Envoy Robert McFarlane: *'...Lebanon can be rebuilt and become a masterpiece of U.S. strategy in the Middle East'*.<sup>105</sup> His Foreign Minister Elie Salem said that

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<sup>98</sup> Salem, Elie, *Violence and Diplomacy in Lebanon*, (London: I.B. Tauris,1995), p.6.

<sup>99</sup> Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, p.102.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Fouad Abou-Nader; NYT, January 22, 1983.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>104</sup> CIA, 'Lebanon: Problems Facing President Jumayyil', (15/10/1983), p.4.

<sup>105</sup> Telegram from U.S. Embassy Beirut (Dillon) to Secretary of State, August 2, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records: Subject File, Cables (08/05/1983-08/07/1983), Box 53, RRL.

*'Amine was banking on the USA to help him. Like Bashir before him, he was veering away from France, the traditional Maronite anchor...He was thinking politics, not History'*.<sup>106</sup> In this context of far-reaching strategic re-alignments, the French expressive naval demonstration aimed at reminding both Lebanese and Americans that France had historic rights in Lebanon, an independent foreign policy, and the means to implement it.

#### **6.4 Catalytic Presence and Offshore 'Port Visits'**

After landing the troops, the warships withdrew, most of them over the horizon, and were apparently reduced in numbers. They remained as back-up to their respective contingents onshore.<sup>107</sup> Naval diplomacy went through different phases that reflected the evolving situation locally and internationally as well as the shifting and diverging policies of the MNF contributing governments.

The first phase was a presence one and lasted approximately until May 1983. It reflected the MNF's original mission definition. Warships would from time to time appear close to the coast as a reminder of their presence. They progressively became part of daily life and normality returned under their watch. The "Fleets" were here, and their pictures appeared reassuringly in the press. This phase corresponded to a short grace period during which Western power projection and associated diplomacy seemed to reign supreme. The concept of presence and its contribution to the creation of a stabilised environment appeared to be working, at least inside the boundaries of the city of Beirut. It was helped by the fact that the anti-Western camp was still reeling from its defeat in June-August 1982, that all Lebanese constituencies were tired of war, and that the IDF was maintaining order in the areas which it controlled. But the Eastern and Northern parts of the country were still under Syrian, Palestinian and associated Lebanese militias' control. The hope was that the withdrawal of all foreign forces and the recovery of Lebanese sovereignty would flow once an Israel-Lebanese agreement is signed.<sup>108</sup> Until May 1983, the fleets adopted a dominantly tranquil catalytic posture, implying a deterrent passive suasion and indulging into naval diplomacy of the 'port visit' type but without entering the harbour. Rather, visits were

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<sup>106</sup> Salem, *Violence and Diplomacy*, p.10.

<sup>107</sup> Brouillet, Alain, *La Seconde Force Multinationale*, p.135.

<sup>108</sup> *Securing a Peaceful Future for Lebanon*, Current Policy No.439 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, December 2, 1982), Hathi Trust Digital Library.



organised onboard and offshore and were aimed at the press and Lebanese officials. These were ferried to the ships by sea or on helicopters. Visits were either *ad hoc* press tours or more diplomatically targeted venues.

In the first instance, journalists were invited on board PHIBRON 4's *Guam* and *Nashville*, barely ten days after the return of MNF2. The coverage was somewhat different in tone and form depending on the journalists' political affiliation. While Phalangist *Al-'Amal* devoted three pages including numerous photos and an awe-inspired tone, the centre-right Christian-leaning OLI wrote the following, heavily allusion-laden words: '*The Sixth Fleet...As soon as it moves somewhere in the Mediterranean, one crosses one's fingers "if only, if only,..." and one says to oneself that the USA are moving for the conquest or re-conquest of a country*'.<sup>109</sup> In contrast, Arab nationalist *As-Safir* devoted to the event a single photograph with the bare minimum information in a rather detached tone.<sup>110</sup> The same split occurred when the press was invited two months later onboard the carrier *Independence*. The Christian-leaning press took pleasure in reporting the ship's Commander words: "*From where we are, we can control Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt. We can also watch the movements of the Soviet fleet in Tartus*".<sup>111</sup> The U.S. Navy did its best to impress on everyone and convey a message of friendly but watchful strength. A '*genuine naval air battle*' involving seventeen F-14s, A-7s, and E-2Cs was played out for the bewildered journalists who were then ferried by helicopter and winched down to the *Biddle*, a guided-missile cruiser which previously participated in the escort operations in August 1982.<sup>112</sup> But U.S. carrier diplomacy was only in ramp up mode. The nuclear-powered *USS Nimitz* was scheduled to relieve the *Independence* early in 1983. OLI interpreted this announcement as a signal of a U.S. intent to stay longer, noting in addition that the Marines ashore had been reinforced with 155mm howitzers and M-60 tanks.<sup>113</sup> Concurrently, the Israel-Lebanese negotiations of a peace agreement as a prelude to the withdrawal of all foreign forces started on December 29, 1982. The negotiations were 'witnessed' by the U.S. and were thus considered as Tripartite negotiations.<sup>114</sup> In turn, they were 'witnessed' and protected by U.S. warships who closed on the coastal spot where the

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<sup>109</sup> *Al-'Amal*, October 8, 1982; OLI, October 8, 1982.

<sup>110</sup> *As-Safir*, October 8, 1982.

<sup>111</sup> OLI, December 1, 1982.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1982.

<sup>114</sup> For a first-hand account of these negotiations on the Israeli side, Kimche, David, *The Last Option*, pp.169-82.

meeting took place, and which was situated not far from the Marines base. The American diplomats made sure that the Israeli and Lebanese negotiators had an angle of view across the windows to the sea and the warships, to remind them the strength of the American commitment to the speedy conclusion of a satisfactory deal.<sup>115</sup>

When the *Nimitz* arrived in January 1983, she got involved in a quasi-comical diplomatic incident. Edward Koch, the Mayor of New York, visited Israel late February 1983 and was requested by the State Department to meet President Gemayel in Lebanon. Koch wanted to cross into Lebanon going through the Israeli-occupied areas. To avoid a diplomatic incident with Lebanon the State Department decided that Koch should go into the country coming from U.S. territory, the *Nimitz*.<sup>116</sup> Too late: Koch had already crossed into occupied South Lebanon. 'Irked', the Lebanese Government refused to meet him, and the trip was cancelled.<sup>117</sup>

The *Nimitz* and the LPH *Guadalcanal* attached to the 22<sup>nd</sup> MAU witnessed in March a visit by President Gemayel 'in support of the Marines'.<sup>118</sup> The visit was duly reported in the Christian-leaning and centrist press but ignored or very briefly mentioned in the pro-Syrian one.<sup>119</sup> It came in response to the first direct attack against the Marines, probably by Shiite Islamists.<sup>120</sup> The *Nimitz* visit was a tribute to the 'all U.S.' strategy of the GOL, to the leading role of the U.S. in the MNF, and to the function of the carrier as an American sovereign territory endowed with a unique charge of prestige. Moreover, the choice of the *Guadalcanal* instead of the Marines barracks ashore highlighted the naval dimension of the U.S. presence.



Figure 19 – Reagan Steering the Ship of Lebanese Détente, *Le Réveil*, August 20, 1983.

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<sup>115</sup> OJ, December 29, 1982.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, February 28, 1983.

<sup>117</sup> NYT, March 2, 1983.

<sup>118</sup> OJ, March 21, 1983.

<sup>119</sup> *As-Safir*, March 21, 1983.

<sup>120</sup> Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon*, p.150.

But the French were far from passively watching the U.S.-Lebanese naval diplomacy minuet. The U.S.-French strategic competition in Lebanon and the Levant became a competition in 'worldly' naval initiatives. A French diplomatic offensive was launched in November 1982 with the visit of a delegation led by a high-ranking official, Alain Hautecoeur.<sup>121</sup> Its aim was to mend fences with the Christian-led Government as well as with other key Christian constituencies.<sup>122</sup> It also aimed at wooing away the Lebanese from American 'empty promises.'<sup>123</sup> In support, the French navy organised a cocktail party on the frigate *Guepratte* to celebrate the Lebanese Independence Day (November 22), a reminder of Mandatory France's historical role in Lebanon.<sup>124</sup> In January 1983, the Commander-in-Chief of the LAF was invited onboard the frigate *Galissonnière*.<sup>125</sup> During the exchanges the Lebanese officer considered that the American deployment of Marines with the support of naval artillery was optimal and 'advised the French to provide their troops ashore with a permanent naval artillery support', adding ominously that 'the firepower of the Western contingents ashore was insufficient, even in an interposition role, against the one in possession of the Syrians and their allies'.<sup>126</sup>

The French ramped up their naval activities in tune with the increasing gravity of unfolding events. The impending signing of an Israeli-Lebanese agreement providing for a total Israeli withdrawal, security guarantees for Israel, and a potential normalisation of bilateral relations, was mainly attributable to the last-minute direct implication of Secretary Shultz.<sup>127</sup> The U.S. was eager to seal a deal, as the Soviets, the Syrians, the Palestinians and associated Lebanese parties were rapidly recovering from their defeat.<sup>128</sup> The overwhelming American role in the negotiations of the May 17 Agreement (the Agreement), the absence of the other MNF countries from the negotiations, and the already mentioned pro-U.S. policy of the GOL combined to frustrate French attempts at a come-back in a leading position in

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<sup>121</sup> Telegram from French Embassy Beirut (Henry) to Foreign Ministry, November 5, 1982, ANMO Liban, 1835INVA, Box 415bis, AD.

<sup>122</sup> Visit Report from French Embassy Beirut (Henry) to Minister (Cheysson), November 9, 1982, ANMO Liban, 1835INVA, Box 415bis, AD.

<sup>123</sup> OLJ, November 8, 1982.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, November 24, 1982.

<sup>125</sup> *Al-'Amal*, January 17, 1983. The visit was ignored by *As-Safir*.

<sup>126</sup> Telegram from French Embassy Beirut (Henry) to Foreign Ministry, January 16, 1983, ANMO Liban, 0047-SUP, Box 94, AD.

<sup>127</sup> Talking Points for Judge Clark, April 22, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSPG, NSPG 62, Box 2, RRL; Salem, *Violence and Diplomacy*, pp.80-95.

<sup>128</sup> Schultz, George, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp.200-1.

Lebanon. The MNF was increasingly seen by Paris as a U.S.-Lebanese club constantly confronting the other participants with *faits accomplis*.<sup>129</sup> France decided to use its most prestigious naval asset to score a diplomatic point.

On May 16, the eve of the official signing of the Agreement, the carrier *Foch*, which had interrupted her stay in Alexandria to steam urgently to Lebanon, threw a large cocktail party gathering Lebanese officials and journalists, and hosted by Admiral Klotz, Commander of the French task force, and Paul-Marc Henry, France's Ambassador to Lebanon.<sup>130</sup> The idea to send the carrier came from the Quai d'Orsay but it was exclusively to provide comfort for the French contingent in Beirut amid mounting attacks, with the telegram from the Secretary General of the Quai to the Ambassador in Beirut insisting that France was not '*to get involved into internal Lebanese conflicts*'.<sup>131</sup> It was the local initiative taken by Henry and Klotz that leveraged this presence to expand it into a formal naval diplomacy exercise.<sup>132</sup> After a naval air show involving Etendard and *Exocet*-equipped Super-Etendard fighter-bombers along with ASW Lynx helicopters and Breguet surveillance aircraft, Klotz and Henry diplomatically declined to link the carrier presence to the imminent signing of the Israeli-Lebanese Agreement.<sup>133</sup> But the opportunity was seized by both to indulge in what was becoming the key contradiction in the definition and mission of the MNF. While the French naval presence was said to be permanent, with the structure and size of the force changing with circumstances, the audience was reminded by Henry that these warships were for the protection of French citizens and FR-MNF and that the mission of the latter '*consisted in a strict peacekeeping function in support of the legal government and not an interposition or deterrence role*'.<sup>134</sup> In short, the naval element would act only as an indirect support to the GOL. Moreover, if the French navy was there to support the FR-MNF it was because, contrary to the U.S. Marines who were essentially a naval force, '*France (and Italy) cannot claw back its troops on the ships in case of danger*'.<sup>135</sup> In his report of the events, Henry expresses satisfaction at the reaction of the press, mentioning only the two Christian-leaning

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<sup>129</sup> Memorandum from Paul-Marc Henry (French Ambassador to Lebanon, 1981-1983), p.28, Direction ANMO, 1835INVA, Liban, Box 410, AD.

<sup>130</sup> *As-Safir*, May 16, 1983.

<sup>131</sup> Telegram from Francis Gutmann to French Embassy Beirut, May 7, 1983, ANMO Liban, 0047-SUP, Box 93, AD.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Francis Gutmann; Interview with Lucien George.

<sup>133</sup> *As-Safir*, May 16, 1983.

<sup>134</sup> OLJ, May 16, 1983.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

francophone newspapers, OJ and *Le Réveil*. However, the latter, who was closer to more militant Christian circles than OJ, went straight to where the growing contentious issue was: while praising the reassuring might of the French navy and ‘*thanking anyway France for her gesture of sympathy*’, it added that the French presence would be more reassuring if it ‘*transformed from “peacekeeping force” to “repressive force”*’, a comment well noted by the Ambassador.<sup>136</sup>

Amid a steady descent into a local, regional, and international crisis the *Foch* came at a critical juncture in the MNF’s presence in Lebanon and in the role of its naval arm. Despite the profusion of champagne and canapés, the seemingly reassuring naval air demonstration, and Ambassador Henry’s carefully crafted words, the irruption of the *Foch* marked the end of the presence phase and heralded the one of coercive naval diplomacy.

This chapter has shown how initial Western neglect for the Lebanese crisis forced the Christians to adjust their traditional naval tropism and turn to Israeli land and air power for protection. Compelled to intervene to avoid a major regional war, the West leveraged the ambivalence of warships, first used as ‘humanitarian’ escorts for the evacuation of PLO fighters, then as back-up and symbols of a Western onshore strategic projection. This first phase of naval diplomacy can be deemed effective as the war stopped and solid hopes for peace in Lebanon and in the region materialised. The Lebanese naval tropism and its differentiated perceptions of naval interventions were instantly re-established as the Christians felt strengthened and vindicated. Nevertheless, the simple presence of the ‘Fleets’ had a clear prophylactic impact on the general atmosphere in Lebanon, sending a reassuring message of a long-awaited Western engagement. This presence retained the coercive potential of warships, shaping perceptions ashore in carefully programmed communication exercises. However, limits in the capacity of naval diplomacy in determining the course of events on the wider strategic theatre were drawn from the onset, owing to deep disagreements inside U.S. and Western circles about the meaning of coercive diplomacy and the opportunity of its application.

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<sup>136</sup> Telegram from French Embassy Beirut (Henry) to Foreign Ministry, May 16, 1983, ANMO Liban, 0047-SUP, Box 93, AD.

## Chapter VII – The Drift Toward Coercive Diplomacy

How were inherited misperceptions and world views weaponised by Levantine political leaders in their increasingly violent dialectic with Western naval power? According to Jervis, a common misperception in international relations is ‘unity of planning’ where the other party’s actions are systematically interpreted as conspiracies.<sup>1</sup> In Lebanon, once Syria decided to violently oppose the May 17 Agreement this misperception, consubstantial to old Arab-Islamic prejudices against the West, was consciously manipulated to produce a powerful narrative that simultaneously challenged Western naval power, signalled a negotiation stance, and mobilised the populace. The propensity to see nefarious intents in Western actions would extend to the Christian camp, fuelled by the West’s ambiguous diplomacy, timid coercive initiatives, and insensitivity to the massacres in the Mountain. Local perceptions of naval diplomacy remained binary and rather aloof from such ‘niceties’ as presence versus purposeful force. What people saw - or wanted to see - in the fleets is that they came either to protect or to dominate. In their eyes, naval diplomacy remained essentially ‘expeditionary’, the way it was in 1860 and 1958.

The arrival of the carrier *Foch* coincided with a considerably deteriorated security and strategic environment. It opened a phase of carrier diplomacy which, several weeks later, saw the deployment of the *Eisenhower* in response to Syria’s re-ignition of the war. The symbolism of the carrier was so strong that it created a new atmosphere. In the months separating the arrival of the *Foch* from the bombings of the American and French barracks in October, naval air will be used by France and the U.S. for reconnaissance and warning overflights. However, fearing the escalatory potential of air power, the U.S. would switch to NGFS for the LAF during the Battle of the Mountain in September. But the value of a carrier lies chiefly in the power projection capabilities of its air group. If the latter remains un-, or improperly used – for reconnaissance only, menacing overflights, or ill-fated strikes – the carrier loses its impact, becoming a mere show of grey steel. An American speciality, carrier diplomacy in Lebanon would ultimately stumble on western strategic inconsistency and the realities of the theatre. Following the failure of the carrier in its role of symbolic capital ship, the U.S. would revert to

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<sup>1</sup> Jervis, *Perceptions*, pp.319-321.

a re-commissioned Second World War battleship to try and revive the symbolic ship effect and re-ignite the impact of its naval diplomacy.

## 7.1 From the *Foch* to the *Eisenhower*

Almost simultaneously with the start of the Tripartite negotiations late December 1982, sparse attacks against the MNF contingents occurred, increasing in frequency, scale, and lethality, and culminating in a devastating suicide-attack against the American Embassy in April.<sup>2</sup> Using a naval reference, OJ characterised the latter event as '*a new Pearl Harbour*'.<sup>3</sup> Fighting broke out in the Mountain, pitting Syrian-backed Druse and Palestinian militias against the LAF and LF, reflecting Syria's rejection of the peace negotiations and the resulting Agreement. An Israeli side-letter to the Agreement stipulated that the IDF would not leave Lebanon unless Syria and the Palestinians pulled out simultaneously, handing Assad a veto right on the execution of the accords.<sup>4</sup> Syria's own irredentist objectives in Lebanon and her hegemonic ambitions in the Levant made her unwilling to withdraw. In defiance, Syrian bombardments against their Lebanese foes briefly spilled to the U.S. Marines positions ashore and the U.S. Navy, with shells falling at 500m from the LST *Fairfax*.<sup>5</sup>

The subdued reaction to these attacks by the MNF contributors and their refusal to expand their mission into sending their troops in the Mountain to support the LAF, awakened pro-Western parties' anxieties about the strength of the West's commitment. The presence formula was increasingly incomprehensible for those Lebanese who expected a more proactive and coercive peacekeeping posture. Pierre Gemayel, the head of the Phalange and the President's father, lamented the absence of the MNF from the Mountain.<sup>6</sup> Leveraging the minorities protection syndrome, he declared that '*...it is not enough to say to someone not to be afraid*', reminding the French ambassador France's '*peculiar responsibilities...to save [Lebanon] her own political child*'.<sup>7</sup> A Christian political party expressed shock at perceived U.S. '*softness in front of Syrian arrogance*' and reminded the West that '*it owes Lebanon to*

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<sup>2</sup> NYT, April 19, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> OJ, April 19, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> NYT, May 18, 1983; Salem, *Violence and Diplomacy*, p.90.

<sup>5</sup> OJ, May 8, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, February 15, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> *As-Safir*, March 31, 1983; Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Foreign Ministry, June 16, 1983, ANMO Liban, 0047-SUP, Box 37, AD.

be its image in a region dominated by repressive dictatorships'.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, the tone was stiffening in the pro-Syrian Muslim-dominated camp. The Druse leader Walid Jumblatt re-connected with the Levant's history, writing that *'the new battle in the Mountain is a continuation of the battle that took place in the nineteenth century and opposed a Druse-Muslim front to a fanatic Maronite one...Despite their military victory, the Druse lost politically because of the international intervention [of 1860]....'*<sup>9</sup> Following the signing of the Agreement, he declared that *'it was the end of Greater Lebanon, itself a creation of France and the Maronites'*.<sup>10</sup>

The Cold War strategic environment worsened. Hardliner Yuri Andropov succeeded Brezhnev in November 1982, which immediately reverberated on the regional situation.<sup>11</sup> The Soviet Union vigorously resumed rearming Syria. New weapons, especially SA-5 air-defence systems deployed for the first time outside of the U.S.S.R, SS-21 short-range ballistic missiles, and dozens of T-72 tanks were delivered as soon as January 1983.<sup>12</sup> Soviet declarations of support to Syria emboldened the Assad regime in adopting an uncompromising stance.<sup>13</sup> During the spring of 1983, Soviet criticism of Western military projection in Lebanon escalated, followed by Syrian diplomacy and press.<sup>14</sup> Syrian mouthpieces attacked the Western naval presence. In January, the Syrian press announced that *'Washington was hurrying to create bases in the Middle East...Through their hegemony and their fleets, they thrive at turning the Arab land into a battlefield...because of their hostility to the Arabs and their hatred for them'*.<sup>15</sup> Three weeks later, *Al-Thawra* accused the U.S. and Israel to act *'as if Lebanon had become an American-Israeli protectorate which can only accept the installation on its territory of military and pre-alert bases...'*.<sup>16</sup> The reference to the 'protectorate' was inspired from the region's colonial history, and also hinted at the 'protection' of Christians as a pretext for Western imperialism. *Al-Thawra* mentioned an American-Israeli agreement to store strategic weapons in Israel including neutron bombs, adding that *'The colonialist West,*

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<sup>8</sup> *Al-'Amal*, July 14, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> *As-Safir*, April 10, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, June 10, 1983.

<sup>11</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Policy in the Middle East and South Asia Under Andropov', (8/2/1983).

<sup>12</sup> NYT, March 21, 1983 & May 16, 1983.

<sup>13</sup> OJ, March 13, 1983; *Tishreen*, March 28, 1983; *Al-Baath*, April 1, 1983.

<sup>14</sup> OJ, May 13, 1983.

<sup>15</sup> *Al-Baath*, January 7, 1983.

<sup>16</sup> *Al-Thawra*, January 29, 1983.



led by America, does not forgive the Arab nation its emancipation'.<sup>17</sup> While *Al-Baath* titled that 'America uses military bases and valet regimes', it later alleged that the 'United States have initiated the establishment of a nuclear belt around the Soviet Union', widening its analysis to include a vast swath of Arab territory from Egypt to Oman deemed to become 'a strategic influence area and to include the Red Sea and the Arab [Persian] Gulf in the area of operations of the Rapid Deployment Force'.<sup>18</sup> Beirut was to become 'the operational headquarters of NATO Southern Command' ...a police precinct for the U.S and Israel following a plot to support the Phalangists...'.<sup>19</sup> The genuine or faked fear of an American-Israeli plan to 'blow up the region' led *Al-Baath* to signal 'intensifying movements of U.S. forces in the Mediterranean' and 'important NATO naval exercises in the Mediterranean' late April, referring to the *Distant Drum '83* manoeuvres that took place that spring and involved three different carrier air wings from the *Eisenhower*, *Coral Sea*, and the *Foch*.<sup>20</sup> 'Units of the Sixth Fleet were directing Israeli manoeuvres', while 'important American-Israeli naval concentrations off the Lebanese coasts' were signalled.<sup>21</sup> The arrival of the *Foch* in mid-May was balanced by the news, ominously announced on May 17, that a 'Soviet aircraft-carrier was in the Mediterranean' (the Kiev-class *Novorossyisk*).<sup>22</sup> And in a bravado shrewd in Islamic resonances, Assad declared to a party of Sunni Ulemas, that 'war does not scare us...The history of Damascus is that of Arabs and Muslims, and therefore this city should be defended by Arabs and Muslims'. To which the clerics unanimously cheered: 'It is you who bears the banner of Jihad...'.<sup>23</sup>

A 'fierce U.S. campaign' against Syria and the Soviet policy in the Levant was started early March 1983.<sup>24</sup> Weinberger accused Syria of being an 'outpost of the Soviet empire', referring to the thousands of Soviet advisors sent to install and crew the new SA-5 batteries, a characterised 'destabilising action'.<sup>25</sup> Ten days later, the first direct attack on Marines in Muslim West Beirut occurred. A new Missile Crisis - a 'SAM Affair'- developed. The Cold War dimension dominated articles and declarations in the American and local press about the

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<sup>17</sup> *Al-Thawra*, February 9, 1983.

<sup>18</sup> *Al-Baath*, February 20, 1983 & March 15, 1983.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, June 21, 1983.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, March 29 & April 21, 1983; Lehman, John (2018), *Oceans Ventured*, p.153.

<sup>21</sup> *Al-Baath*, June 1, 1983.

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Thawra*, May 17, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> *Al-Baath*, June 29, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> *As-Safir*, March 1, 1983.

<sup>25</sup> *NYT*, March 1986, 1983.

Soviet come-back, the SA-5s, and the negative role of Syria. OLI analysed that '*A Middle Eastern 38<sup>th</sup> parallel goes through the Beqaa Valley and sends Lebanon in separate pieces to join Germany and Korea*'.<sup>26</sup> Phalange party strategist Pakradouni stated that the '*Beqaa had become a second Berlin with the Syrian army and its Soviet advisors representing the Warsaw Pact*'.<sup>27</sup> He added that the '*MNF is not a charity society. It is NATO and here is a NATO position in the Middle East where it would face the Warsaw Pact from Iran to Damascus...NATO could be here to stay...It has always been said that the solution for Lebanon was in its internationalisation*'.<sup>28</sup> Western suspicions concerning Soviet intentions in Syria were real.<sup>29</sup> In a NSPG meeting in April, CIA Director William Casey addressed the missiles issue, their '*sophistication*', their impact on the IAF, and their potential for escalation.<sup>30</sup> In his memoirs, Salem remembers George Shultz's fears that with the Soviets in Syria '*manning some of the weapons*', a new Israeli-Syrian war could draw them in.<sup>31</sup> In June, *As-Safir* cited U.S. naval officers from the *Iwo Jima* off Beirut saying that '*a Soviet destroyer and an AGI had been in Lebanese territorial waters for several weeks, at a distance between seven and 36kms from U.S. warships*'.<sup>32</sup> Apparently, the Soviet units came at the start of the Israel-Syrian tensions following Syria's rejection of the Agreement. '*An Israeli warplane threw jamming decoys between the two ships and U.S. warships...The Soviets have 33 ships in the Mediterranean versus 25 for the Sixth Fleet augmented by the CTF of the recently arrived USS Coral Sea...U.S. naval sources denied that the Coral Sea arrival was a warning to the Soviets and the Syrians*...'<sup>33</sup>

Following the conclusion of the Agreement, Israel decided on a partial withdrawal to a line stretching from the littoral eastwards to the Beqaa Valley and which would follow the course of the Awwali river immediately north of the city of Sidon, 40 km south of Beirut.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> OLI, March 3, 1983.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, February 28, 1983.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni; *As-Safir*, February 28, 1983.

<sup>29</sup> Salem, *Diplomacy and Violence*, p.80; Memorandum from Direction Afrique du Nord/Moyen-Orient, Foreign Ministry, May 16, 1984, ANMO Syrie, 0052-SUP, Box 10, p.3, AD.

<sup>30</sup> Talking Points for Judge Clark, April 22, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSPG, NSPG 62, Box 2, RRL.

<sup>31</sup> Salem, *Diplomacy and Violence*, p.80.

<sup>32</sup> *As-Safir*, June 17, 1983.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, June 17, 1983.

<sup>34</sup> Kimche, *The Last Option*, pp.173-4.



Figure 20 – The IDF's Awwali Fall-back Line, NYT, September 5, 1983.

Thus, the mountain region of the Shuf would have no clear controlling authority. This region is where the massacres of Christians started in 1860, precipitating the Western naval intervention. In March 1977, after the assassination by Syria of Walid Jumblatt's father, his followers retaliated against local Christians, killing dozens.<sup>35</sup> Following the Israeli invasion, an emboldened LF came to the Shuf under the pretext of protecting the Christians, fuelling Druse fears of a Maronite hegemony.<sup>36</sup> The Druse coordinated with their Syrian, Palestinian, and Muslim militia allies to upset the new *status quo*. Syria saw in it the opportunity to put pressure on the GOL and its Western sponsors to repeal the Agreement. Thus, a local issue merged with the already deteriorating conditions around the Agreement and the re-kindling of the Cold War in the region. The fighting in the Mountain escalated over the summer of 1983 while the attacks against the MNF increased in precision and regularity.<sup>37</sup> Discussions centred on whether the LAF had the capacity to take over the vacated areas following coordination with Israel.<sup>38</sup> The possibility of the MNF expanding its role to support the LAF in the Mountain, fanning in key strategic locations such as the Beirut-Damascus highway, was examined.<sup>39</sup> It was ruled out as the contributing countries were hostile to any deployment in the Mountain without prior agreement by the Druse and LF, insisting on a strict peacekeeping

<sup>35</sup> Naaman, *Mémoires*, p.147-8.

<sup>36</sup> Abou Khalil, Joseph, *Les Maronites dans la Guerre du Liban*, (Beirut: EDIFRA, 1988), p.248.

<sup>37</sup> Nearly 20 attacks against the American, French, and Italian contingents between January 30 and August 30, 1983.

<sup>38</sup> Several meetings between the U.S. Special Envoy McFarlane and his team with Lebanese, Israeli, Saudi, and Syrian officials took place during August 1983. For example: Telegram from Robert McFarlane to Secretary of State, August 23, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records: Cable File, Box 107, RRL.

<sup>39</sup> Telegram from Robert McFarlane to Secretary of State, August 19, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject File: Records, 1981-1985 Middle East Trip (McFarlane), Box 53, RRL.

mission limited to Beirut with defensive-only ROEs.<sup>40</sup> In July, Reagan nominated Robert McFarlane as his new representative in the region.<sup>41</sup> In his memorandum to Shultz outlining his action plan, McFarlane identified Syria's refusal to withdraw and her Soviet sponsor's activism as the principal obstacles to overcome.<sup>42</sup> The new envoy who, like Shultz, was a former Marine adopted a combative, but confused approach which would reflect on the mission and functioning of the MNF and on the role of its naval arm.

The situation progressively reached boiling point starting from late July. There was a general conviction that the imminent Israeli partial withdrawal will, if uncoordinated with the LAF, give way to chaos in the Mountain and put the GOL's survival into jeopardy.<sup>43</sup> McFarlane's active diplomacy in Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia was meant to delay the reckoning. But Syria stonewalled and the Saudi diplomacy was unsuccessful in bringing Assad to show more flexibility.<sup>44</sup> Apparently, the Western fleets and alleged U.S.-Israeli plans for aggression so abundantly denounced in the Syrian press, did not frighten him. *'Assad understood naval diplomacy very well'* but being adept of brinkmanship, he *'liked to play with it...he did not take the [Americans] always seriously'*.<sup>45</sup> The Soviet support and his own conviction that the West would not attack, and that the U.S. have a short strategic breath, reinforced his stand. Speaking to a Druse delegation, he advised *'don't be depressed or impressed [by U.S. naval deployments]. I have a friend in Moscow who is not impressed by the fleets. His name is Andropov'*.<sup>46</sup> The Syrian press accused the Marines of exerting military pressures on Syria through their *'live fire exercises near Beirut'*.<sup>47</sup> The *Bright Star '83* exercise with Egypt was seen hiding a U.S. *'secret plan for a military intervention in the Mediterranean and the Gulf'* with *'five divisions ready to intervene in areas close to the Soviet and Iranian borders'*.<sup>48</sup> McFarlane was described as a soldier more than a diplomat, *'his suitcase not only contains a political file but also a military map...his map of Lebanon is marked with red signs*

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<sup>40</sup> Kimche, *The Last Option*, p.175; OLI, August 26, 1983.

<sup>41</sup> McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p.244.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum, Robert McFarlane to George Shultz, July 29, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject File, Lebanon, Folder (1/28/83-8/18/83), Box 55, RRL.

<sup>43</sup> Telegram from Richard Fairbanks to Robert McFarlane, September 3, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records: Cable File, Folder (9/3/83-9/4/83); Box 107, RRL.

<sup>44</sup> Telegram, from Robert McFarlane to Secretary of State, August 10, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records: Subject File, Middle East Trip (McFarlane Cables (08/10/1983), Box 53, RRL.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Marwan Hamadé.

<sup>47</sup> *Tishreen*, August 8, 1983.

<sup>48</sup> *Al-Baath & Al-Thawra*, August 10, 1983.

[a reference to talks in U.S. and GOL circles about defining red lines for the Syrian actions in Lebanon]', and he allegedly '*participated in the U.S. landing of 1958*'.<sup>49</sup> The Marines were '*hammering [Arab] nationalist positions while preparing to enter the Mountain*'.<sup>50</sup> A new dimension was added to the propaganda onslaught, using minorities perceptions of Western interventions more blatantly. The Amal Shiite militia denounced the '*intervention to protect [the Christians] as a pretext for imperialism*', while the Islamic Salvation Front denounced the GOL as deriving '*from the American support to the abject partition play [the creation of a Christian state allied with Israel] ...*'.<sup>51</sup> In turn, a prominent Sunni leader '*exposed*' the '*American plot*' '*to sow doubts among Sunnis, Shiites, and Druse, [a] colonialist trick...*'.<sup>52</sup> The hardening of the Syrian camp, the unravelling security situation, and most importantly, the MNF's reluctance to expand its mission in support of the LAF inflated Christian fears. During his visit to Beirut late August, John Lehman declared that the U.S. would not send the Marines to the Mountain and that their mission will remain limited to the Greater Beirut area.<sup>53</sup> In a dramatic meeting with French embassy officials a week later, Pierre Gemayel exclaimed: '*Don't turn your back on us if we are in trouble, I beg you*'.<sup>54</sup>

Until the end of August, MNF troops had reacted to attacks on their positions with restrained small arms fire. Early August, the Marines received Target Acquisition Batteries counter-artillery radars (FASTAB) and they started returning fire with illumination rounds, while naval forces were '*placed at general quarters and positioned...so they were ready to fire on ashore targets when called upon*'.<sup>55</sup> On August 28 and 29, artillery fire coming from Syrian and Druse-held areas hit the MNF, killing French soldiers and Marines.<sup>56</sup> The latter returned fire, initially with small arms, then 81mm mortar illumination rounds and symbolically, for the first time since Vietnam, from the naval guns of the guided-missile cruiser *Belknap*.<sup>57</sup> Failing to stop the incoming fire, the Marines further escalated and used their 155mm howitzers to shoot back six live shells which silenced the source of fire.<sup>58</sup> Far more spectacular was the

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<sup>49</sup> *Tishreen*, August 15 & *Al-Thawra*, August 16, 1983.

<sup>50</sup> *Al-Thawra*, August 24, 1983.

<sup>51</sup> *As-Safir*, August 25 & *An-Nahar*, September 2, 1983.

<sup>52</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 2, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> *As-Safir*, August 21, 1983.

<sup>54</sup> Telegram, Embassy Beirut (Husson) to Foreign Ministry, August 26, 1983, ANMO Liban, 0047-SUP, Box 62, AD.

<sup>55</sup> Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon*, p.75.

<sup>56</sup> OLI & *An-Nahar*, August 30, 1983.

<sup>57</sup> Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon*, p.78.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*.

movement of the *Eisenhower* which closed to 4.5 km from the coast, sailing in view of all observers for more than an hour before moving over the horizon.<sup>59</sup> The *Eisenhower* move was followed by the *Foch* and Italian frigates.<sup>60</sup> The Marines spokesman declared:

*'We wanted her to be close for everybody to see her and make no mistake about our capacities...Aircraft onboard were ready to take off yesterday if our forces were not able to silence the guns'.<sup>61</sup>*

This limited, but highly symbolic introduction of the naval element was an attempt to deter Syrian/pro-Syrian attacks on the Marines while maintaining the increasingly untenable fiction of the latter's peacekeeping role. The timid and very graduated kinetic response to the attacks, and the allegations by different MNF spokesmen that the Western forces might not have been targeted intentionally, reflected the embarrassment of the MNF contributors. In a scathing article, OJ noted that *'no speaker [for the MNF] dared to recognise the source, or the intent of the fire. Some of them even squarely denied that they were in a "combat situation" ...Maybe this is an attempt to interpret the facts in conformity with a fiction of neutrality which, if it came to vanish, would force the MNF to reconsider its mandate'*. OJ added that the only initiative came from the Americans and their display of the *Eisenhower*, reminding its readers that this was the name of the President who sent the Marines in 1958.<sup>62</sup>

For the U.S. the stakes were high. The administration was the godfather of the Agreement which it considered crucial for the revival of the RPI. Abandoning the GOL to its Syrian foes would compromise American credibility. But the administration had to deal with the WPR. Its spokesmen's reluctance to recognise a combat situation stemmed from its double fear of a showdown with Congress and of losing the public's support.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, OJ did not miss noting the failure of the U.S. Navy to impress the attackers, *'who did not hesitate and copiously shelled the Marines with rockets'*.<sup>64</sup> Old naval diplomacy based on the mere demonstration of a 'gunboat' to calm tensions was apparently not working in 1983 Lebanon. Apparently only. In fact, Assad's brinkmanship was at play.<sup>65</sup> According to

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<sup>59</sup> *An-Nahar*, August 31, 1983.

<sup>60</sup> Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon*, p.78.

<sup>61</sup> OJ, August 31, 1983.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> NYT, September 1, 1983.

<sup>64</sup> OJ, August 31, 1983.

<sup>65</sup> NSPG Meeting, September 3, 1983, NSC Records, Crisis Management Centre, 1981-1984, Box8, RRL.

Pakradouni, Assad whom he met shortly afterwards, took the *Eisenhower* ‘promenade’ as ‘a very serious warning and feared for the Syrian forces in Lebanon. Precautions were taken as the Syrians anticipated a limited air attack to pressure them into accepting the Agreement. Moreover, the carrier intervention had a positive impact on Lebanon’s President morale who saw in it an encouragement to hold the line’.<sup>66</sup>

Beyond the illumination rounds fired by the *Belknap*, the *Eisenhower* promenade was the real point at which naval power entered the conflict. The symbolism of the carrier impacted onshore perceptions. OLI analysed that the *Eisenhower* deployment and expected naval reinforcements ‘are not aimed at local parties (who would have been flattered), but at Syria’.<sup>67</sup> The Syrians got the message and unleashed a salvo of defiant press statements, accusing the Marines of ‘savagely bombarding, in association with the *Phalange*, the [Shiite] southern suburb of Beirut’.<sup>68</sup> *Tishreen* wrote that ‘...the carrier *Eisenhower* and other warships support the Marines...The Sixth Fleet Commander declares that the fleet is ready to accomplish her mission in Lebanon’.<sup>69</sup> Lebanese Muslim parties denounced ‘the aggression of the *Phalange* and the Marines’, while *As-Safir* mockingly displayed pictures of U.S warships, including the *Eisenhower*.<sup>70</sup>



Figure 21 – ‘Beware...Aircraft Carriers’, showing the *Eisenhower* in upper right box, *As-Safir*, August 31, 1983.

An interesting example of how onshore perceptions of naval diplomacy are shaped is provided by a long article in *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi*, a bi-monthly magazine close to Sunni and PLO

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni.

<sup>67</sup> OLI, September 3, 1983.

<sup>68</sup> *Al-Thawra*, August 24 & *Tishreen*, August 30, 1983.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, August 31, 1983.

<sup>70</sup> *As-Safir*, August 31, 1983.

circles. A three-page, seven-column piece is devoted to the *Eisenhower* promenade. Its core thesis is built on the assumption that moving a carrier is a sensitive and complex political and military decision that could only be taken at Commander-in-Chief level. This would mean that the carrier, venturing so close to the Lebanese coast, was aiming at wider objectives than merely deterring Syrian and Syrian-supported gunners. Expanding on what Assad told Pakradouni, *Al-Kifah* concluded that the *Eisenhower* came as the cornerstone for a U.S. military onslaught to impose the Agreement and forcibly re-shape the region through the RPI. As a 'proof' of such a significant military operation, the journal channelled unsubstantiated information about a '*secret mobilisation of three American brigades in West Germany*'.<sup>71</sup> The suspicion that the *Eisenhower* action was a prelude to something bigger than the mere defence of the Marines and of Lebanon gripped the Syrian media. For *Tishreen*, '*...The movement of the American and NATO fleets and carriers to intimidate Lebanon and Syria ...consists in imposing an American Lebanon...that would impact the balance of its environment [Syria]...in favour of the [Christian] minority*'.<sup>72</sup> The next day, *Tishreen* returned to the topic in an article titled '*The Imperialist Concentrations in Lebanon*' which re-connected with old Arab nationalist themes and where it asked rhetorically '*What is the meaning of this influx of Marines and of American landing craft, of the carrier Eisenhower anchoring off Beirut, of France sending the Foch...? One does not need such a military concentration to subjugate Lebanon...The objective is not only Lebanon but Syria and through her, all the Arab liberation movement*'.<sup>73</sup>

Hence, the potency of carrier diplomacy had positioned the conflict in a new perspective. It forced Syria and her allies to entertain the possibility that the MNF, and especially the U.S., could be ready to engage in an escalation in defence of their boots ashore and their regional interests. In its own style, the Syrian camp was acknowledging that the *Eisenhower* had closed the presence phase and ushered the one of coercive naval diplomacy. To deter the Syrians, an escalation potential was progressively put in place by the U.S., with the acknowledgement that '*the question of escalation [is] very tricky*' as it could have

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<sup>71</sup> *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi*, September 12-18, 1983.

<sup>72</sup> *Tishreen*, September 3, 1983.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, September 4, 1983.



*'profound implications for our credibility as a world power, our relations with the Arab world and the Soviet Union, and our relations with the Congress'.<sup>74</sup>*

Nevertheless, the *Foch* was dispatched to communicate French displeasure at the killing of their soldiers and the *Eisenhower*, which was recalled from her participation in the *Bright Star '83* exercises in Egypt, was ordered to remain in Lebanese waters indefinitely. The 31<sup>st</sup> MAU was brought in from Mombasa and ordered to remain off Beirut as back-up.<sup>75</sup> By early September, the Sixth Fleet had fourteen ships off Lebanon, watched by the Soviet AGI *Leningrad*.<sup>76</sup> The naval escalation was also rhetorical. In Beirut with the GOL, but also in communications to Washington, McFarlane started evoking that *'The U.S. has positioned forces in the Eastern Mediterranean in the hope that the Syrians will be deterred'*.<sup>77</sup> A week later, the White House spokesman ominously *'warned the Syrians...that the United States had "considerable firepower" stationed in the Mediterranean facing the Beirut coastline'*.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the month of September will be the pivotal moment for naval diplomacy in the Levant, but also, for the rest of the Cold War.

## **7.2 The Battle of the Mountain: Naval versus Land Power**

On September 4, 1983, ignoring U.S. pressure to coordinate with the LAF, the IDF unilaterally pulled out from the Shuf and re-deployed to the Awwali line. The LAF was incapable of filling the vacuum as it had to put down an opportunistically launched pro-Syrian Shi'a offensive in the southern suburb of Beirut destined to outflank it and prevent it from intervening in the Mountain. Simultaneously, Syrian-supported Druse, Palestinian, Syrian, Iranian, and Libyan forces launched an offensive which wiped out an outnumbered LF from most of the Shuf. Massacres of Christians resulted in a general Christian panic and an ethnic cleansing. Thousands of Christian civilians and LF militiamen found refuge in the Shuf town of Deir El-Qamar where they were besieged by their foes. The onslaught continued with attacks on Suq El-Gharb, a low-rise mountain town held by the LAF that sat not far from the Presidential palace, the U.S. Ambassador's residence, and the Ministry of Defence where several U.S.

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<sup>74</sup> NSPG Meeting, Memorandum from William P. Clark, September 3, 1983, Crisis Management Centre, NSC Records, 1981-1984, RAC Box8, RRL.

<sup>75</sup> Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon*, p.151.

<sup>76</sup> *Al-'Amal*, September 14, 1983.

<sup>77</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, August 31, 1983, Executive Secretariat, Cable Files, Box107, RRL.

<sup>78</sup> NYT, September 7, 1983.

military advisers were based. The town also commanded the south-eastern access to Beirut and its control would have enabled the Druse and their allies to connect with the Shi'as in the southern suburb.<sup>79</sup> Last but not least, an eventual fall of Suq El-Gharb would yield the pro-Syrian forces the control of the hills directly overlooking the Marines positions near the airport.

The Battle of the Mountain (*Ma'arakat Al-Jabal*) was transformational as it shattered what remained of the fiction of presence-peacekeeping and propelled naval diplomacy into the realm of violent purposeful and definitive force. When shells from the Syrian-controlled areas started to crash on MNF positions on September 7, killing French soldiers, Super-*Etendard's* from the *Foch* and F-14s from the *Eisenhower* swooped over pro-Syrian artillery positions in warning and reconnaissance flights. Simultaneously, American, French, and Italian warships moved menacingly closer to the coasts of Beirut.

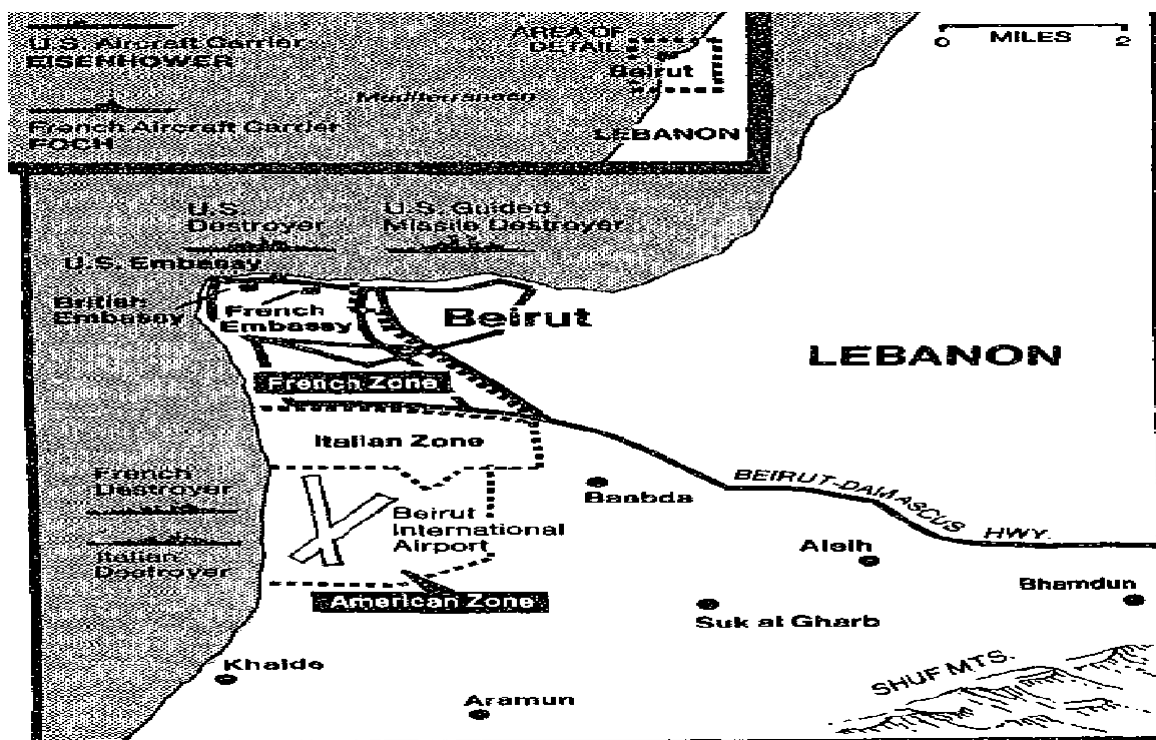


Figure 22 – Western Warships close on Beirut, NYT, September 8, 1983.

The next day, as the shelling of the Marines continued - and for the first time - 'the frigate *USS Bowen* fired four 5-inch shells' which silenced a Druse battery while the Marines fired their 155mm howitzers.<sup>80</sup> The significance of the action resided not only in its unprecedented

<sup>79</sup> Interview of Fouad Abou-Nader; Ménargues, *Les Secrets de la Guerre du Liban*, Vol. II, Chapters 16-18.

<sup>80</sup> NYT, September 8, 1983.

character (the *Belknap* had earlier fired only illumination rounds), but also in the fact that it was naval diplomacy that was tactically definitive (silence the pro-Syrian battery) and strategically purposeful (deter further Syrian actions and compel Assad to change course).

The action took Syria by surprise. Indeed, on the same day, a few hours prior to *Bowen's* bombardment, the Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam was confronting the Saudi mediator by '*bragging [that he was] certain that the USG will never employ the naval power that it is deploying offshore...that he would sink our ships or call in the Soviets and would teach the USG that Syria was not Central America*'.<sup>81</sup> The Syrian press' reaction to the *Bowen's* action was commensurate and invoked old historical categories. *Al-Baath* noted that '*America has started its war and has mobilised all the participants to the new Crusade*'.<sup>82</sup> For *Tishreen*, the '*involvement of the fleets...went beyond the pacific role of [MNF] into an operational one...in preparation for a Marines landing...These actions are comparable to the military operations of the Crusades historical invaders*'.<sup>83</sup> And Radio Damascus '*accused the U.S. and their allies of having reactivated the strategy of the fleets and of military conquests of colonialist countries of the past*'.<sup>84</sup> As for the local reactions, Jumblatt denied shelling the Marines and promised to strike back at the Sixth Fleet, adding that '*We do not need fleets off our coasts, and we do not need a new colonialism. Let them go back to where they came from*'.<sup>85</sup> To the French ambassador who delivered a verbal warning that the *Etendards* would return and strike if further shelling hit French positions, he repeated the same denegation which the French diplomat rejected outright.<sup>86</sup> A Sunni politician, former opponent of the 1958 landing, declared that '*if the overflight by their aircraft and the presence of their fleets in our territorial waters are meant to pressure us...then this is rejected*'.<sup>87</sup> But the GOL was elated, considering that '*...France and the United States would fire in support of the [LAF and the GOL] when it was necessary to do so to protect their own interests*'.<sup>88</sup> The GOL's reaction shows how Christian expectations were being inflated by the first Western coercive action, as the GOL

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<sup>81</sup> Telegram from Embassy Jidda to Robert McFarlane, September 8, 1983, Executive Secretariat, Cable Files, Box107, RRL.

<sup>82</sup> *Al-Baath*, September 9, 1983.

<sup>83</sup> *Tishreen*, September 11, 1983.

<sup>84</sup> *Le Réveil*, September 3, 1983.

<sup>85</sup> *Sawt Al-Uruba*, September 12, 1983.

<sup>86</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, September 10, 1983, Direction ANMO, 0047-SUP, Liban, Box38, AD.

<sup>87</sup> *Sawt Al-Uruba*, September 8, 1983.

<sup>88</sup> CIA, Information Report, September 9, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Box107, RRL.

jumped to the conclusion that intimidation overflights and live naval shells will necessarily give way to active support.

Following discussions with the U.S. administration, Britain decided to send six *Buccaneers* strike aircraft to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. Britain had declined the dispatching of the *Invincible* CTF considering that the move, because of the presence of the *Eisenhower* and the *Foch*, would 'increase escalation unduly'.<sup>89</sup> Arriving in Cyprus on September 9, the *Buccaneers* flew a 'show of strength' sortie over Lebanon on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The Syrian press swiftly picked up the event. For *Tishreen*, the arrival of the *Buccaneers* had 'completed the siege laid by NATO to [Arab] nationalist Lebanon'<sup>90</sup> The *Buccaneers* signalled Britain's desire to stick to the pure defence of BRITFORLEB, avoiding the escalatory charge of a CTF that would have set the stakes at a higher level while sending messages potentially detrimental to the country's Arab interests.

Naval diplomacy was also solicited at another level. The massacres in the Mountain and the plight of the displaced were taking their toll in terms of morale but also, of the stability of a GOL threatened to lose its core Christian constituency if it did nothing. 'Terrified', Gemayel threatened to resign then asked for direct U.S. intervention. McFarlane rejected the demand, reminding Gemayel of the strict defensive ROEs.<sup>91</sup> The same demand was extended to the French ambassador, who ignored it.<sup>92</sup> The U.S. ambassador attempted to minimise the extent of the humanitarian tragedy in more than one cable to Washington.<sup>93</sup> He recommended that no answer be made to a written demand by the GOL to facilitate the supply, by the ICRC, of food and medicines for the besieged Deir El-Qamar after Druse fighters had blocked their delivery.<sup>94</sup> Christian outcry against the passivity of the MNF mounted. Pierre Gemayel declared that 'We want to know what is the rationale for this MNF and why did it come? ...It is a shame that they stand just "watching" ...their attitude is unsound and degrading for them...It is regrettable that this great force, the most powerful in the world, stand "watching"

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<sup>89</sup> COS Meeting, September 8, 1983, TNA FCO 46/3653, Kew.

<sup>90</sup> *Tishreen*, September 10, 1983.

<sup>91</sup> Telegrams from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, September 4 & 6, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC, Cable File, Box107, RRL.

<sup>92</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, September 9, 1983, Direction ANMO Liban, LA-I-2-7, 1983-1989, AD.

<sup>93</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, September 7, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Box107, RRL.

<sup>94</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, September 10, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Box107, RRL.

*while Lebanon bleeds to death...*<sup>95</sup> The Christian Lebanese Front raised the themes of 'honour' and 'loyalty': *'We are waiting from the United States an action worthy of them to save Lebanon... No deterrent force could defeat them, when their honour will be in play...they cannot renege on their own importance, their mission, and their engagements'*.<sup>96</sup> Chamoun was more specific, asking *'the U.S., who has undertaken to help the GOL...to send relief using its helicopters and...to protect the civilians from the shelling'*.<sup>97</sup> As for the Maronite Church, it *'begged the Vatican to save 100,000 Christians in the Mountain'*.<sup>98</sup> In turn, the Vatican summoned *'on a Sunday'* the U.S. *Attaché* to convey its concern.<sup>99</sup> Last, Christian demonstrators staged a sit-in in front of the ambassador's residence, requesting an intervention.<sup>100</sup> The U.S. response came twofold. First, reconnaissance flights (TARPS) by F-14s from the *Eisenhower* *'...would be visible sign to Christian population that Gemayel has been able to enlist U.S. sympathy and possible support... [the flights] will have favorable effect on Christian morale. Flights should be accompanied by public statements that they are reconnaissance, although we recognize some people will see them otherwise, and that may not be a bad thing'*.<sup>101</sup>

Second, in response to a U.N. request to ferry assistance to refugees who had flocked to the coastal city of Sidon seeking Israeli protection, the U.S contemplated using CTF 62 warships to ferry the goods. Delicate naval diplomatic considerations were raised as not only was Israel's agreement necessary but also Arab perceptions had to be managed, for U.S. warships anchoring in an Israeli-occupied area could be seen as part of a *'US-Israeli endeavor'*.<sup>102</sup> Hence, naval diplomacy was being mobilised for a hybrid humanitarian-political mission where moral support to beleaguered Christian refugees and warnings to their besiegers were supposed to shore up the GOL - the official justification of U.S. power projection in the Levant.

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<sup>95</sup> *Al-'Amal*, September 10, 1983.

<sup>96</sup> *Le Réveil*, September 2, 1983.

<sup>97</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 7, 1983.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, September 12, 1983.

<sup>99</sup> Telegram from Embassy Rome to McFarlane, September 5, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Box107, RRL.

<sup>100</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, September 10, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Box107, RRL.

<sup>101</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, September 7, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Box107, RRL.

<sup>102</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, September 9, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Box107, RRL.

The Syrian-led onslaught against Suq El-Gharb threatened the MNF's cohesion and presented the administration with an acute dilemma. First, the Syrian camp's propaganda succeeded in presenting the Western force as a party to the conflict - a '*civil conflict*' - and not merely a 'neutral' peacekeeping force. Hence, when Syrian-backed forces threatened to reach Beirut and topple the GOL, the MNF countries each reacted differently.<sup>103</sup> The Europeans wanted to avoid being seen as supporting a Christian-dominated government and '*fighting "the Arab"*'.<sup>104</sup> They retreated into the '*civil war*' narrative conveniently built by the pro-Syrian propaganda.<sup>105</sup> As alleged peacekeepers and beyond the necessities of self-defence, they could not '*take sides*'. France was foremost in perpetuating this narrative.<sup>106</sup> Italy was even more blunt, declaring that it had initially sent its troops only to protect the Palestinians.<sup>107</sup> The U.S. Administration could not use this comfortable pretext and openly disagreed with its European partners.<sup>108</sup> U.S. intelligence was aware that the Druze were backed by Palestinian, Libyan, and Iranian forces, and benefited from a massive Syrian logistical and artillery support.<sup>109</sup> It was thought that if the LAF and the GOL collapsed, the whole U.S regional strategic construct would follow.<sup>110</sup> The acute dilemma between the tempting 'civil war' narrative and the confrontation with the realities of a foreign-led war translated into the administration's conflicting declarations.<sup>111</sup> In the American press articles alternated, promoting one or the other explanation.<sup>112</sup> Second, the WPR rendered illegal any engagement of U.S forces into active combat. The administration had presented the September 8, F-14s overflights and the *Bowen* strike as self-defensive actions. But it was impossible to involve the Marines in ground combat to shore up the LAF. The combination of the peacekeeping-

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<sup>103</sup> Memorandum for the Vice-President (Bush) from William Clark (NSC), September 11, 1983, Executive Secretariat, Country Files, Lebanon, Box43, RRL.

<sup>104</sup> British Minister of State Richard Luce cited in Telegram from Robert McFarlane to Secretary of State, September 29, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records: Cable File, Box 107, RRL.

<sup>105</sup> *The Times*, September 26, 1983.

<sup>106</sup> *An-Nahar*, August 9 & September 1, 1983; AFP Report, August 10, 1983, ANMO Liban, 0047-SUP, AD.

<sup>107</sup> *Le Réveil*, December 25, 1983.

<sup>108</sup> Memorandum from Marc Bonnefous to Claude Cheysson, September 16, 1983, ANMO Liban, 0047-SUP, Box 62, AD; Telegram from U.S. Embassy Paris (Galbraith) to Secretary of State, September 13, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Cable File, Box 107, RRL.

<sup>109</sup> Telegram from JCS Washington to Secretary of State, September 11, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Cable File, Box 107, RRL; See also two CIA notes dated September 12, 1983: 'Foreign Support for the Druze Offensive' and, 'Lebanon-Participation in Fighting of Syrian, Palestinian, Iranian, and Libyan Forces'.

<sup>110</sup> NYT, August 21, 1983.

<sup>111</sup> *An-Nahar*, August 23 & OJL, September 13, 1983.

<sup>112</sup> NYT, August 21 & 30; September 2 & 13, 1983.

presence rationale with the 'civil war' narrative and with the inflexibility of the WPR threatened the U.S. strategy in the Levant.

The administration outlined different options, ranging from the continuation of the current policies to a more muscular approach consisting in the U.S. taking direct charge of the defence of Greater Beirut.<sup>113</sup> A memorandum for the President acknowledged that the U.S. *'have reached a critical juncture...we must decide...whether we should take actions that would cross military and political thresholds...'*, reminding America's larger regional interests.<sup>114</sup> The U.S. was nearing the tipping point where naval diplomacy short of war could suddenly morph into undeclared war, or worse. While this memorandum was being written, the situation on the theatre worsened with the LAF verging on collapse in the Suq El-Gharb front.

A defiant Assad told McFarlane that *'Syria and Lebanon are one and Syria has a legitimate right to move at will in the country'*, adding that *'as an Arab, I cannot concede the right of [sic] the French, Italian, and U.S. forces to be in Beirut while Syria cannot enjoy this right'*.<sup>115</sup> Returning to Beirut on September 11, McFarlane was confronted to a disastrous situation.<sup>116</sup> In a dramatic telegram, he denounced Syria's actions and warned that they *'constituted serious threat of decisive military defeat of the [LAF], which could involve the fall of the government within 24 hours'*. He then upped the ante by writing *'Last night's battle was waged...within five kilometres of the presidential palace (and our residence...)*. For those at the State Department, this would correspond to the enemy being on the attack on Capitol Hill...In short, tonight, we could be behind enemy lines.' Confirming that the *'threat appears to be unambiguously foreign'*, he leveraged the freshly finalised NSDD 103 to implicitly introduce the concept of pre-emptive self-defence, arguing that it could be too late to respond to an attack on U.S. military and diplomatic personnel. He thus considered that a *'clear and present danger...to Americans would exist if Syrian supported forces capture Suq El-Gharb...The balance of forces...is lopsided against the GOL...The use of U.S. TAC air and fire support would not "win the war" but could provide the muscle needed to get the Syrians to bargain seriously'*. McFarlane was careful to add that as the Syrians employed

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<sup>113</sup> See, Memorandum for Mr. William P. Clark, September 3, 1983, Crisis Management Centre, NSC Files, RAC Box8, RRL; CIA, 'Worst Case Strategies for Lebanon' (9/1983).

<sup>114</sup> Memorandum for the President, September 9, 1983, Executive Secretariat, Meeting Files, NSC 00081-00090, Box9, RRL.

<sup>115</sup> Telegram from McFarlane to Department of State, September 10, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC, Cable Files, Box107, RRL.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.

*'surrogates...they have retained a measure of deniability and hence can still agree politically without a total loss of face'*.<sup>117</sup> The envoy was advocating an escalated purposeful force in a situation which was already that of an undeclared war of Syria against the GOL. By using kinetic naval power in support of its Lebanese ally, the U.S. was taking the risk that Syria and eventually the Soviet Union, but also other 'moderate' Arabs, would interpret this action as an act of war. In WPR terms, McFarlane's approach was shrewd. The fall of Suq El-Gharb would put the Marines positioned in the flatlands below into *'clear and present danger'*. Therefore, supporting the LAF with naval and air power could be construed as self-defence with the ROEs stretched out but below breaking point. The effect of McFarlane's telegram was immediate. In an emergency meeting the Administration brought an addendum to NSDD 103, a move that would transform the nature of Western naval diplomacy in the Levant. It accepted the thesis that the eventual fall of Suq El-Gharb could endanger the Marines and that *'successful LAF defense of the area...is vital to the safety of US personnel'*, thereby authorising *'appropriate US military assistance in defense of Suq-Al-Gharb'*, including *'naval gun fire support and, if deemed necessary, tactical air strikes, but [excluding] ground forces'*.<sup>118</sup>

A dichotomy had progressively emerged between the MNF naval component and its projection ashore. Because of its higher escalatory potential and the various legal and political obstacles to its coercive use, the land element of the MNF became the static parameter in an evolving - and worsening - strategic and military situation and a considerable liability for the American strategy. Conversely, the naval force represented the dynamic element of the Western projection. Between September 1982 and the attack on the U.S. Embassy in April 1983, the naval force structure and level remained roughly the same. The rising violence accompanying the negotiation and signing of the Agreement translated into a progressively beefed-up naval force, in level and structure. The presence of carriers became more frequent, with the dash of the *Foch* in May and the *Eisenhower's* promenade in August. During 1983, no less than six American carriers would 'visit' Lebanon.<sup>119</sup> Hence, the dynamic, flexible, controllable escalatory potential of the warship provided the capacity to remain in phase with

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<sup>117</sup> Telegram from McFarlane to Department of State, September 11, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC, Cable Files, Box107, RRL.

<sup>118</sup> NSDD 103, September 10, 1983, NSDD Digitised Reference Copies, RRL.

<sup>119</sup> The USS *America*, *Coral Sea*, *Nimitz*, *Eisenhower*, *Independence*, and *J.F. Kennedy*.



the shifting strategic and military situation ashore. As a result, the naval instrument was progressively called into action to reverse the unfavourable strategic bargaining, transforming the conflict into one opposing naval to land power.

On September 19, following Gemayel's request and in application of NSDD 103, the destroyer *John Rodgers* and the guided-missile cruiser *Virginia* lobbed 265 five-inch Highly Explosive shells in support of LAF positions in Suq El-Gharb, silencing Syrian-controlled artillery. According to the JCS situation report on this intervention, '*the tide of the battle was turned in favor of LAF due to direct involvement of NGFS ships*'<sup>120</sup>. The naval shelling, which continued through the following week confirmed that naval diplomacy had definitely entered a coercive purposeful phase. It was followed on September 21 by a compromise between the administration and Congress extending the Marines' presence by 18 months under the WPR.<sup>121</sup>

### 7.3 Perceptions and Distortions

These events triggered a series of reactions from all sides. The Syrian press was quick to resurrect old 1950s and 1960s categories. While the official SANA Press Agency repeated the favourite accusation that the U.S. was acting in Lebanon as '*if this country has become their protectorate*', *Al-Thawra* announced that an '*American decision [NSDD 103] has put the Marines in a state of war. Washington concentrates 10,000 soldiers near the Beirut coast...A Soviet frigate and a destroyer has crossed the Straits into the Mediterranean*'.<sup>122</sup> The old technique of waving the 'Soviet stick' was back. Another 1950s relic was recycled by *Al-Thawra* in an editorial in which it accused the U.S. of '*reviving colonialism...They are restoring the climate of the 1956 [Suez] aggression*'.<sup>123</sup> For *Al-Baath*, '*the forces of the imperialist West have coalesced around the single objective of submitting Syria and eliminating Arab dreams which are based on the Syrian fortress*'.<sup>124</sup> In an editorial titled '*The American Soldier, from the mud of Vietnam to the Lebanese fire*', *Al-Baath* declared in a reference to Theodore Roosevelt's naval diplomacy, '*that [Syria] cannot accept that the American big stick has the*

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<sup>120</sup> JCS, Situation Report VIII, September 19, 1983, Executive Secretariat, Cable File, Box107, RRL.

<sup>121</sup> NYT, September 21, 1983; U.S. House of Representatives, *Statutory Authorisation Under the War Powers Resolution-Lebanon*, (September 21-22, 1983), U.S. Library of Congress.

<sup>122</sup> SANA, September 15, 1983; *Al-Thawra*, September 17, 1983.

<sup>123</sup> *Al-Thawra*, September 20, 1983.

<sup>124</sup> *Al-Baath*, September 23, 1983.

*last word*'.<sup>125</sup> Leveraging the success of the 'civil war' narrative, Syria considered that the U.S. have taken side and become party to the conflict.<sup>126</sup> *'American warships are fighting the Lebanese people to impose on him the submission Agreement [the May 17 Agreement], to salvage the Reagan Initiative and the policy of Camp David'*.<sup>127</sup>

These accusations were linked to the wider geopolitical context and to the threat of general war. Washington aimed at *'establishing a strategic bridgehead and develop its aggressive role from Lebanon'* but its *'war against the Lebanese people will certainly degenerate into a war against the Arab liberation movement, which will lead to an explosion spreading beyond the Middle East'*.<sup>128</sup> Syria was defiant. A *'military spokesman declared that...we shall retaliate against any source of fire from the land, sea or air... [Syria was] determined to deter any aggression. The American fleet...is triggering a dangerous development...that could lead to general war'*.<sup>129</sup> In Syrian perceptions U.S. naval diplomacy was presented, at least officially, as a blatant act of aggression, if not war. Reading the Syrian press, one has the impression that U.S. purposeful force has failed. The linkage with the Arab nationalist cause was aimed at re-activating the old dialectic with the imperialist 'fleets' but also at legitimising the Syrian Alawite regime in the eyes of the Arab and Muslim world. The repeated references to a general war were a clear hint at the Soviet Union and its contribution to Syria's confidence in defying the U.S. warships.

Syria's Lebanese allies reacted similarly but with their own sectarian specificities. Jumblatt accused the U.S. navy of having unilaterally started shelling the Druse and the Syrians, and of having *'prevented the fall of Suq-El-Gharb'*, adding that the *'Fleets have come to exterminate the Druse...'*.<sup>130</sup> For Jumblatt, *'the continuous and biased foreign interventions in favour of an extremist Maronite side, have contributed to aggravate the Lebanese question while using it to establish spheres of influence and protect economic interests'*, adding that *'the colonialist project that the West is trying to implement in Lebanon since the nineteenth century and even before, is based on educational, economic, and military advantages to one*

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<sup>125</sup> *Al-Baath*, September 22, 1983; Hendrix, Henry, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, (Annapolis, MA: Naval Institute Press, 2009), Chapter 7.

<sup>126</sup> *Tishreen*, September 21, 1983.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, September 22, 1983.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, September 21, 1983.

<sup>129</sup> *Al-Thawra*, September 18, 1983.

<sup>130</sup> *As-Safir*, September 20, 1983.

*sect while ignoring the Muslims which it treats as second-class sects...'*<sup>131</sup> Inspired by the previous initiatives of their Christian foes protesting MNF indifference to the tragedy in the Mountain, the Druse staged a demonstration in front of the British Embassy where the American consular services had retreated following the April bombing of their Embassy, to protest against the U.S. NGFS.<sup>132</sup> The Sunni leader Karameh singled out McFarlane '*the naval commander who brought the fleet to our waters...'*', repeating the Arab nationalist's association of western naval power with colonialism and its thirst for oil, and encouraging the '*mujahedeen*' in their struggle against the '*fleets*'.<sup>133</sup> Using the Soviet card, *As-Safir* titled about a '*Soviet plan to move 52,000 soldiers to Syria...the Soviet Union is using satellites to watch NATO warships off Lebanon, while three submarines have been dispatched to the waters of the Eastern Mediterranean*'.<sup>134</sup> As for *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi*, it labelled the U.S. escalation as the '*Second Episode of the Eastern Question*', interpreting the U.S. shelling as paving the way for a NATO takeover of Lebanon.<sup>135</sup>

Christian reactions were more complex and reflected their evolving perceptions of the MNF and its naval diplomacy. The leader of the Phalange praised the American help, considering however that '*Lebanon fights for America and the West...more than the West fight for Lebanon*'.<sup>136</sup> The pro-GOL press was generally elated, with cartoons playing with puns to highlight the importance of the U.S. intervention.<sup>137</sup> OLI acclaimed the '*spectacular confirmation of the American support for legality*', citing the Marines spokesman as saying that '*A victorious resistance of the LAF is critical for the security of U.S. citizens in the MNF and diplomatic corps*'.<sup>138</sup> *An-Nahar* leveraged the wording of NSDD 103 and justified the naval shelling as self-defence, asking rhetorically if '*the aggression against the [GOL] and the [LAF] involves the concept of self-defence [by the MNF] considering that the role of this force is to defend the state and facilitate the extension of its sovereignty over all Lebanon. How could*

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<sup>131</sup> *Sawt Al-Uruba*, September 14, 1983.

<sup>132</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, September 22, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC, Cable File, Box109, RRL.

<sup>133</sup> *Sawt Al-Uruba*, September 16, 1983; *As-Safir*, September 20, 1983; *As-Safir*, September 21, 1983.

<sup>134</sup> *As-Safir*, September 21, 1983.

<sup>135</sup> *Al-Kifah al-Arabi*, September 18-25, 1983.

<sup>136</sup> *Al-'Amal*, September 20, 1983.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, September 21 & 22, 1983.

<sup>138</sup> OLI, September 20, 1983.

*this be achieved after the war has become a foreign war in an internal dressing which the renascent LAF is unable to confront alone?'.<sup>139</sup>*

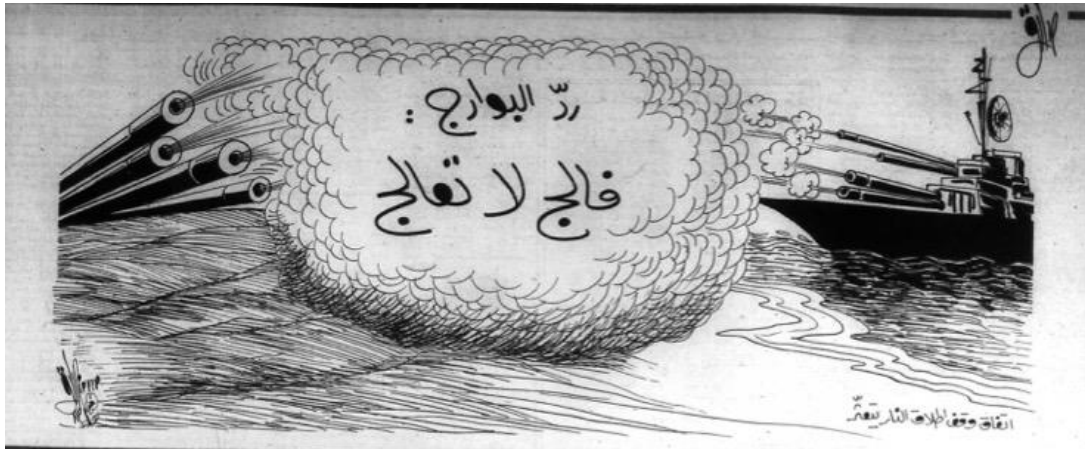


Figure 23 – ‘The Warships’ Reply: Cut, don’t Cure’, *Al-‘Amal*, September 21, 1983.

It was precisely the status of the LAF which became the source of an ambiguous Christian attitude and of a polite, indirect disagreement with the U.S. Navy. Indeed, *Le Réveil* published an article titled ‘*The Army, supported by the U.S. Navy, thwarts an offensive against Suq El-Gharb*’ in which the LAF was cited denying that the town nearly fell to Palestinian attackers before the U.S. Navy intervened to save the day.<sup>140</sup> A few days later, *Al-‘Amal* published a report on the LAF in Suq El-Gharb in which it asked commanding officers about their views regarding the U.S. intervention. The answer was: ‘*The American warships? A “communication” ploy...it is the LAF who is paying the price...U.S. warships do not intervene when the Syrians and Palestinians attack...but only if U.S positions are hit by foreign fire. It therefore proceeds to silence the firing artillery position*’.<sup>141</sup> In his interview with former President Gemayel, the author was told that the naval shelling was ‘*against “imaginary targets”*’, a judgement Gemayel repeated in his recently published memoirs.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, according to some Christian military and political leaders, not only did the U.S. naval bombardment in Suq El-Gharb come only when Marines positions were hit and not in response to LAF requests but also its targets were fake. Hence, they disagreed with the JCS earlier statement that the ‘*tide of the battle was turned...due to direct involvement of NGFS ships*’, a statement whose validity had been acknowledged by Jumblatt himself, and

<sup>139</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 20, 1983.

<sup>140</sup> *Le Réveil*, September 20, 1983.

<sup>141</sup> *Al-‘Amal*, September 24, 1983.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel; Gemayel, Amine, *The Resistance Presidency* (in Arabic), (Beirut: Beit Al-Mustaqbal, 2021), p.155.

confirmed by *The Times*'s Robert Fisk who pretended witnessing the '*terrible effects*' of the U.S. bombardment.<sup>143</sup> These conflicting statements could eventually be explained by the fog-of-war or by the ambiguity of naval diplomacy which aimed at 'silencing' the sources of fire, an objective which could well be attained by hitting empty areas or shooting blank rounds (the latter being ruled out as the JCS report was clear that HE shells were used). 'Silencing' does not necessarily imply 'hitting', even less 'destroying'. Deflating the value of the U.S. NGFS could have served the GOL and the LAF who wanted to promote the prestige of the latter as a key instrument of legitimacy, while Jumblatt wanted exactly the reverse: To show how the LAF's dependence on the U.S. Navy symbolised the GOL's status as a puppet of the Americans but also proved that the U.S. was taking sides. Other Christian leaders were not as negative as Gemayel. The Commander-in-Chief of the LAF is cited in a telegram by McFarlane as acknowledging the efficiency of U.S. fire support.<sup>144</sup> Both Salem and Pakradouni were more nuanced than Gemayel. Whatever the accuracy of the shelling they recognised its positive impact, privileging its demonstrative value. '*Even if the shells fell in wastelands, it was a clear message*', '*the naval show of force helped...even if this was the maximum Weinberger would accept to do*'.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, there was more to it. According to Rear Admiral Dur who wrote the NSDD 103 Addendum, these instructions '*were not well received by the DOD and the Pentagon who authorised naval fire only when the Marines were fired upon and not in response to attacks on the LAF*'. He added that the latter consideration was '*officially accepted by the DOD only to manage the expectations of the President who wanted to support the GOL and the LAF militarily*'. But the DOD '*resisted*' the instructions, to avoid '*getting involved in the Lebanese civil war*'.<sup>146</sup> Their attitude was having tactical consequences which were affecting the perceived validity of U.S. naval diplomacy.

Mixed with other developments to come, this conflict in interpretations takes all its importance as it contributed to the elaboration by the Lebanese parties of a narrative consisting of systematically doubting the reality of Western military actions. Fuelled by a regional propensity for American-centred conspiracy theories, this narrative will extend to later naval actions such as the bombardments by the *New Jersey* of pro-Syrian positions or

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<sup>143</sup> *The Times*, September 29, 1983.

<sup>144</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to the Department of State, September 28, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Cable Files, Box107, RRL.

<sup>145</sup> Interviews with Karim Pakradouni and Elie Salem.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

the French naval air retaliatory strikes against Shi'a Khomeinists in Baalbek. It will shape a cynical and sceptic Christian Lebanese perception of the reliability of Western interventions while providing the pro-Syrian camp with the arguments to discredit them.

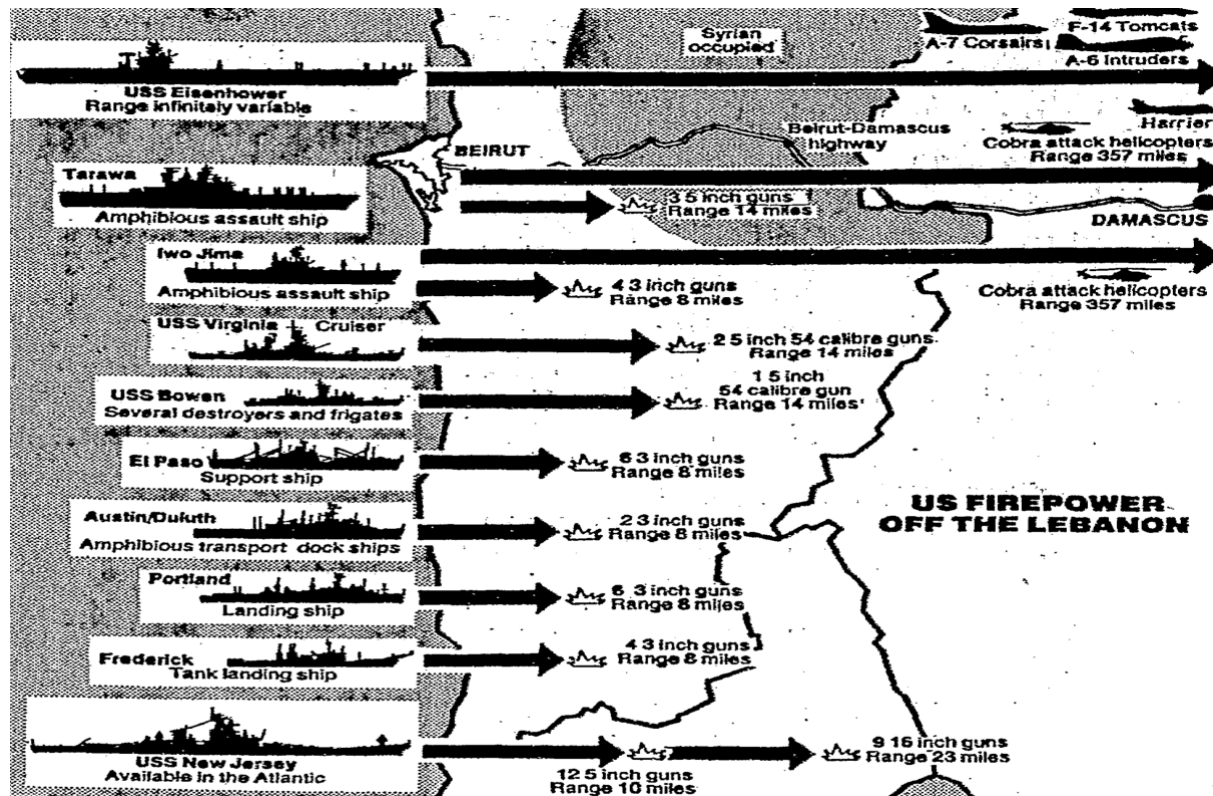


Figure 24 – US Naval Firepower, *The Times*, September 14, 1983.

#### 7.4 Cold War Logic, the Eskadra, and the Riddle of the Western Armada

NSDD 103 legalised coercive naval diplomacy and supplied the appropriate naval capabilities, foremost in the shape of the battleship *New Jersey*. Simultaneously with the arrival of the battleship, OJ mentioned a 'Western armada...of the thirty-five U.S. warships in the Mediterranean, fourteen are off Lebanon to which we must add the Eisenhower. France has the Foch, Britain the Hermes, the Invincible, and the Illustrious even if they are not officially linked to Lebanon; and Italy has three frigates'.<sup>147</sup> *An-Nahar* noted a 'traffic jam' in the sea, writing that 'Nowadays, Lebanon sums up all the international and regional tensions...An American carrier, a French carrier, and soon a British one...aircraft from the carriers fly over Soviet missiles and Marines are not far from Soviet-made artillery...Suq El-Gharb is the demarcation line between NATO and the Warsaw Pact...this is how the land overflowed with

<sup>147</sup> OJ, September 29, 1983.

*armies and the sea became crowded with fleets...'*<sup>148</sup> *As-Safir* wrote that *'the Lebanese crisis does not need all this huge concentration of fleets with, lastly, the New Jersey; it does not need NATO's supersonic fighters...to protect around five thousand soldiers...'*, claiming *'that one warship is enough to support the LAF and protect the Marines'*. *As-Safir* explained that the reasons for the concentration was the heating of the global confrontation which has moved to the Eastern Mediterranean as well as U.S. concern with recent Iranian victories in the Gulf War, concluding rhetorically: *'Which country in the region could give the U.S. military presence a legal status such as the one Lebanon provides? Not one'*.<sup>149</sup> For Syrian *Tishreen*, the question was *'How could Suq El-Gharb be part of the American national security? With this new offensive of the fleets, Washington restores the image of the 'ugly Yankee'*.<sup>150</sup>

The deployment encompassed several recently commissioned U.S. warships, the reactivated battleship *New Jersey* (1982) and the first of the *Ticonderoga*-class AEGIS cruisers (January 1983). It was precisely these newest units that provided the NGFS, with the nuclear-powered cruiser *Virginia* receiving the Sixth Fleet's "Top Hand" honour after closing to within one mile off the Lebanese coast on September 19 and delivering 300 five-inch shells during two one hour-long shoots.<sup>151</sup> Following the bombings of the French and U.S. Marines barracks in October, Western naval presence grew further, triggering more questions, confusion, and fear. In the U.N.S.C., the Soviet Union denounced U.S. naval reinforcements, declaring that they heralded a major [retaliatory] operation.<sup>152</sup> In Lebanon, Jumblatt wondered *'if this country needs a fleet as powerful as the Sixth Fleet? It is an honour for the Druse to fight such an armada. We are used to fight against foreigners...We are fighting for the Druse but also for the Arab Muslims of Lebanon.'*<sup>153</sup> As for the Syrians, they considered that *'The American concentrations in the Mediterranean mean that a war in the region is inevitable'*.<sup>154</sup> At decision-making levels, the views were more nuanced. For Gemayel, *'the U.S thought that a big deployment would be an efficient deterrent. But the Soviets and the Syrians saw it as a bluff, that the U.S. was not ready for military action. All this was more symbolic than real, a*

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<sup>148</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 22, 1983.

<sup>149</sup> *As-Safir*, September 25, 1983.

<sup>150</sup> *Tishreen*, September 24, 1983.

<sup>151</sup> 'U.S Naval Operations in 1983', *Proceedings*, 110/5 (1984), p.59.

<sup>152</sup> OJ, November 12, 1983.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, November 16, 1983.

<sup>154</sup> *Al-Baath*, December 5, 1983.

*smokescreen*'.<sup>155</sup> Pakradouni added that *'Assad never took seriously the possibility of a wider force projection, such as a landing. He correctly interpreted U.S. actions as aiming at deterrence and pressure, and at defining "red lines" of which he made great fun*'.<sup>156</sup> Salem was not surprised by the size of the deployment. He recalled Charles Malik in 1958 saying that *'the U.S. sees any conflict in Lebanon as one with the U.S.S.R. which always wanted a place in the Middle East. The best proof that the deployment was primarily aimed at the Soviets was that the U.S. did not use even the tenth of the naval power deployed to impose a solution on Syria*'.<sup>157</sup> The U.S. deployment led France's Cheysson to call Shultz *'regarding the American armada off Lebanon*', receiving assurances that it was the result of the normal rotation of warships, and that *'as at no moment we want to diminish our firepower, the rotation period gives way to a remarkable accumulation*'.<sup>158</sup> This was repeated by Rear Admiral Dur, who admitted that the naval presence *'was significant*' but added that *'the American normal presence in the Mediterranean consisted of one CTF, seven to eight destroyers and cruisers, plus amphibious ships and supplies. Off Lebanon, this looks like a large armada, but it is visually pretty much concentrated*'. For Dur, this force was not there for Cold War considerations, but to support the Marines and send a message of resolve, at least from the standpoint of the White House.<sup>159</sup> Former Navy Secretary Lehman concurred saying that the *'Sixth Fleet deployment was normal and sufficient ...*'.<sup>160</sup>

This review of the different perceptions highlights the contrast between the non-American interrogations and the tranquil U.S. explanations. Instead of a grand anti-Soviet design or the preparation of a large-scale attack on Syria, we have the 'normal' rotation inside the 'normal' deployment of the Sixth Fleet. This apparent deficit in intelligibility of U.S. naval diplomacy could have been voluntary, leaving each player with the messages it wanted to hear. In 1983-84 Lebanon observers were despaired to put a rationale on all the display of naval power. *'The Lebanese were mature enough to know that they were not the centre of the world*' and they logically looked for explanations at another, higher level.<sup>161</sup> *'The West would*

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.

<sup>158</sup> Memorandum from Cheysson to Hernu and Vedrine, November 6, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-LIBAN, 1983-1989, LA-III-C-1, AD.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.



*never intervene for [the Christians]. It would come eventually for strategic reasons.*<sup>162</sup> When the Sixth Fleet saturated the sea in July 1958, most observers were then able to attribute a strategic meaning to this deployment helped by the fact that the local crisis was solved barely three months later. In 1983, OJ wrote that *'...it seemed clear that the Western presence was here to impose peace, security, and order, all things which cannot be obtained through negotiations. If it wasn't that, how then to explain...the armada cruising off Beirut?'*<sup>163</sup> Still in search for an answer, the journal later wrote that *'The most important armada [is] off the coasts of Lebanon'*, with *'nearly forty warships belonging to NATO countries including three carriers-and an equal number of Soviet ships. The U.S. fleet is made of twenty warships, the most important being the carriers John F. Kennedy and the Independence, the New Jersey...'*. It then detailed the French and Italian naval units, begging the same question: for what?<sup>164</sup>

What the American diplomacy was probably trying to achieve and for which the GOL had to settle, was the definition of a new balance materialised in 'red lines' drawn by naval fire. A State Department paper considered that *'The Syrians should see that we have established a number of military "red lines", and that we will not back away from them'*. It added that these *'red-lines could be effective [because of] Assad's own penchant not to overplay his hand...He retreats when he fears that things could get quickly out of control...vintage Assad'*.<sup>165</sup> The pivot of all these red lines was Suq El-Gharb. Their result was the delimitation of a GOL-controlled zone including the Greater Beirut area. A Syrian-controlled Lebanon extended north and east of Suq El-Gharb to the Syrian border; an Israeli-occupied zone was erected south of Sidon, while the pro-Syrian Druse controlled the Shuf.<sup>166</sup> The red lines, to be enforced by U.S. naval power, reflected the Cold War's strategic stalemate. As discussed, during the spring of 1983, Lebanese circles had warned against a Korean/German configuration in Lebanon.<sup>167</sup> The shift to coercive naval diplomacy in September deepened this perception, especially since the Soviet Union stepped in to rebuild and enhance Syria's military capacity, a development denounced by Reagan.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>163</sup> OJ, December 24, 1983.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, February 2, 1984.

<sup>165</sup> *U.S. Strategy in Lebanon*, October 13, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Meeting Files, 00081-00090, Box9, RRL.

<sup>166</sup> *Al-'Amal*, September 5, 1983.

<sup>167</sup> See p. 185.

<sup>168</sup> NYT, September 21, 1983 & October 9, 1983.

In a memorandum reviewing the strategic objectives in Lebanon, Shultz wrote that *'The stakes are high—they go far beyond Lebanon. The Syrians...seek the removal of the Marines (also a key Soviet objective)'*. Describing how Syria was trying to wreck the Agreement and hence the U.S.-led Middle East peace process, he added that *'The Soviets have played a major role in this, in that their extraordinary rearmament of the Syrians...is boosting Syrian self-confidence and demonstrating to the Arabs the value of siding with the Soviets.'*<sup>169</sup> In a declaration to the press, Cheysson denounced the Cold War divide in Lebanon, saying that *'France rejects the project of partitioning the Middle East between Syrian-Russian and Israeli-American spheres of influence'*.<sup>170</sup> For *An-Nahar*, Suq El-Gharb is a *'political red line for the struggle between an American project and a Soviet one'* adding that *'there is a [Soviet] decision to conquer Suq El-Gharb, faced by an American determination to prevent this at any cost...the American stand is neither a 'joke' nor a communication ploy, but the reality...communicated by...McFarlane to the Syrians...'*. It added that the U.S.S.R via Syria was trying to re-enter the Middle East peace process by wrecking the American initiatives.<sup>171</sup> For Druse leader Marwan Hamadé, *'the crisis had become a "hot episode" of the Cold War, a counter-offensive which was Soviet-inspired...The Druse and their allies received T-54 and T-55 tanks transferred through Syria.'*<sup>172</sup> For Reagan, *'Syria was supplying the Druse with weapons...and the Soviet Union was standing behind Syria...'*<sup>173</sup> The latter labelled the MNF as 'NATO', reminding *'Washington that Moscow is much closer than it to the region. We...shall not permit that ... Lebanon be transformed into a...bridgehead for the Americans'*.<sup>174</sup> Assad doubled-down, declaring that a U.S.-Soviet conflict in Lebanon is possible and *'the responsibility for it will be on the U.S. as they are in Lebanon while the U.S.S.R, geographically close to that country, is not present there'*.<sup>175</sup> As for the Soviet Union, the TASS news agency regularly condemned American escalatory actions in Lebanon and the terrorising of Syria.<sup>176</sup>

The dominance of the Cold War narrative begs the question of its naval translation. Western naval deployments and kinetic actions must have triggered a commensurate Soviet

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<sup>169</sup> Memorandum from George Shultz to President Reagan, October 13, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSPG 60-85A, Box2, RRL.

<sup>170</sup> *As-Safir*, September 20, 1983.

<sup>171</sup> *An-Nahar* September 20, 1983.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Marwan Hamadé.

<sup>173</sup> *As-Safir*, September 24, 1983.

<sup>174</sup> *Tishreen*, September 26, 1983.

<sup>175</sup> OJ, November 17, 1983.

<sup>176</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 20, 1983.

response, whether in terms of an expansion of the Eskadra or in terms of assertive movements by Soviet units, such as aggressive trailing of Western platforms or demonstrations of support to Syria and her allies. Contrary to what was the case during the 'Missile Crisis' of the Spring of 1981, the research for this thesis does not substantiate an enhanced Soviet naval activism during the presence of the MNF in Lebanon. As an illustration, in July 1983 an OJ article titled '*The Eye of Moscow*' reported the encounters by journalists onboard the French ASW corvette *Georges Leygues*, describing the trailing of the French warship by a Soviet AGI, '*an innocent trailer or fishing boat*', and the cruising side-by-side with a *Kashin*-class destroyer, sixty kilometres off Beirut, while the crews of the two warships were brought to attention and exchanged salutes.<sup>177</sup> This article shows that the Soviet navy was deployed not far from Lebanese territorial waters and that it was indulging in surveillance and trailing activities. Mid-July, *The Times* had reported that a Soviet AGI, protected by a SAM-equipped *Kashin*-class destroyer and a frigate - possibly to avoid a repetition of the *Liberty* episode - monitored IDF communications less than 20 miles from the Lebanese coast, with the probable task of passing information to Syria concerning the planned Israeli pull-out to the Awwali line. The IAF reacted by dropping 'chaff' to 'blind' the Soviet AGI.<sup>178</sup> A similar action against an identical Soviet formation had been reported by *As-Safir* mid-June, based on information obtained from the *Iwo Jima*.<sup>179</sup>

In September, when the *New Jersey* entered Lebanese territorial waters, a *Krivak*-class frigate and an AGI steamed at close distance to the battleship.<sup>180</sup> Subsequently, Soviet surveillance of the *New Jersey*, usually by a *Kashin*-class destroyer, would become routine.<sup>181</sup> Soviet submarines were also active, triggering a warning note from the French government to its Soviet counterpart, a document which also signalled the presence of Libyan submarines.<sup>182</sup> CIA reports on Soviet naval activity in the Eastern Mediterranean show a routine, rather subdued posture, with Soviet units engaging in firing exercises around seventy kilometres off Lebanon in December 1983 '*probably in response to US actions in the region [the U.S. air raid on Syrian positions on December 4]*'.<sup>183</sup> The force level of the Eskadra

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<sup>177</sup> OJ, July 28, 1983, *As-Safir*, July 28, 1983.

<sup>178</sup> *The Times*, July 17, 1983.

<sup>179</sup> *As-Safir*, June 17, 1983 and page 176.

<sup>180</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 26, 1983.

<sup>181</sup> Stillwell, Paul, *Battleship New Jersey*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval institute Press, 1986), p.263.

<sup>182</sup> Memorandum from Marc Bonnefous, November 8, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-LIBAN, 983-1989, LA-V-B-42, AD.

<sup>183</sup> CIA, December 15, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Lebanon, Box43-44, RRL.

undramatically 'increased by about 8 percent in 1983 - the highest level since 1976 - yet remained well below that of early-to-middle 1970s', with forty-eight ships including seven to nine surface combatants. Of note was the tripling of *Alligator*-class amphibious ships to three in anticipation of eventual evacuations of Soviet civilians from Lebanon.<sup>184</sup> During the U.S. air raid on Syrian positions in Lebanon in December 1983, the reaction of Syrian anti-aircraft defence was so swift, as if it expected the U.S. aircrafts, that a Top Secret NSC note alludes to a possible Soviet tipping about the impending attack through '*...a Kashin-class destroyer positioned near the U.S. carriers...*'<sup>185</sup> These assumptions were again spontaneously aired by Rear Admiral Dur during his interview with the author.<sup>186</sup> In 1984, the force level and structure remained roughly unchanged with the notable exception of the nuclear-powered guided-missile cruiser *Kirov* redeploying from the Atlantic to join the Eskadra around mid-January 1984.<sup>187</sup> The importance of the move resided in the fact that it took place after the U.S. had significantly escalated their coercive diplomacy in December with the re-activation of the *New Jersey*. The fact that the *Kirov*-lass was conceived as a counterpoint for the *Iowa*-class of battleships to which belonged the *New Jersey* highlighted the symbolism of the Soviet cruiser's deployment.<sup>188</sup>

Soviet naval interests were also diplomatically communicated. Reacting to U.S. declaration of a wide area off Lebanon as a "*zone of dangerous activities of the U.S. Navy*", the Soviet ambassador in Washington protested that '*...The Soviet side...does not recognise the restrictions...and warns that the entire responsibility for the consequences of that act will be borne by the American side*'.<sup>189</sup> While TASS accused that '*Washington has arbitrarily declared the Mediterranean, thousands of miles away from the USA, "a sphere of US vital interest"*', the Soviet Union stiffened its attitude when attempts were made at the U.N.S.C. to send U.N-sponsored international forces to replace MNF2.<sup>190</sup> The U.S.S.R conditioned sending a U.N. force (which was never agreed upon) to the withdrawal of the Sixth Fleet from

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<sup>184</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Naval Activity Outside Home Waters during 1983' (8/1984).

<sup>185</sup> Memorandum for Robert McFarlane, December 6, 1983, Crisis Management Center, NSC Records, 1981-1984, RAC BOX8, RRL.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Dur.

<sup>187</sup> CIA, 'Soviet Naval Activity Outside Home Waters during 1984' (30/10/1985); As-Safir, January 19, 1984.

<sup>188</sup> Sumrall, Robert, *Iowa-Class Battleships*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), pp.57-9.

<sup>189</sup> Cable from Secretary of State, White House Situation Room, January 4, 1984, Crisis Management Center, NSC Records, 1981-1984, RAC BOX8, RRL.

<sup>190</sup> TASS, July 28, 1983; Telegram from Embassy Moscow to Foreign Office, August 17, 1983, TNA FCO 28/5367, Kew.

Lebanese waters.<sup>191</sup> Hence, Soviet naval activity was relatively restrained and no naval diplomacy explicitly targeted onshore audiences, contrasting with the Cold War rhetoric which wrapped the U.S.-Syrian collision and was fed with the speculations about the meaning and objectives of a Western naval deployment whose levels were unseen since 1958.

This chapter has shown how local perceptions of naval diplomacy were profoundly impacted by the West's iterative search for the appropriate answer to the renewed violence. Following a failed attempt at carrier diplomacy, the 'Battle of the Mountain' compelled the U.S. to use kinetic force with localised definitive results. But it did not extend to the Shuf where massacres of Christians were perpetrated. Western naval power had abdicated its role as 'protector' of the Christians, compromising the validity of naval diplomacy as an instrument of statecraft in Lebanon. A new Christian *misperception* of naval diplomacy emerged that doubted the 'sincerity' and efficiency of Western kinetic actions and joined the traditional Syrian-Muslim perception of a malevolent, conspiring West - a relevant illustration of Jervis' 'unity of planning'. The West's own strategic confusion and its swelling, unintelligible naval deployment added to this new paradoxical 'unity in perceptions' by fuelling the narrative of a Superpower confrontation in Lebanon.

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<sup>191</sup> *An-Nahar*, February 15, 1984.

## Chapter VIII – The *New Jersey*: From Symbolic Ship to ‘Gunboat Diplomacy’

This chapter examines how, between mid-November 1983 and early February 1984, Western naval diplomacy descended into an exclusively violent mode as the U.S. fell victim to ‘wishful thinking’ and ‘affect’, two of the misperceptions in international relations identified by Jervis.<sup>1</sup> What was the impact of this evolution on local perceptions and on the final strategic outlook in Lebanon? Did the West’s use of almost all naval kinetic means – airstrikes and bombardments – alter or confirm the sceptical and generally negative perceptions of naval power? How did the transition of the *New Jersey* from symbolic warship to gunboat diplomacy impact the image of the Western deployment and of the policy that it supported? Did the insertion of Western kinetic naval force inside an active war zone dilute its effectiveness? What was the signalling framework of these actions? Were the ‘principles’ of coercive diplomacy correctly applied and was the MNF a strategic failure? What were the consequences for the historic role of naval diplomacy in the Levant?

The arrival of the battleship *New Jersey* in late September shortly after the first U.S. NGFS mission crossed a new, qualitative threshold. For the Lebanese, she essentialised the Western presence and aroused their curiosity. The U.S. was resorting to the symbolic, ‘superior ship’ strategy to freeze the military situation and prevent the escalation of its purposeful naval diplomacy towards the ‘upper limit’ of undeclared war.<sup>2</sup> But contrary to the *Missouri* precedent which took place in a peaceful strategic context, the use of the *New Jersey* as a symbolic ship in an active war zone would prove to be an untenable proposition like the earlier *Eisenhower* promenade. The national power supposedly vested in the battleship’s sixteen-inch guns would be checked by the ‘*asymmetry of motivation*’ between the West and the Syrian camp - Lebanon being a less vital interest for the former than for the latter.<sup>3</sup> The battleship had to ‘raise her voice’ to compensate, quickly descending into an expressive force that tested the ‘upper limit’ it initially came to avoid. But was the *New Jersey* as symbolic a ship as the *Missouri* had been? According to Luttwak, a ‘*symbolic ship...asserts no local military superiority...and reflects national power rather than naval power as such...*’.<sup>4</sup> While

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<sup>1</sup> Jervis, *Perceptions*, p.356.

<sup>2</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, pp.42-6 & 101.

<sup>3</sup> George, *Forceful Persuasion*, pp.12-3.

<sup>4</sup> Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, p.29.

one cannot reject the fact that the *New Jersey* symbolised America's overwhelming national power, the symbolism of the battleship must be qualified by the fact that her capabilities could translate into '*local military superiority*' and '*were relevant to the setting*'.<sup>5</sup> If the *Missouri* was irrelevant for confronting a Soviet land invasion of Turkey from Bulgaria or the Caucasus, the *New Jersey* was capable of bludgeoning into abeyance any of the local warring parties, including the SAA. Hence, the battleship symbolised as much national power as clear and immediate naval 'power to hurt' becoming, at least in the eyes of America's adversaries, a symbol and ultimate instrument of 'gunboat diplomacy'. This '*term of abuse*', which Cable had carefully tried to 'regenerate', remained '*emotionally charged...a specific type of naval diplomacy that is more overt, aggressive, and offensive, usually conducted by a Great Power against a weaker state...*'<sup>6</sup>.

### 8.1 Deploying the *New Jersey*: Motives, Perceptions, and Reactions

NSDD 103 contained a paragraph stipulating that '*The USS New Jersey (BB-62) will be deployed to the Atlantic and made ready to enter the Mediterranean on short notice*'.<sup>7</sup> The specific mentioning of a warship in a NSDD is an indication of her military and political significance. The *USS New Jersey* was the first of four *Iowa*-class, Second World War vintage battleships to have been recommissioned in December 1982.<sup>8</sup> Her reactivation was decided and implemented under the auspices of Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, one of the fathers of the new U.S. Maritime Strategy and of the '600-ship fleet'.<sup>9</sup> For Lehman, the reintroduction of the battleship aimed at '*reinforcing [CVBGs]*' in areas such as the Eastern Mediterranean and restore the naval balance quickly and relatively cheaply.<sup>10</sup> The U.S. Navy simply had '*to use the ships*' and '*remember that the Soviet bloc was surrounded by seas and that [NATO] commanded them*'.<sup>11</sup> The Maritime Strategy, a '*mobile, forward, flanking strategy of options*' first presented in November 1982 then revised in 1984, 1985, and 1986, was an offensive strategy which aimed at seizing the initiative from the onset of hostilities, destroying Soviet

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<sup>5</sup> Luttwak, *The Political Uses*, p.29.

<sup>6</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp.1-34; Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.1; Widen, 'Naval Diplomacy', p.717.

<sup>7</sup> NSDD 103, September 10, 1983, NSDD Digitised Copies, RRL.

<sup>8</sup> The others being the *Iowa*, the *Missouri*, and the *Wisconsin*; Sumrall, Robert, *Iowa-Class Battleships*, pp.41-61.

<sup>9</sup> Lehman, *Command of the Seas*, Part II; and Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, Chapters 1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Sumrall, *Iowa-Class Battleships*, pp.56-63.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

forward deployed forces such as the Eskadra, and ‘*carrying the fight to the enemy*’.<sup>12</sup> It aimed at outflanking the Soviets’ main thrust in Europe by attacking with SSNs and CVBGs their SSBN bastions across their 2,000 km cumulative area of sea control/sea denial.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 25 – Soviet Bastions: Sea Control and Sea Denial areas. Source: Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1980s*, p.61.

The re-activated battleships organised in SAGs were to support the CVBGs in high-threat areas such as the Soviet sea denial/sea control zones, but also to act on their own as BBSAGs in medium-threat areas as well as to bring fire support to outflanking amphibious landings.<sup>14</sup> The SAGs built around the battleships would counter the Soviet *Kirov*-class of nuclear-powered cruisers.<sup>15</sup> The Eastern Mediterranean, the conduit to the Black Sea, required the wartime presence of two to four CVBGs and one SAG.<sup>16</sup> The armament of the *New Jersey* was modernised and while her three giant turrets each holding three sixteen-inch guns were retained, ten of her twenty five-inch guns were replaced by launchers for thirty-two new *Tomahawk* land-attack cruise-missiles and sixteen anti-ship *Harpoon* missiles. She also received four *Phalanx* anti-aircraft/anti-missile close-in defence systems.<sup>17</sup> According to Lehman, her deployment in Lebanon was first discussed when the Marines arrived in

<sup>12</sup> For the history of the inception of the Maritime Strategy, see Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, pp.47-116; For different versions of the Strategy, see Hattendorf, *The Evolution & U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1980s*.

<sup>13</sup> On the SSBN Bastions, see Hattendorf, *The Evolution*, pp.23-25, and Rivkin, David, ‘No Bastions for the Bear’, *Proceedings*, 110/4 (1984), pp.36-43.

<sup>14</sup> Serig, Howard, ‘The Iowa Class: Needed Once Again’, *Proceedings*, Vol.108/5 (1982), pp.134-49; Sumrall, *Iowa-Class Battleships*, pp.145-50.

<sup>15</sup> Sumrall, *Iowa-class Battleships*, pp.57-9.

<sup>16</sup> Lehman, John, ‘The 600-Ship Navy’ in Hattendorf, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1980s*, p.251.

<sup>17</sup> Stillwell, *Battleship New Jersey*, pp.252-5 & Appendix 4.



September 1982. She was supposed to convey the message of *'don't mess with these Marines'*. The idea was put to rest because it would have blurred the image of the Marines as peacekeepers.<sup>18</sup>

But the strategic landscape in Lebanon had changed during the Summer of 1983. Rear Admiral Dur recalls that, while overflying *'The ridgeline in the Shuf, he saw Syrian and Druse batteries collocated with common ammunitions dumps'* and used to shell the LAF and MNF positions. Dur reported to McFarlane *'that these batteries were at the edge of the effective range of Sixth Fleet warships; but a single round from a battleship could take a whole position more than 20 miles away.'* Dur considered that *'the Syrians would think twice before entering in an artillery duel with the New Jersey'*.<sup>19</sup> With NSC Clark's, McFarlane's, and Schultz's support and against Weinberger's reservations, the idea was submitted to Reagan and approved following a NSPG meeting where the potential targets the battleship would *'engage if our Marines are attacked* [underlined in original] were defined - Druse and Syrian artillery positions - and the decision was taken to send to Lebanon *'as quickly as possible'* a *'Second [CVBG]. Would send a strong signal of concern for broader strategic picture in Eastern Mediterranean'*.<sup>20</sup> Dur added that *'The Navy staff remembered the Missouri cruise and wanted to scare the Russians. A battleship has a special place in naval presence. It is presence with an exclamation mark!'*<sup>21</sup>

According to Lehman, sending the *New Jersey* *'was opposed by some for narrow political reasons and because of jealousy of the Navy which was getting publicity and Congressional support'*.<sup>22</sup> Once deployed however, *'the battleship intended to use her Tomahawks against Syria proper if necessary, demonstrating to the Soviet patron that she had the ability to strike anywhere at will. She changed the correlation of forces against the Soviets and had tremendous capabilities in local conflicts.'*<sup>23</sup> When the U.S. naval concentration off Lebanon reached unprecedented levels in November 1983, the Sixth Fleet with its two CTFs around the *Independence* and the *Kennedy* augmented by the *New Jersey*, broadly corresponded to the Maritime Strategy's projected wartime structure of two CVBGs and one SAG for the

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

<sup>20</sup> Talking points for NSPG Meeting September 3, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Meeting File, NSC 00081-00090, Box9, RRL.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Eastern Mediterranean area. This coincidence underscores not only the traditional strategic importance of Levantine waters but also the Cold War tropism that usually characterised U.S. approaches to crises in the Levant. Lehman added that *'part of the rationale in sending the New Jersey was to provide guarantees for the Christians, with the downside that a naval intervention in support of the LAF and the Christians would put the Marines present onshore as "diplomats", in jeopardy'*.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, the decision to dispatch the *New Jersey* was motivated as much by the local Lebanese situation as by pure Cold War considerations. It was inserted in a wider effort to expand the offshore element of the MNF. Internal memoranda from the State Department, the NSC, and the CIA planned for the addition of a second carrier (the *John F. Kennedy*) to the *Eisenhower* (with the two LPHs *Iwo Jima* and *Tarawa* already on station) and called for enhanced naval contributions by the three other MNF countries. They advocated *'More aggressive measures to defeat artillery, including, as appropriate, naval bombardment, counter-battery fire, and air strikes.'*<sup>25</sup> Through this increase in naval power and in the readiness to use it, the U.S. was displaying resolve and *'escalation dominance'*.<sup>26</sup> To show U.S. escalation control, *'anonymous Western military sources'* told the press a week after the first NGFS on September 19, that airstrikes by F-14s and A-7s were cancelled at the very last minute while the aircraft had already taken off, because such an action was deemed *'too escalatory'*.<sup>27</sup> The immediate objectives of the expanded naval force were to reach a stable ceasefire while negotiating with Syria from a position of strength and to support the injection of pre-emptive force into the ROEs. McFarlane came back to the notion of *'clear and present danger'* which he developed earlier, advocating *'more flexibility'* in the application of U.S. firepower to avoid *'waiting for the eleventh hour...'*. He added that *'we have great assets now, including the USS New Jersey...Yet we have to consider the profound impact on our credibility if...we are either not prepared to use them or use them too late and lost the war...our capacity to deter and if necessary, fight in the Gulf will clearly be influenced by perceptions of our*

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>25</sup> Telegram from Department of State to Robert McFarlane, September 10, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Cable File, Box107, RRL; CIA, *'Two Concepts for the Management of the Lebanon Crisis'* (September 1983).

<sup>26</sup> Telegram from Robert McFarlane to Richard Fairbanks, August 28, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject File, Box55, RRL.

<sup>27</sup> *As-Safir*, September 26, 1983. The mention of the F-14 - an aircraft which, in 1982, did not yet possess land-attack capabilities - by the *'Western Source'* as potentially taking part in an air strike could either mean that the F-14s were escorting the A-7s, or be a propaganda ploy to highlight the seriousness of the U.S. coercive posture. The confusion about F-14 capabilities will be displayed by OJ following the December 4 air raid, see p.233.

*credibility in Lebanon*'.<sup>28</sup> McFarlane was recognising that the accumulation of naval power without the intent to use it would demonetise naval diplomacy, concurring with Salem's judgement that '*when a force is here for so long without action, it loses its impact*'.<sup>29</sup> Hence, there was something inherently escalatory in the increase of naval firepower, a built-in mechanism that would fatally lead, for the sake of consistency and credibility, to more force being applied. This could even more be the case that the U.S. envoy raised the stakes, highlighting the international dimension of the MNF presence. Not only would eventual American kinetic use of naval assets have an impact on the Persian Gulf theatre, but their delayed use would lead to losing the 'war' in Lebanon. For him, naval diplomacy was becoming very 'short of war', a fig-leaf concealing the fact that the U.S. was allied with a government confronting an undeclared foreign-led war by Soviet-allied Syria.

After Saudi-mediated negotiations conducted by McFarlane in Damascus on September 23 a ceasefire was reached. It shortly preceded the *New Jersey*'s arrival in Lebanese waters on September 24. The U.S. attributed the interruption in combat operations to a battleship effect. In his memoirs, McFarlane recounts reminding Assad, as 'a final gambit' to convince him accepting a ceasefire, that the *New Jersey* would arrive the next day.<sup>30</sup> The role of battleship-diplomacy in imposing the ceasefire is not much contested, even if rarely absolutely ascertained. For Dur, the only proof he remembers about a possible *New Jersey* effect were '*LAF radio intercepts of communications between Syrian batteries insisting on the need for caution, lest the New Jersey unleashes "hellfire" on their positions*'.<sup>31</sup> This pointed at a certain level of restraint more akin to a lull than to an interruption in fighting. On the Syrian side, the ceasefire was solely attributed to Assad's contacts with the Saudi mediator, and the arrival of the *New Jersey* was announced in the press separately as new American reinforcements.<sup>32</sup> On the Christian side, Abou-Nader remembered that the arrival of the *New Jersey* was seen by the LF as a strong message to the Syrians that led them to accept a temporary ceasefire.<sup>33</sup> As for Gemayel, while he recognised the impact of the battleship, he added that '*the ceasefire was anyway short-lived because Syria quickly understood that the*

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<sup>28</sup> Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Department of State, September 28, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Cable Files, Box107, RRL.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.

<sup>30</sup> McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p.253.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

<sup>32</sup> *Al-Baath*, September 26, 1983.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Fouad Abu Nader.

*ship was merely a symbol and not a fighting armada*’, adding that *‘the New Jersey was so special that she was isolated: She was not a real flagship with a fleet around her as a carrier task force is’*.<sup>34</sup> For Gemayel, the naval movements reflected the piecemeal and tactical nature of U.S. policy in Lebanon. What he did not know is that the U.S. feared that the arrival of the battleship could encourage him to delay his acceptance of a cease-fire, hoping that the U.S. Navy would help him improve his negotiating position.<sup>35</sup> Thus, naval diplomacy was used to shape the expectations of both friend and foe, the former being ‘encouraged’ to more flexibility as much as the latter was pressured to accept a ceasefire.

The perceptions by the Lebanese public seemed to confirm the distinctive status of the battleship which ended up subsuming in the local imaginary all the Western naval presence. She was greeted with touristic curiosity by the Lebanese press and public, the latter running to the shore to see her when possible. Invited onboard, journalists were entertained to her superlative features. *Al-‘Amal* reported on the visit in a three-page, photo-laden article titled *‘Come to the World of the New Jersey’*.<sup>36</sup> *Le Réveil* invited its readers to a *‘tour in the womb of the “monster”*’.<sup>37</sup> A photograph of a U.S. naval officer standing beside a taller than him sixteen-inch shell, adorned almost all newspapers front pages including the ideologically unsympathetic *As-Safir*.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with former President Amine Gemayel.

<sup>35</sup> Telegram from Secretary of State to Embassy Beirut, September 22, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Cable Files, Box109, RRL.

<sup>36</sup> *Al-‘Amal*, September 30, 1983.

<sup>37</sup> *Le Réveil*, September 30, 1983.

<sup>38</sup> *As-Safir*, September 30, 1983.



Figure 26 – ‘Come to the World of the New Jersey’, Al-‘Amal, September 30, 1983.

Even before the battleship arrived, *Al-‘Amal* had titled an article with an excerpt of her last Commander’s speech before her decommissioning in 1969: “‘*New Jersey Fires her Guns in the Name of Freedom*’”.<sup>39</sup> *As-Safir* devoted a full page to a piece titled ‘*Would the Era of Gunboat Diplomacy Come Back?*’. After reminding readers that the gunboat had been the historical instrument of colonialism, it compared the arrival of the *New Jersey* in Lebanese waters to the anchoring of Admiral Seymour’s fleet off Alexandria in 1882, prelude to the bombardment of the city and to the British colonisation of Egypt. It considered that the battleship, preceded by a carefully crafted publicity about her destructive power, came essentially for

<sup>39</sup> *Al-‘Amal*, September 21, 1983.

deterrence.<sup>40</sup> The latter theme was repeated by the battleship's Commander, Captain Milligan. Linking explicitly the arrival of the warship with the ceasefire and citing Reagan, he reminded that *'When the New Jersey was put back in service in 1982, the President declared that she would perfectly reach her objective if she does not have to use her weapons. We are satisfied by the ceasefire because we would not like to use our guns.'*<sup>41</sup> This public course on deterrence was an implicit warning to Syria and an attempt to restore the fiction of presence through the active suasion of the battleship. It did not convince Christian leaders such as Chamoun who, in a series of articles in OLI, exclaimed: *'Friend, pound your fist!'*, adding that

*'the New Jersey whom we have been waiting for finally arrived...Thanks to the American propaganda machine, she appears in all Lebanese newspapers and in foreign publications...Washington prefers to show [her guns] rather than use them and leverage the fear or the hope she inspires in order not to have to use them...In the end, it is not enough to make the guns of one's policies but, if one wants to be respected, [it would be] better to make what America not always do: the policies of one's guns.'*<sup>42</sup>

Hence, the ploy of the symbolic ship was understood but questioned by local observers from both sides of the divide, both inspired by their 'expeditionary' tropism. For the Muslim camp, the *New Jersey* brought back colonial-era gunboat diplomacy while the Christian side questioned the relevance of naval symbolism to an active war zone. Christian doubts about the reliability of Western support grew paradoxically after the arrival of the *New Jersey*. Back in Beirut from Damascus, McFarlane made an anonymous press communication about a *quid pro quo* in which the U.S. acknowledged the *'legitimacy of Syrian interests'* in Lebanon.<sup>43</sup> The GOL and the Christians reacted sharply. In an article titled *'Response to the Anonymous American'*, *Le Réveil* accused McFarlane of utter ignorance of Lebanese realities, explaining that "Syrian interests" would mean the end of the Agreement, of the RPI, and of Lebanon.<sup>44</sup> Chamoun, an old hand in dealing with American diplomacy, toyed with American well-known Cold War tropism, writing that if the *'anonymous diplomat'* recognises Syria's interests and

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<sup>40</sup> *As-Safir*, September 26, 1983.

<sup>41</sup> OLI, September 30, 1983.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, September 27 & October 5, 1983.

<sup>43</sup> Telegram from Robert McFarlane to Embassy Beirut, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Cable File, Box107, RRL.

<sup>44</sup> *Le Réveil*, September 30, 1983.

influence in Lebanon, then ‘*why would Lebanon not become a satellite of Syria, itself a Soviet satellite in the Middle East?*’<sup>45</sup>

For the Christians, Assad had not been moved by the American show of force. Instead, U.S. pressure was now being exerted on them, suspecting that America wanted a compromise at any cost and pull out of Lebanon.<sup>46</sup> Internal memoranda shows the Reagan Administration reviewing different alternatives, including variants of McFarlane’s Damascus *quid pro quo*, while being reluctant to engage in a sell-out that would destroy its credibility internationally.<sup>47</sup> Gemayel never forgave McFarlane the Damascus compromise. His whole perception of the U.S. intervention, including its naval aspects, became definitely and negatively tainted. He recalled the American compromise with Nasser in 1958, establishing a parallel between Murphy and McFarlane and invoking ‘*negative memories of the Sixth Fleet when U.S. Marines arrested [his father] Pierre and imprisoned him aboard a warship in the wake of the Christian backlash against the first, pro-rebel, U.S.-supported Chehab Government*’.<sup>48</sup> In his recently released memoirs he wrote a scathing portrait of McFarlane, more akin to a settling of scores than to a political analysis.<sup>49</sup>

This episode shows that ‘onshore diplomacy’ can produce perceptions that could negate or deflate expectations created by the deployment of naval force. In the case of the Christians, the promises of the NGFS and the *New Jersey* were blurred by the actions of American diplomats in Damascus. If among the populace, the expectations of a quick and forcible resolution of their predicament had been raised by the recent U.S. kinetic actions, such ‘illusions’ were absent in leadership circles. They were realistic enough to expect a compromise between the U.S. and Syria, with the *New Jersey* providing the ‘guarantee’ that would facilitate its acceptance by the Lebanese - in a remake of the 1958 compromise with Nasser. What they did not expect was that U.S. diplomacy supported as it was by the power

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<sup>45</sup> OLI, October 5, 1983.

<sup>46</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Quai d’Orsay, October 3, 19830047-SUP, ANMO-Liban, 1983-1989, LA-III-C-1, AD.

<sup>47</sup> See for example a package addressed to the President by NSC William Clark, September 9, 1983, and containing different scenarios for dealing with Syria, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Meeting Files, 00081-00090, Box9, RRL.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>49</sup> Gemayel, *The Resistance Presidency*, pp.153-4.

of its naval guns, would go as far as McFarlane's recognition of Syrian interests and influence in Lebanon.<sup>50</sup>

## 8.2 The Powerless *New Jersey*: The October Bombings and the Mixed Results of Naval Airpower

The U.S. coercive purposeful posture inaugurated in September 1983 led to disagreements with their MNF partners, especially France. Despite recognising that U.S. NGFS '*probably saved President Gemayel's regime*', France was annoyed by American dominance.<sup>51</sup> One differentiation tool which also served her wider Arab ambitions, was to stick to the civil war narrative where French forces, '*...cannot be a suppletive force to any one of the factions in presence*'.<sup>52</sup> France publicly criticised the U.S. NGFS for the LAF and American blanket support to the GOL, saying that it '*rejects gunboat diplomacy*'.<sup>53</sup> In naval diplomacy terms, this translated into a narrowly retaliatory posture. The presence of the *Foch*, replaced by the *Clemenceau* and the frigate *Duquesne* in early October, aimed at providing the French contingent ashore with appropriate support. On September 23, responding to a deadly shelling of French positions, eight Super-Etendards from the *Foch* struck pro-Syrian Druse artillery.<sup>54</sup> Jumblatt was '*vigorously warned about our decision to retaliate*', while he predictably denied any implication.<sup>55</sup> French naval diplomacy tried to go beyond kinetic retaliations. Rumours about French attempts at organising a meeting of the warring Lebanese parties onboard the *Foch* were repeatedly denied, probably because French diplomats failed to convince the different stakeholders of the wisdom of the proposal.<sup>56</sup> What did not escape some observers was the discrepancy between French declarations of 'neutrality' and the continuous presence of a carrier task force 'to protect' the French contingent. *Le Réveil* noticed the contradiction and wrote that '*At the same time that he decides to send the carrier*

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.

<sup>51</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, October 3, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-Liban, 1983-1989, LA-III-C-1, AD.

<sup>52</sup> Telegram from Embassy Damascus to Quai d'Orsay, October 8, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-Liban, 1983-1989, LA-III-B-5, AD; *Le Réveil*, September 1, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> *Le Réveil*, September 20, 1983.

<sup>54</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 23, 1983.

<sup>55</sup> Telegram from Embassy Damascus to Quai d'Orsay, September 24, 1983, 00047-SUP, ANMO-Liban, 1983-1989, LA-I-2-4, AD.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum from François de Grossouvre, Chargé de Mission in Élysées Palace, September 2, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-Liban, 1983-1989, LA-III-B-5, AD; *Le Réveil*, September, 1983.



*Foch*, Mitterrand says that *'France does not want to be trapped in a civil war'*.<sup>57</sup> All the Lebanese leaders interviewed here ignored French naval diplomacy. According to Francis Gutmann, there was a relative lack of interest in Quai d'Orsay circles for naval diplomacy which was *'very tiny in French thinking...it was mostly reactive and short-term action.'* He added that *'the U.S. were much more engaged and aggressive'*, admitting that *'it is true that in the end it...reassured the populations by establishing a visual balance of power between Christians on the one side, and Muslims and Syria on the other. But its role was not decisive'*.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, French naval diplomacy was not entirely inactive. In December 1983, the French navy engaged in a repeat of the naval evacuations of September 1982, again for the benefit of the PLO. Arafat and PLO elements were holed in the northern city of Tripoli, besieged from land by the Syrian army and Syrian-supported PLO dissidents.<sup>59</sup> Talks about an evacuation by sea onboard Greek ships foundered when, in a not unprecedented convergence of interests with Syria in Lebanon, Israeli gunboats interdicted the Tripoli shoreline. *Al-'Amal* sarcastically summed up the situation in a cartoon. From right to left, it showed in a first box Arafat faced with a Syrian gun saying: *'Not from the land'*; in a second box, faced with an Israeli gunboat saying: *'Not from the sea'*; and in a final box, a winged presumably dead Arafat says, *'Remember me Lord if I came to you by air'*.<sup>60</sup>



Figure 27 – Arafat's Conundrum, *Al-'Amal*, December 10, 1983.

<sup>57</sup> *Le Réveil*, September 1, 1983.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Francis Gutmann, January 25, 2020.

<sup>59</sup> NYT, June 22, 1983.

<sup>60</sup> *Al-'Amal*, December 10, 1983.

International negotiations with Syria and Israel led to a solution whereby a French force consisting of five corvettes and the carrier *Clemenceau* would escort the U.N.-flagged Greek ships to Tunis.<sup>61</sup> Gutmann remembered that when at sea, Arafat wanted to switch ships to confuse alleged Israeli submarines. Gutmann, who was overseeing the evacuation, rejected the demand as it implied a lack of confidence in French naval protection.<sup>62</sup> Despite this quasi-surgical nature of French naval diplomacy, one of its endeavours apparently unrelated to the Lebanese theatre would have devastating consequences for the MNF and for Western naval diplomacy in the Levant.

France's support to Iraq in its war against Iran had complicated its relationship with the latter. France's readiness to deliver attack aircraft to Iraq had triggered Iranian threats, with a deadly bombing of the French Ambassador's residence in Beirut in September 1983 coming as an ultimate warning.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, France agreed to 'let' Iraq six Super-Etendards equipped with *Exocet* missiles. For the Iraqis and the Iranians, these aircraft were seen as game-changers in a war which was turning against Iraq. To deliver the Super-Etendards, the *Marine Nationale* replicated the action of the Sixth Fleet during the October 1973 War when it helped deliver attack aircraft to Israel. Early in October 1983, the Super-Etendards secretly landed on the *Clemenceau*, which was positioned off Lebanon, for a refuelling stop before proceeding to Iraq after overflying the Turkish-Syrian border.<sup>64</sup> Barely two weeks later, on October 23, Iranian-controlled Shi'a terrorists launched explosives-laden trucks against the French and U.S. Marines barracks in Beirut, killing 242 Marines and fifty-eight French Marsouins and Paras.<sup>65</sup>

The Lebanese reactions to the disaster roughly followed the demarcation line. The GOL-associated side which included several Muslims leaders, feared that the West would pull out. For OLI, *'The real stake [of the attacks] is...a declaration of war against the political, military, and even physical presence of the West in Lebanon'*.<sup>66</sup> Sincerely moved and fearing for the future, Christian leaders and populace multiplied declarations about the brotherhood in

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<sup>61</sup> NYT, December 20, 1983.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Francis Gutmann.

<sup>63</sup> *An-Nahar*, September 22, 1983.

<sup>64</sup> Razoux, Pierre, *The Iran-Iraq War*, (Harvard University Press, 2015), pp.272-4; Pons, Frederic, *Mourir Pour le Liban*, (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1994), pp,70-5.

<sup>65</sup> For detailed accounts of the attacks and their immediate effects, see Geraghty, *Peacekeepers at War*, Chapters 8-10, Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon (1982-1984)*, pp.70-106; Pons, *Mourir pour le Liban*, Chapter IV.

<sup>66</sup> OLI, October 24, 1983.

blood and organised solidarity marches to the U.S. and French embassies, while the Maronite Patriarch celebrated a solemn Mass in honour of the befallen in the presence of the American and French Ambassadors.<sup>67</sup>

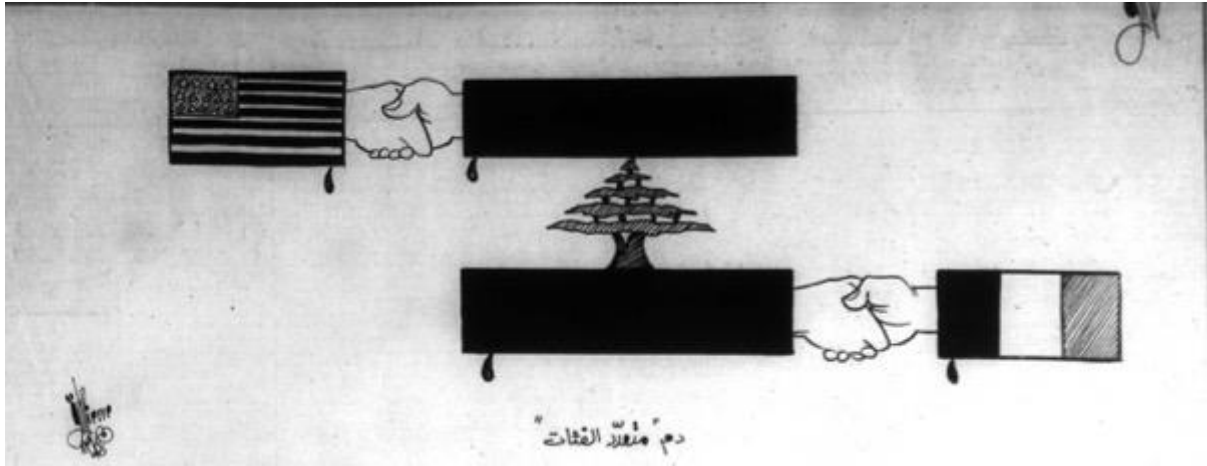


Figure 28 – ‘Multinational Blood’, in solidarity with the Marines and the Paras, Al-‘Amal, October 25, 1983.

In the Syrian camp, reactions were unsympathetic. For *Tishreen*, ‘the two operations executed by the Lebanese National Resistance’ have to be understood in the context of ‘the real war’ launched by the Marines and the MNF against the Lebanese nationalist forces.<sup>68</sup> In Lebanon, a Sunni politician, while ‘regretting’ the attacks, reminded that ‘justice cannot be restored while we have fleets and MNFs’.<sup>69</sup> As for the Nasserist Mourabitouns, they considered that the attacks ‘...targeted the forces with whom we are at war...the strategic enemy...the American Administration...’, adding that they ‘were a legitimate right of Muslims and Arabs’.<sup>70</sup> For Jumblatt, what happened was a payback for the American policy ‘of colonising the Middle East, and ...it will happen again if the U.S. persisted in this adversary posture against the Arab and Islamic world...’<sup>71</sup> For *As-Safir*, the attacks resulted from the ‘Historic propensity...of some Lebanese [the Christians] to confront any internal problem...by looking for an outside solution for it; and it is not surprising that the outside solution becomes in turn a problem in itself...’<sup>72</sup>. *As-Safir* had already written ‘that Lebanon [had] hosted a MNF in the nineteenth century’, referring to the 1860 intervention and adding that ‘it is as if nothing has changed since then’.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Le Réveil*, October 24, 1983; *Al-‘Amal*, October 28, 1983; *An-Nahar*, October 25, 1983.

<sup>68</sup> *Tishreen*, October 24, 1983.

<sup>69</sup> *An-Nahar*, October 24, 1983.

<sup>70</sup> *As-Safir*, October 30, 1983.

<sup>71</sup> *An-Nahar*, October 25, 1983.

<sup>72</sup> *As-Safir*, October 26, 1983.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, September 29, 1983.

The recourse to naval power was vain and had created its own demise. This was well illustrated in a cartoon in *Sawt Al-Uruba*, where an aging and useless *New Jersey* (she bears the number '43' indicating the year of the first firing of her main battery) stands next to the explosion onshore dubbed '*Pearl Harbour 83*'. *Sawt Al-Uruba* joined its Christian foes in their doubts about the efficiency of the *New Jersey* diplomacy which were expressed only two days before the attacks in an *Al-'Amal* cartoon showing Reagan's distorted biceps in the form of the *New Jersey* with the caption: '*The empty mantra...the threat to use the New Jersey*'.



Figure 29 – A useless *New Jersey* and the '*Pearl Harbour*' of the attacks on the barracks, *Sawt Al-Uruba*, October 25, 1983.

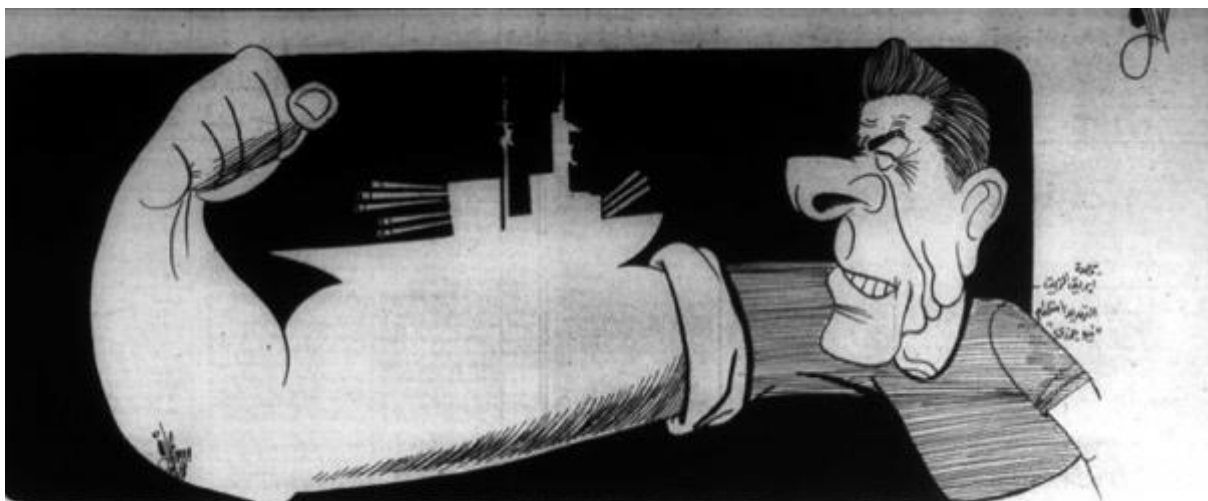


Figure 30 – '*The Empty Mantra...*', *Al-'Amal*, October 21, 1983.

On the day of the attacks, the Phalangist radio signalled the Sixth Fleet closing on Lebanese shores.<sup>74</sup> With the U.S. charging that '*the attacks could not have happened without Syrian approval*', Western retaliation looked imminent and Syria's nervousity grew.<sup>75</sup> *Al-Baath*

<sup>74</sup> OLI, October 24, 1983.

<sup>75</sup> *As-Safir*, October 27, 1983.

announced that '*tens of U.S. warships and thousands of American soldiers were heading for the region*'.<sup>76</sup> Syrian paranoia grew with *Al-Thawra* alleging the deployment of American Pershing missiles in Israel.<sup>77</sup> Warning of a coordinated NATO-Israeli attack, the Syrian press denounced the presence of more than fifty NATO warships in Lebanese waters.<sup>78</sup> The increase in the Western naval presence was noted by all and logically linked to the question of retaliation. OJ, which reported that Reagan had declared that '*Syria was aware [of the attacks]*', asked if the '*[U.S.] are determined to avenge the Marines?*' It cited the Pentagon speaking of '*a routine operation*' which consisted in the *Independence* CTF joining the *Eisenhower* and the *New Jersey*, but with no indications about '*when the relieving of the Eisenhower would take place*'. Both carriers would be joined by the *John F. Kennedy* CTF.<sup>79</sup> F-14s TARPS overflights increased and were opposed by Syrian anti-aircraft systems.<sup>80</sup> More than two weeks after the attacks on the barracks, the Western response was still pending, which only increased the general nervousness. On November 7, Syria announced '*a general mobilisation in anticipation of a U.S. retaliatory attack*'.<sup>81</sup>

A new NSDD 111 considerably expanded the ROEs for the USMNF to '*allow support to the [LAF]...when in the judgment of the U.S. ground commander, LAF positions controlling strategic arteries to Beirut are in danger of being overrun by hostile forces*'.<sup>82</sup> In effect, NSDD 111 dropped the pretext constructed in NSDD 103 that linked support to the LAF in Suq El-Gharb to the protection of the Marines positioned underneath. It also expanded the bombardment zone and gave carte blanche to the tactical commander, taking naval diplomacy a step further towards a violent purposeful posture bordering on war. In a memorandum to Weinberger, the JCS feared that the U.S. could be drawn into a war with Syria '*as a result of tactical judgements made in Lebanon. Such a decision should be made in Washington*'.<sup>83</sup> If this memorandum reflected the disagreements between the NSC and the DOD/Pentagon, it raised once more the question of how force should be used in support of diplomacy. For the JCS, naval diplomacy is the expression of a strategy and should be directed

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<sup>76</sup> *AL-Baath*, October 25, 1983.

<sup>77</sup> *Al-Thawra*, October 28, 1983.

<sup>78</sup> *Al-Baath*, October 28, 1983; *Al-Thawra*, October 30, 1983.

<sup>79</sup> OJ, November 7, 1983.

<sup>80</sup> *Le Réveil*, November 11, 1983.

<sup>81</sup> *Al-'Amal*, November 8, 1983; NYT, November 8, 1983.

<sup>82</sup> NSDD-111, October 28, 1983, NSDD Digitised Copies, RRL.

<sup>83</sup> Memorandum from JCS to Secretary of Defence, November 4, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Near East and South Asia, Kuwait-Lebanon, Box41, RRL.

from Washington even for purely tactical, pinpoint strikes. The danger of escalation, especially with the presence of loosely coordinated Syrian proxies, was too high to risk giving the local Marines commander the autonomy of decision. This memorandum would allow the JCS to elude implementing NSDD 111 and lead to an ambiguous application of force which would impact the perceptions of naval diplomacy during the last weeks of the MNF.<sup>84</sup>

The atmosphere created by the naval concentration, round-the-clock TARPS, official accusations, and NSDD 111 led NSC deputy-director Admiral Pointdexter to express his fear that it could '*bring matters to a possible danger point*' and to suggest a formula for tension reduction by '*bring[ing] the CV level in the Mediterranean back down to a single carrier (John F. Kennedy relieves Eisenhower which proceeds West...)* until about 13 November. At that time *Independence will be on station with JFK and available to support our planned operation. When JFK proceeds through the Suez Canal on 19 November, we will revert to one carrier posture...*'<sup>85</sup> The U.S. was fine-tuning the degree of its naval suasion by varying the force level and structure of the naval deployment. In a meeting with the French Ambassador in Washington a few days later, Pointdexter repeated the U.S. traditional explanation that the simultaneous presence of three carriers '*was not unusual and was due to technical reasons*', adding that '*it was also salutary that [the naval accumulation] maintains the uncertainty and anxiety of the Syrian leaders as to the intentions of Washington*'.<sup>86</sup> While Pointdexter's memorandum mentioned a '*planned operation*' which, in the context of the times, conspicuously pointed to the long-expected retaliatory action the Admiral, in his discussion with the French Embassy, insisted in labelling any such operation as '*preventive*' rather than retaliatory, adding that it would be '*surgical*'. Such nuances meant that retaliation could lock the U.S. in a tit-for-tat logic that could endanger American assets in the Middle East.<sup>87</sup> It would also imply that the original culprit was clearly identified when the exact roles of Iran, Syria, and local Shi'as were still being analysed. The choice of the 'preventive' label could be diplomatically justified as self-defence while keeping a purposeful posture that compels the

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<sup>84</sup> See Robert McFarlane's reading of the JCS Memorandum in McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p.268.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum from John Pointdexter to Robert McFarlane, November 8, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Near East & South Asia, Rumsfeld-Saudi Arabia, Box46, RRL.

<sup>86</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Washington to Quai d'Orsay, November 10, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-LIBAN, LA-III-C-1, 1983-1989, AD.

<sup>87</sup> NYT, November 9, 1983.

adversary to desist from further actions. These debates and the events that would follow would diminish the credibility of Western naval diplomacy in local and international eyes.

On November 17, 14 Super-Etendards from the *Clemenceau* struck former LAF barracks near the town of Baalbek in the Syrian-occupied, majority Shi'a-populated Beqaa, in apparent retaliation for the October bombings. The installations were used by IRGCs and by the pro-Iran Shi'a Islamic Amal, whose leader had labelled the bombings a '*good deed which God loves...*'<sup>88</sup> The operation was presented by the French DOD as aimed at '*preventing new terrorist actions*'.<sup>89</sup> The press reported that the strike allegedly thwarted an attack against the Residence of the Ambassador in Beirut.<sup>90</sup> France was therefore venturing out of its strictly retaliatory policy, at least in declaratory terms, into the realm of pre-emptive, deterrent purposeful action, borrowing the self-defence oriented 'preventive' from Admiral Pointdexter's discussion with the French Ambassador. Casualties' reports were confused, with the Phalangist radio alleging that they were '*in their hundreds*'.<sup>91</sup> Two questions emerged.

The first concerned the reality and extent of the effects of the strike. Barely two days after the action, press rumours relayed doubts about its effectiveness, with OLJ assuring that '*journalists saw the [bombed installations] intact*'.<sup>92</sup> In an article titled '*The Smokes of Baalbek*', *Le Réveil* doubted the level of casualties, now situated as low as...two, and relayed a comment by *Le Monde* about '*a badly executed operation*'. '*Did the raid fail? Or is France afraid of its act of war?*'<sup>93</sup> To which the pro-Syrian *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi* answered by writing that the '*Super-Etendards failed the Baalbek test*'.<sup>94</sup> Following the 'imaginary' targets of the U.S. NGFS in September, France's own purposeful naval diplomacy was thrown into the category of 'imaginary' actions. A narrative rapidly emerged. A few hours before the raid, the LAF had intercepted a communication from Paris to a Shi'a Amal office in Beirut and relayed to an Iranian post in Baalbek, which resulted in orders being given for the evacuation of the targeted installations. Transmitted to Admiral Klotz commanding the *Clemenceau* CTF, the intelligence pointed at an informer inside the French Administration. A few months later, a

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<sup>88</sup> *The Times*, October 28, 1983.

<sup>89</sup> *Le Réveil*, November 18, 1983.

<sup>90</sup> *Al-'Amal* November 18, 1983.

<sup>91</sup> NYT, November 17, 1983.

<sup>92</sup> OLJ, November 19, 1983.

<sup>93</sup> *Le Réveil*, November 27, 1983.

<sup>94</sup> *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi*, November 21-27, 1983.

cadre from the Shi'a Amal movement confirmed to Klotz the information, adding the names of the people involved and interpreting the French raid '*as a token to please the French public opinion*'.<sup>95</sup> One of the suspects was Francis Guttman who, during his interview with the author, spontaneously raised the issue of the Baalbek raid to 'de-bunk' the narrative of the advance warning.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, the story stuck and beyond its strictly French domestic aspects, impacted the credibility of Western naval diplomacy. The French operation was perceived at best as a vainly expressive action instead of the forcible purposeful one - the '*act of war*' which it initially appeared to be. At worst, it was another manifestation of the West's mental confusion in Lebanon and of its fledgeling resolve.

The second question was about the U.S. absence despite the latter assurances that the French operation was coordinated with them.<sup>97</sup> It was understood that, following a deadly Israeli airstrike on the same area the day before the French raid the administration, fearing tactical association with Israel in the eyes of the Arab world, may have cancelled what was originally a joint Franco-American operation.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the Pointdexter memorandum indicated November 13 to 19 as the interval for carrier availability for the '*planned operation*'. A conflict had developed inside the administration pitting the NSC/State against DOD/Pentagon, with the Navy in between. Lehman recalled the Navy suggesting using the *New Jersey's Tomahawks* or night air attacks on the Baalbek area, but continuous dithering by the DOD/Pentagon led the French to grow impatient and move alone.<sup>99</sup> McFarlane accused Weinberger of having disobeyed Presidential orders by denying the Commander of the Sixth Fleet the authorisation to strike in coordination with the French.<sup>100</sup> In turn, Weinberger alleged that he was approached by his French counterpart '*...two to three hours*' only before the attack and that, lacking '*orders or notifications* [from Reagan]', he had to decline.<sup>101</sup> However, French and American independent sources confirm that the two countries' respective CTFs on station in Lebanon drew common plans for action as late as the morning of November 17. But Washington reneged at the last minute and the French decided to go

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<sup>95</sup> Pons, *Mourir pour le Liban*, pp.264-9.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Francis Gutmann.

<sup>97</sup> *An-Nahar*, November 18, 1983.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, November 17, 1983.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with John Lehman; Lehman, *Command of the Seas*, p.319.

<sup>100</sup> McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp.270-1.

<sup>101</sup> Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, p.112.



alone.<sup>102</sup> U.S. credibility suffered with *Al-'Amal* releasing a cartoon where a 'Bravo France' is paralleled by an 'America is trying to prove itself' with Reagan holding a toy aircraft and mimicking an attack with a 'Whoooooosh! Booommm!' sound.



Figure 31 – 'Whoooooosh! Booommm!', *Al-'Amal*, November 18, 1983.

The U.S. answer came on December 4, 1983, an air raid launched from the carriers *Independence* and *John F. Kennedy* in reaction to Syrian missile fire against TARPS conducted by two F-14s. The Sixth Fleet launched twenty-eight aircraft, A-6 *Intruders* and A-7 *Corsairs*, against a concentration of Syrian bunkers and anti-aircraft systems in the Lebanese Mountain East of Beirut. One A-7 was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed on the Christian port-city of Junieh with the pilot safely ejecting; and one A-6 was downed by a SA-7 and crashed in Syrian-controlled territory with the pilot killed and the navigator captured by the Syrians.<sup>103</sup> This heavy toll was aggravated by the raid's meagre tactical results.<sup>104</sup> But was it the long-expected retaliation? Was it another form of naval diplomacy in support of the efforts of the new U.S. Envoy, Donald Rumsfeld? Or was it just a tit-for-tat pinpoint reaction?

If Lehman had no doubt that the President was 'thinking retaliation' when he ordered the raid, he conceded that its immediate trigger was the unprecedented missile firing at the TARPS instead of the usual anti-aircraft fire. This led the JCS to elect a strictly tit-for-tat reaction.<sup>105</sup> Dur agreed that the strikes were a warning to the Syrians not to interfere with

<sup>102</sup> Pons, *Mourir pour le Liban*, pp.259-60; see also Wilson, *Super Carrier*, Chapter 9.

<sup>103</sup> For a detailed and technical account of the air raids, see Lehman, *Command of the Seas*, pp.319-26, and Wilson, *Super Carrier*, pp.133-220; NYT, December 5, 1983; *An-Nahar*, December 5, 1983.

<sup>104</sup> Memorandum to the President from Robert McFarlane, December 5, 1983, Crisis Management Centre, NSC Records, 1981-84, RAC Box9, RRL.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with John Lehman and Lehman, *Command of the Seas*, pp.320-1.

the TARPS.<sup>106</sup> Lehman considered TARPS intelligence-gathering value to be limited but *'they gave at least the chain of command the feeling that they were doing something'*.<sup>107</sup> For Shultz, the TARPS were a diplomatic liability as they were conducted then interrupted before being resumed without any coordination with Rumsfeld, putting the latter more than once into Syrian crosshairs.<sup>108</sup> OJ noted the American inconsistency writing that *'Powerful America does strictly nothing to avenge its 234 [sic] Marines killed last October...But anyone who dares shooting SAMs at F-14s stuffed with advanced anti-missile equipment and flying at 20,000 feet, this is deemed unacceptable...but then only far less sophisticated aircraft are sent to destroy the missiles.'*<sup>109</sup> The latter point triggered a debate inside the U.S. Administration. Weinberger declared that *'Naval artillery was not used...because of the need to execute precise strikes on Syrian positions. But the battleship New Jersey will stay and is adequate for missions adapted to her capacities and which could be necessary. We hope that it won't be the case'*.<sup>110</sup> For Lehman, Reagan initially asked if the *New Jersey* could take out the Syrian positions but JCS' Vessey considered the targets to be out of range for her, which was wrong. Lehman thought *'the battleship's sixteen-inch' shells would have saved American lives and hardware. Instead, the intended deterrent message was diluted.'* He recalled that *'the Navy had presented a plan for immediate retaliation after the October bombings, with Tomahawks fired from the New Jersey against the Syrian Ministry of Defence and against Iranian training bases in Baalbek. It was a very good plan, with huge impact. But the President was disobeyed. Some people didn't want to see the Navy carry it out'*.<sup>111</sup> For Rear Admiral Dur, *'the U.S was provoked by Syria when it fired on the TARPS. But the response was not very effective because the DOD directed daylight attacks at low altitudes to avoid collateral damage. This denied more effective employment of the A-6 Intruder which was optimised for radar delivery in challenging night and weather conditions....exposing it to a wide range of Syrian anti-aircraft weaponry. New Jersey was a riskless tool except for the absence of spotters to adjust fire and the DOD's concern for collateral damage.'*<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

<sup>107</sup> Lehman, *Command of the Sea*, p.320.

<sup>108</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp.228-9.

<sup>109</sup> OJ, December 5, 1983.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, December 5, 1983.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Philip Dur.

But the raid had wider ramifications.<sup>113</sup> Despite its defensive purposeful nature, it was inserted in the context of a new American-Israeli anti-Syrian strategic understanding and symbolically took place one day after another, successful Israeli one.<sup>114</sup> For America, the recognition of Syria's special security interests in Lebanon never meant a Syrian domination of that country.<sup>115</sup> But the U.S., engaged in a 'violent bargaining' with Assad around the definition of red lines to his ambitions, recognised that a peaceful Syrian withdrawal was unlikely. This made a 'dignified' withdrawal of the Marines even more necessary that the November 1984 Presidential elections loomed. The crux of Rumsfeld's mission consisted in resolving this problematic with the liberal use of naval force.<sup>116</sup> The day after the raid took place, Reagan issued NSDD 117 which confirmed and widened the dispositions of NSDD 111 as to the use of naval fire.<sup>117</sup>

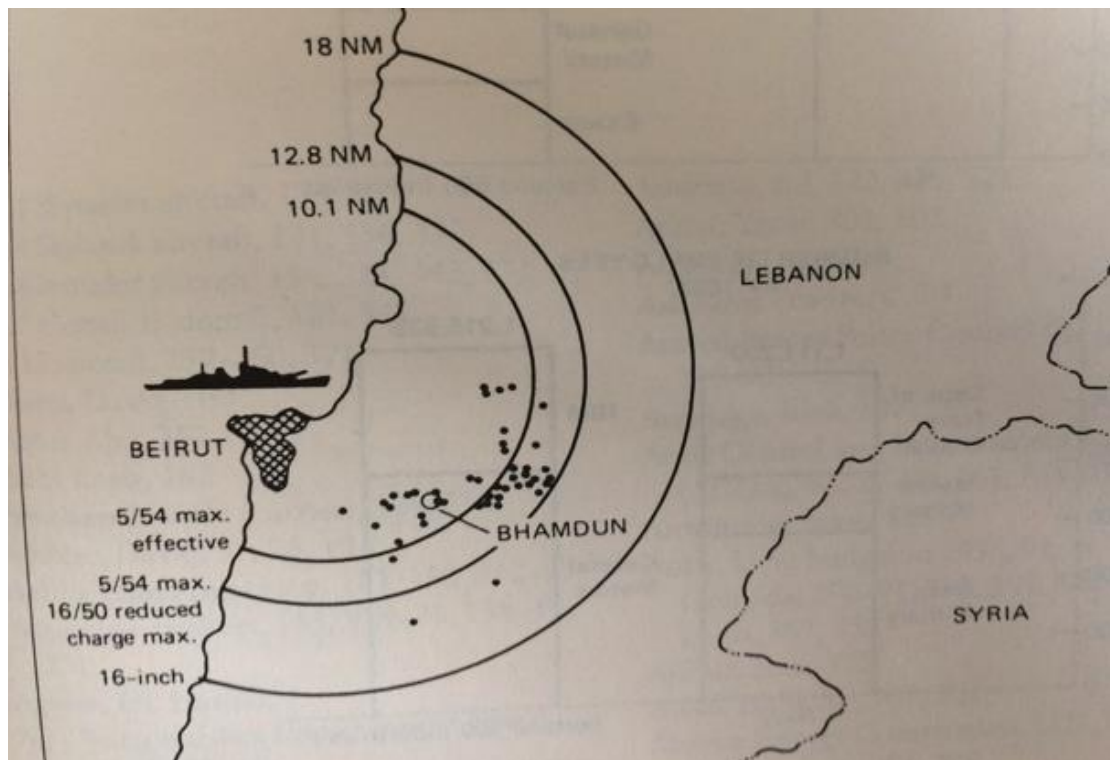


Figure 32 – New Jersey's 16-inch guns range covers areas (black dots) targeted by December 4 air raid.  
Source: U.S. Department of Defence in Lehman, *Command of the Seas*, Fig.7.

<sup>113</sup> NYT, December 5, 1983.

<sup>114</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Washington to Minister Cheysson, December 7, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-LIBAN, LA-III-C-1, 1983-1989, AD.

<sup>115</sup> Memorandum from George Shultz to the President, *U.S. Strategy in Lebanon*, October 13, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSPG, 60-85A, Box2, RRL.

<sup>116</sup> Memorandum, *Taking Stock in Lebanon*, December 15, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Near East & South Asia, Lebanon, Box 43-44, RRL.

<sup>117</sup> NSDD-117, December 5, 1983, NSDD Digitised Copies, RRL.

Syrian reactions to the raid were twofold. The newspapers unleashed their anti-Western rhetoric. *Tishreen* put the attack in its strategic context, writing that it was '*premeditated...and is one of the direct results of [Israeli Prime Minister] Shamir's visit to Washington...The American raid occurred after the Israeli one, which reveals the common U.S.-Israeli action*'<sup>118</sup> For *Al-Baath*, '*U.S. concentrations in the Mediterranean lead us to think that a war in the region is unavoidable.*'<sup>119</sup> Alluding to the Soviet Union, *Tishreen* wrote that the Syrian government '*was considering the ways and means to restore the balance in the region...*'<sup>120</sup> But perceptions inside leadership circles were different. Meeting Assad two days after the raid, Salem found him '*terrified by the downing of the two aircrafts. He thought the U.S. was about to descend on him. He was consequently shocked when the U.S. sent diplomats to bargain for the release of the captured navigator. Assad said that from that point he realised that the U.S. would not fight. The myth was shattered*'.<sup>121</sup> Worse, Assad indulged into a 'reverse naval diplomacy'. Declaring that the navigator would not be freed unless TARPs were discontinued, he finally released the captured African-American airman in answer to a plea from Senator Jesse Jackson, an African-American presidential candidate who made the trip to Damascus. Assad had '*diverted U.S. politics in his favour*'.<sup>122</sup>

In Lebanese perceptions, an allegedly precision operation morphed into a calculated, ambivalent strategic move. For the Lebanese, it was difficult to justify the sudden and massive nature of the U.S. action by the then established Syrian practice of shooting at the TARPs. Explanations must be necessarily found elsewhere. On the Christian side Gemayel, adopting his usual sceptical attitude, downplayed the objectives of the raid saying that '*the military like to test their equipment and that of their adversaries. What happened was a mishap which could not escalate because the Soviets were there. The whole thing was a cat-and-mouse game between the U.S.-Israel side and the Soviet-Syrian side.*'<sup>123</sup> *An-Nahar* wondered if America could accept this new challenge without resorting to another confrontation, asking if the raid was for testing the advanced Soviet weapon systems or for justifying a wider military operation? '*If not, why then would America ridicule her naval air and expose her*

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<sup>118</sup> *Tishreen*, December 5, 1983.

<sup>119</sup> *Al-Baath*, December 5, 1983.

<sup>120</sup> *Tishreen*, December 7, 1983.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Elie Salem.

<sup>122</sup> OJ, January 4, 1984.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

prestige to people who mock her naval muscle-flexing and see in her empty threats a substitute for the might of the New Jersey’?<sup>124</sup> In the pro-GOL press, the reactions went from a rationalised apologetic approach to a deep disappointment. In an article titled ‘*The Political Reading of the American Raid*’, *Al-‘Amal* privileged a coercive diplomacy approach, explaining that the real objectives of the attack were fulfilled because they were political and consisted in America ‘telling her local and international enemies that she is a not a paper tiger...America is America...and who can send twenty-eight aircraft...can send 280’, adding that the messages were for Syria and the Soviet Union.<sup>125</sup> Reacting to Syrian bravado that the liberation of the captured airman was linked to the U.S. leaving Lebanon, the journal published a cartoon in which, from right to left, a U.S. Marine reads a Syrian newspaper clamouring this condition. But time passes by, the Marine ages, and the newspaper still reports the same vain blackmail.

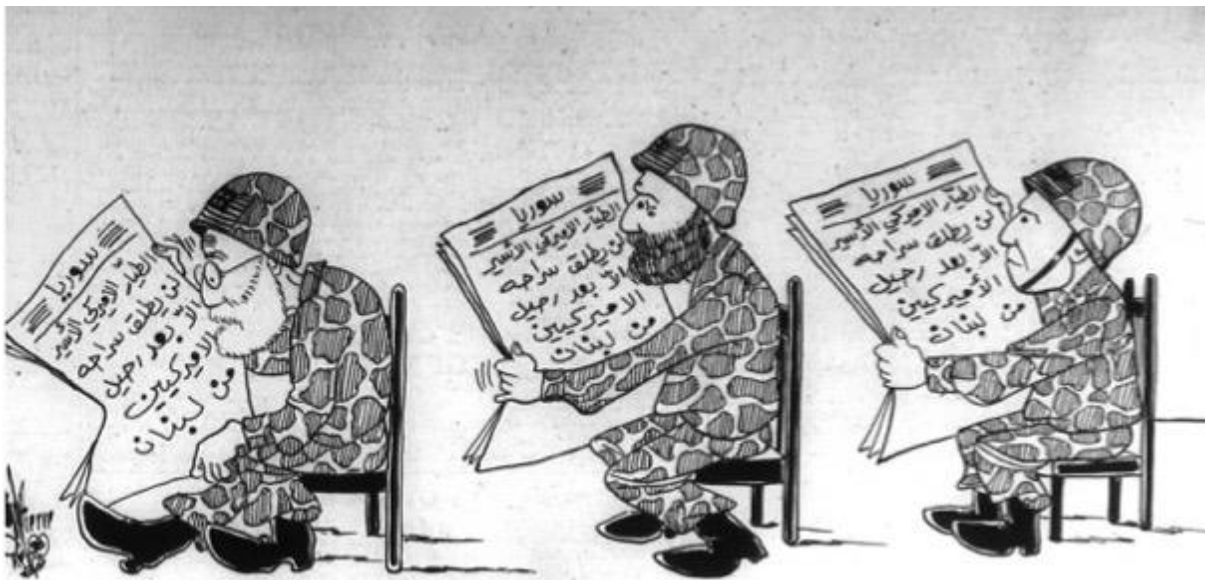


Figure 33 – *The Ageing Marine in Lebanon, Al-‘Amal, December 7, 1983.*

However, reflecting GOL sources, OLI angrily wrote that ‘*If we except the intervention of Sixth Fleet guns last September, the MNF is not supporting the GOL...it is complicating the situation because it is not anymore defending Lebanon but just itself. Which is absurd. Better for it to go*’.<sup>126</sup> *As-Safir* answered that the raid was the prelude to a U.S.-Israeli war against the Arabs to impose on them the RPI. America is an occupying force with its fleet anchored in Lebanese

<sup>124</sup> *An-Nahar*, December 6, 1983.

<sup>125</sup> *Al-‘Amal*, December 6, 1983.

<sup>126</sup> OLI, December 6, 1983.

territorial waters, striking where and whom it wants and forgetting that it is here for a specific mission on behalf of the GOL.<sup>127</sup>

The raid did not improve the intelligibility of U.S. naval diplomacy. An involuntary mix of tactical tit-for-tat, remote payback for the October attacks, and conscious diplomatic leveraging, it was further de-monetised by the U.S. rush to negotiate the release of the captured navigator, erasing any pretence at a diplomacy of force. It was to restore the terms of the violent bargaining and pave the way for the 'dignified' exit of the Marines that the next, and final chapter of U.S. naval diplomacy in the Levant was opened.

### **8.3 Unleashing the *New Jersey*: Abandonment, Expressive Rage, and Strategic Failure**

A series of U.S. initiatives pointed at preparations for a pull-out and at the increased willingness to use naval force to ensure an orderly withdrawal process while drawing red lines for Syrian influence in Lebanon. On December 14, Reagan declared that there were '*two ways in which [the Marines] could be withdrawn. One of them would be if we achieve our goal; the second...would be if there was such a collapse in order that...there would be no reason for them to stay...*'<sup>128</sup> Observers interpreted these words for what they were: a recognition of failure and a preparation to leave. French diplomats asked ironically if '*the ongoing firing by Syrian anti-aircraft systems at American warplanes and the unwavering determination that it expresses despite the intervention of the "formidable firepower of the U.S. Navy", have become better understood in the White House?*'<sup>129</sup> On the same day, Rumsfeld reminded that '*we are pursuing a strategy of "leaning somewhat forward" ...it would be useful to develop an action plan keyed to the political-military negotiating requirements...so that appropriate pressure can be put on the Syrians...It would be in Syria's best interest to settle for less ambitious goals...*'. He suggested several coercive diplomatic actions, ranging from daily exercises of the fleet in Lebanon to '*a training exercise that would involve flying B-52 bombers from the States to the Eastern Mediterranean with communications and coordination of air*

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<sup>127</sup> *As-Safir*, December 6, 1983.

<sup>128</sup> NYT, December 15, 1983.

<sup>129</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Washington to Quai d'Orsay, December 14, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-LIBAN, LA-III-C-1, AD.

*activity with CTF 60 [Sixth Fleet] ...*.<sup>130</sup> This readiness to use force was materialised on the very same day. Swiftly responding to new firing on TARPS as if the latter had become baits for further applications of force, and a few hours before Reagan's declaration of withdrawal, the *New Jersey* opened fire for the first time since Vietnam, targeting Syrian anti-aircraft positions. The battleship unleashed eleven sixteen-inch shells over ten minutes, while the destroyer *Tattnall* and the cruiser *Ticonderoga* lobbed sixty-five five-inch shells.<sup>131</sup> In his diaries Reagan wrote that *'The New Jersey finally did it! ...All of Beirut thought there was an earthquake'*.<sup>132</sup>

The earthquake was political as much as military. The Syrians first tried to absorb the shock, with a military spokesman reporting about the shelling of *'our forces'* by *'American battleships [sic] anchored West of Beirut'*, without naming the *New Jersey*.<sup>133</sup> *Al-Baath* noted the qualitative escalation, writing that *'America has started the naval war'* and adding that *'...through their air and naval aggression the [U.S.] are continuing their military pressures on Syria...Washington's real policy is that of the gunboat'*.<sup>134</sup> The next day, *Al-Thawra* finally named the *New Jersey* but said that *'she had hammered the nationalist forces [Syria's Lebanese proxies]'*.<sup>135</sup> One more day and the Syrians had broken the spell. A defiant editorial in *Tishreen* argued that *'Like America who grants itself the right to launch reconnaissance flights, Syria has also the right to conduct such operations above the American fleets.... It is our national duty to take out any American warship in a battle. They will take notice that Syria is not as an easy target as they imagine and that the New Jersey who brings us death will not be shielded from death.'*<sup>136</sup> In Lebanon, the Christian press underscored the pivotal nature of the event. *OLJ* titled *'A Fearsome Première...a spectacular confirmation of a new American policy of instant retaliation'*. But the journal was without illusions: *'New Jersey is less a military sledgehammer than a psychological and symbolic one...American policymakers first displayed it in order not to use it then, noting the failure of this vain ostentation, decided to threaten its use. It is now done. But not more than the threat, its implementation did not impress the*

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<sup>130</sup> Telegram from Rumsfeld to Secretary of State, December 14, 1983, Executive Secretariat, Country File, McFarlane Middle East Mission, Box44-45, RRL.

<sup>131</sup> *USS New Jersey*, Ship's Deck Log Sheet, December 14, 1983, NARA; NYT, December 15, 1983.

<sup>132</sup> Reagan, Ronald & Brinkley, Douglas, (Ed.), *The Reagan Diaries*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), p.205.

<sup>133</sup> *Tishreen*, December 15, 1983.

<sup>134</sup> *Al-Baath*, December 15, 1983.

<sup>135</sup> *Al-Thawra*, December 16, 1983.

<sup>136</sup> *Tishreen*, December 17, 1983.

*Syrians...So what? Do we now need a "Super New Jersey" or rather would salvation not be in Napoleon's famous "lover strategy", run away?'.<sup>137</sup>*

A devaluation of the battleship loomed. Worse, now that the spell has been broken and as the *New Jersey* had become the symbol of Western power projection in the Levant, devaluation threatened the whole Western construct in Lebanon. Even staunchly pro-GOL *Al-'Amal* lacked its usual enthusiasm, focusing rather on the lack of a clear American strategy as if the *New Jersey* had added a further layer of opacity to American behaviour. *Al-'Amal* wrote that *'one time, Lebanon is just another U.S. State; and then it becomes [only] an important country but where the "Syrians have legitimate interests"...even the terrorists who kill and maim Americans...are at a loss understanding the value of this naval armada.'*<sup>138</sup> Christian observers were able to discern the game at play. On the same day as the *New Jersey's* 'première', Rumsfeld was holding meetings in Damascus.<sup>139</sup> Picking up the news and playing on Arabic paronyms, *An-Nahar* wrote that *'The American-Syrian escalation has reached its apex with the terrorising (tar'ib) intervention of the New Jersey which was accompanied by an American wooing (targhib) with the arrival of Mr. Rumsfeld in Damascus'*.<sup>140</sup> For OLI, this is a *'surprising situation which witnesses diplomats and guns talking simultaneously and relies on rules that both parties seem to accept: it is understood that missiles will continue to be fired at any aircraft overflying Syrian positions in Lebanon; and it is also understood that American forces will retaliate immediately'*.<sup>141</sup> In an editorial ironically titled *'Thank you Reagan'*, *As-Safir* considered the *New Jersey's* intervention as a cover for Reagan's same-day withdrawal declaration, asking *'what is the meaning of the bombardment by the giant battleship...? And what is the meaning of that other 'bombardment' which was launched a few hours later by Reagan...? What is clear is that the two decisions came out from a single situation room, and that the two shells, even if New Jersey fired more than one, came out from the same cannon'*.<sup>142</sup>

But the limits of naval diplomacy 'short of war' were nearing, as *'The facts indicate that the [U.S.] and Syria are in a state of war...this is unprecedented in the Middle East since World*

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<sup>137</sup> OLI, December 15, 1983.

<sup>138</sup> *Al-'Amal*, December 23, 1983.

<sup>139</sup> *Al-Baath*, December 15, 1983.

<sup>140</sup> *An-Nahar*, December 15, 1983.

<sup>141</sup> OLI, December 17, 1983.

<sup>142</sup> *As-Safir*, December 15, 1983.



*War Two*'.<sup>143</sup> Naval diplomacy had degenerated into quasi-warfare, beyond Booth's '*standing demonstrations of naval power*', and anxiety grew in Western circles about the possible use by the Syrians of SS-21 land-attack missiles against the fleet.<sup>144</sup> The Sixth Fleet had been reinforced with the brand new *Ticonderoga*.<sup>145</sup> A '*psychosis of "kamikaze" planes*' developed with the Pentagon hurriedly equipping the warships with *Stinger* missiles.<sup>146</sup> The hit to Western prestige and credibility was significant, with observers wondering '*how the U.S. are going to help the GOL getting rid of the invaders, while the Marines are digging ever deeper trenches and the New Jersey & company are criss-crossing the Mediterranean for fear of being hit by an explosive-laden plane piloted by some fanatic*'.<sup>147</sup>

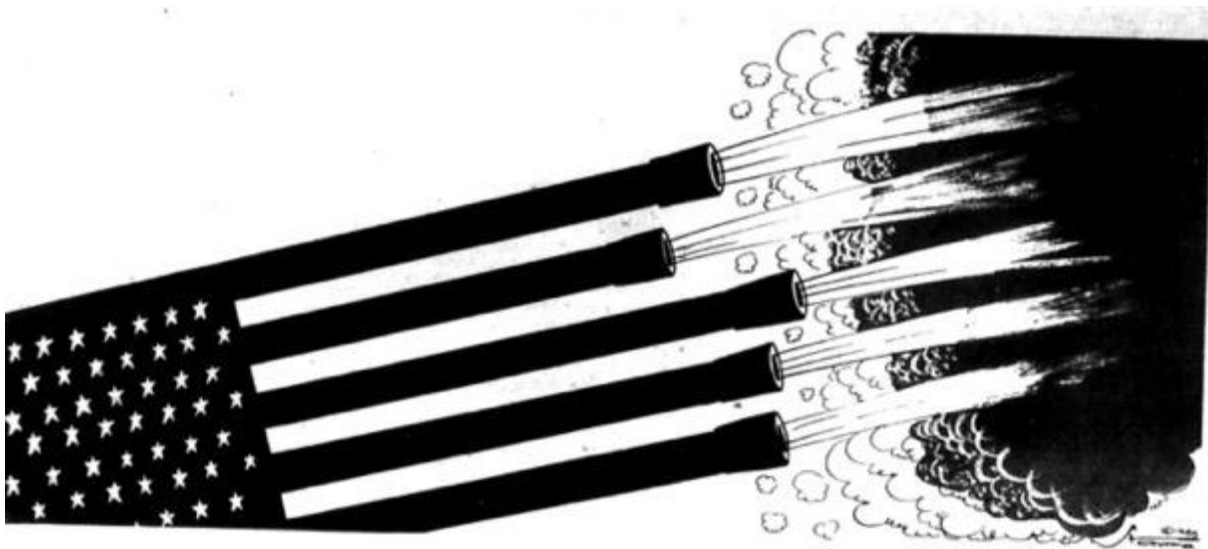


Figure 34 – Celebration of the first New Jersey Bombardment, *Le Réveil*, December 15, 1983.

The activation of the *New Jersey* brought additional arguments for a withdrawal of the Marines. A JCS memorandum transmitted to Reagan by Weinberger argued that '*we are nearing the point now where US military force can be brought to bear in a more effective way if all US forces... are offshore*', adding that '*We will need to keep naval air and gunfire support in the area and continue to remind the Syrians that we can and will intervene to support the GOL...*'<sup>148</sup> U.S. frustration with the Syrians grew as the latter stiffened their positions. Shultz admitted that '*Our long term goals...are not achievable in timeframe acceptable to U.S.*

<sup>143</sup> OJ, December 17, 1983.

<sup>144</sup> Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, pp.41-2.

<sup>145</sup> NYT, December 22, 1983; *As-Safir*, December 16, 1983.

<sup>146</sup> OJ, January 22, 1983.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, December 23, 1983.

<sup>148</sup> Memorandum from JCS to Secretary of Defense, December 29, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Near East and South Asia, Kuwait-Lebanon, Box41, RRL.

domestic opinion...Neither we or the Israelis are willing to use sufficient force to get Syrian withdrawal together with the implementation of the May 17 Agreement'.<sup>149</sup> Assad told Rumsfeld that 'Syria rejects the Agreement and will be the last to leave Lebanon'.<sup>150</sup> Rumsfeld wrote that 'I find it a bit degrading for the U.S. to continue to be jerked around indefinitely by the crowd that is marching with the Soviets...'<sup>151</sup> Assad's statements were immediately followed by a shelling of Marine positions which attracted swift retaliation from the New Jersey five-inch guns.<sup>152</sup> Amid a U.S. rollercoaster of conflicting declarations regarding the Marines staying or not, things came to a head in the early days of February 1984.<sup>153</sup>

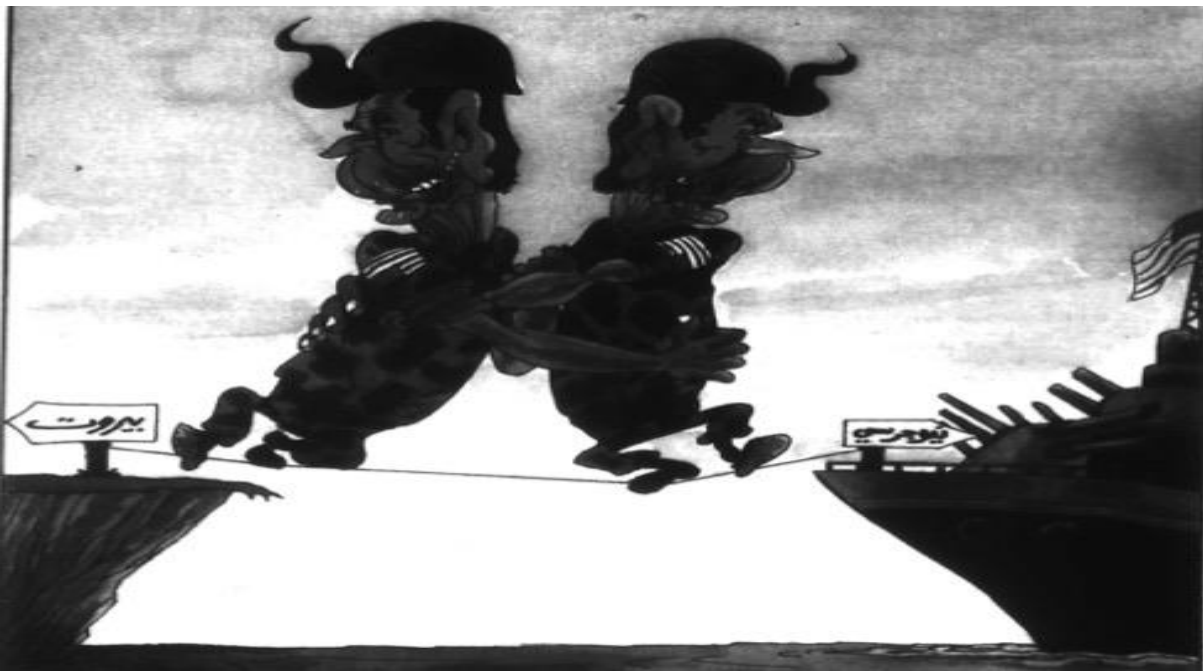


Figure 35 – Reagan on the tightrope between Beirut (staying) and the New Jersey (leaving), Al-Kifah Al-Arabi, January 1984.

Syria, her Druse and Shi'a proxies had started hammering GOL-Christian areas to prevent the LAF from launching an operation to close a strategic gap between the Shi'a-dominated southern suburbs of Beirut and the Druse-controlled hills. The GOL asked for U.S. (and Israeli) assistance, assuring it could deal with the militias but not with Syrian artillery.<sup>154</sup> To

<sup>149</sup> Telegram from Secretary of State to Donald Rumsfeld, December 28, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Rumsfeld Middle East Mission (November 1983-January 1984), Box46, RRL.

<sup>150</sup> *Le Réveil*, January 14, 1984.

<sup>151</sup> Telegram from Rumsfeld to Secretary of State, February 3, 1984, Executive Secretariat, Country File, McFarlane Middle East Mission, Box44-45, RRL.

<sup>152</sup> NYT, December 16, 1983.

<sup>153</sup> For the dizzying series of U.S. contradictory declarations, see NYT and *Le Réveil* over January 1984.

<sup>154</sup> Telegram from Rumsfeld to Eagleburger, February 3, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Rumsfeld Middle East Mission (November 1983-January 1984), Box46, RRL.

Rumsfeld's dismay, Washington's answer came negative. While opposing the GOL's determination to close the gap militarily, advocating instead a list of unrealistic political initiatives, the Pentagon rejected Israeli and GOL's suggestions that the U.S. extend a '*military umbrella*' above the Greater Beirut area to protect it from Syrian artillery fire.<sup>155</sup> On February 1, NSDD 123 was issued. Reassuringly, it gave '*authority...for U.S. naval forces to provide naval gunfire and air support against any units in Syrian-controlled territory firing into Greater Beirut*'. But it also started the '*phase down of USMNF military personnel ashore and a plan for the continuing U.S. military presence offshore*'.<sup>156</sup> By establishing an exclusive reliance on coercive naval diplomacy, the U.S. was finally admitting that the small contingent ashore had '*distorted the relationship [with the reality of the military situation] because of Congressional concern*'.<sup>157</sup> McFarlane, now NSC Advisor, pressured Rumsfeld to announce to Gemayel the drawdown of the Marines, adding that '*...the situation on the Hill is explosive. We need to act before Congress confronts us with a very restrictive resolution...*'.<sup>158</sup> But events were moving fast. On February 6, Shi'a, Druse, and various Muslim militias swept the LAF from West Beirut under the cover of a Syrian artillery barrage, threatening to topple the GOL.

The GOL's despair grew following Reagan's announcement the next day of the phased withdrawal of the Marines. In several dramatic meetings with Rumsfeld and his team in the shelter of a bombed-out Presidential palace and amid pools of blood from fallen LAF soldiers, the GOL literally begged for U.S. direct support and for the drawing by naval and air power of a red line around GOL-Christian areas, even beyond Greater Beirut. Salem hit out at U.S. naval diplomacy, saying that the U.S. is '*using nineteenth century diplomatic language and we need a simpler formula*'.<sup>159</sup> Rumsfeld admitted the failure of U.S. naval diplomacy, that the '*U.S. had not had success in dealing with Syria. U.S. has done some experimenting militarily that hadn't worked, and that ultimately there would have to be some balance in the region*',

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<sup>155</sup> Telegram from Secretary of State to Donald Rumsfeld, February 2, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Rumsfeld Middle East Mission (November 1983-January 1984), Box46, RR; Telegram from Secretary of State to Donald Rumsfeld, December 27, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Near East and South Asia, Lebanon, Box43-44, RRL.

<sup>156</sup> NSDD-123, February 1, 1984, NSDD Digitised Copies, RRL.

<sup>157</sup> Telegram from Donald Rumsfeld to Secretary of State, February 7, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Lebanon (2/7/1984), Box44, RRL.

<sup>158</sup> Telegram from McFarlane to Rumsfeld, February 4, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Lebanon (2/4/1984), Box 44, RRL.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Elie Salem; Telegram from Secretary of State to Embassy Beirut, February 5, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Rumsfeld Middle East Mission (January 1984-February 1984), Box46, RRL.

accepting that an onshore balancer, Soviet-backed Syria, checks the Western naval power projection.<sup>160</sup> The *'simpler formula'* the GOL wanted was *'something spectacular...the use of air attacks...rather than naval gunfire, because their view is that the latter has not been sufficiently accurate to destroy targets...Our advice has been for a return fire...which destroys rather than simply silencing fire...'*<sup>161</sup> What the GOL wanted was 'expeditionary' force and not the 'niceties' of naval diplomacy. They were waging a war and expected a warlike assistance. These discussions reveal the difficulty in optimising the use of force in naval diplomacy while keeping it under the threshold of the act of war. They raise the question of the limits of naval diplomacy in an active war zone. What does remain of it when its use of force is just one kinetic action among hundreds of others? They also reveal the difficulty in managing allies' expectations in that the use of a non-warlike naval force which 'silences' instead of 'destroying' was interpreted by the GOL as a lack of effectiveness of naval fire, contributing to shape the local perceptions of the performance and credibility of U.S. naval power. Four days after the beginning of the Syrian-led onslaught, Rumsfeld expressed his frustration writing that *'the political/military situation on the ground does not seem to fit within the military capability of our forces; our military ROE does not mesh with the political situation'*.<sup>162</sup> Lamenting the silence of the *New Jersey*, he insisted that *'something urgently was needed to stop the [LAF] soldiers from feeling that the U.S. had abandoned them'*, adding ominously, that *'Now there is a direct serious threat to the people including the Christian areas'*. But then *'The phone rang...the US Navy was going to open naval gunfire in response to firing every ten minutes.'*<sup>163</sup>

On February 8, under the provisions of NSDD 123, the *New Jersey* unleashed a nine-hour barrage against Syrian-controlled artillery positions. The battleship fired 250 sixteen-inch shells while the destroyer *Caron* lobbed 300 five-inch shells.<sup>164</sup> The naval fire *'silenced'* the attacking artillery, *'estimated at 500-600 guns.'*<sup>165</sup> For Lehman, at least eight Syrian

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<sup>160</sup> Telegram from Rumsfeld to the Secretary of State, February 7, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Lebanon (2/7/1984), Box44, RRL.

<sup>161</sup> Telegram from Rumsfeld to General Rogers, USCINCEUR, February 8, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Near East and South Asia, Rumsfeld-Saudi Arabia, Box 138, RRL.

<sup>162</sup> Telegram from Rumsfeld to Secretary of State, February 7, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Near East and South Asia, Rumsfeld-Saudi Arabia, Box 138, RRL.

<sup>163</sup> Situation Report, Rumsfeld to White House Situation Room, February 8, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File: Near East and South Asia, Rumsfeld-Saudi Arabia, Box 138, RRL.

<sup>164</sup> NYT, February 9, 1984.

<sup>165</sup> OJ, February 9, 1984.

'artillery battalions' were destroyed.<sup>166</sup> *Al-'Amal* titled that 'thirty-four artillery positions were transformed into wells...and the [Druse] have mutinied and fled howling and moaning'.<sup>167</sup> While people in Christian East Beirut declared that 'were not for the New Jersey, we would be dead by now', the White House reported that 'Gemayel and the Christian community have been encouraged by US naval gunfire...[They] hope that massive US or Israeli intervention will prevent further gains by the Druze and Muslims'.<sup>168</sup> This traditional, 1860-sounding Christian perception of Western naval interventions was balanced by the one expressed by the other, non-Christian communities. For the Druse, 'it was now clear that the Marines' mission is to support...a fanatic Phalangist party', denouncing the 'savage bombardment' which resulted in heavy civilian losses and 'the destruction of the homes of innocent citizens...not one house has been left standing...'.<sup>169</sup> A Druse village, Tebyat, was allegedly razed by the 'New Jersey civilisation'.<sup>170</sup> In an editorial titled 'Goodbye America', *As-Safir* wrote that the naval fire came to balance the Marines' pull-out, adding that 'The Marines came...to train us in obedience...they came with the democracy of bombardment and that of the New Jersey'.<sup>171</sup> For Gemayel, the bombardment was a 'farewell salvo', a reading shared by Pakradouni who spoke of a 'parting gift'.<sup>172</sup> To both men, the red line requested by the GOL was replaced by a noisy 'signalling' to Syria. A fact acknowledged by Shultz who added that the U.S. would not go 'beyond a reasonable amount of shelling'.<sup>173</sup> But the clarity of naval diplomacy was again affected by a short conflict which developed between Lehman and the rest of the administration, with the former declaring that the bombardment came in support of the LAF and the White House spokesperson publicly correcting him by stressing that it came 'in support of the Marines'.<sup>174</sup> Not only did the spokesman's statement contradict the White House Situation Room document mentioned above, but Lehman maintains his version to this day, saying that the 'New Jersey intervened as a guarantee for the Christians'.<sup>175</sup> For another

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<sup>166</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>167</sup> *Al-'Amal*, February 9, 1984.

<sup>168</sup> OIJ, February 10, 1983; White House Situation Room Report, February 11, 1984, Crisis Management Centre, NSC Records, 1981-84, RAC Box 8, RRL.

<sup>169</sup> *As-Safir*, February 10, 1984.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, February 14, 1984.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, February 9, 1984.

<sup>172</sup> Interviews with Amine Gemayel and Karim Pakradouni.

<sup>173</sup> NYT, February 10, 1984.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, February 16, 1984.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

U.S. source, the bombardment only aimed at stopping the shelling of highly symbolic targets, namely the Lebanese Presidency and DOD (where U.S. advisors were present) as well as the American ambassador's residence, and were neither a 'parting gift' nor a 'red line'.<sup>176</sup> The confusion about the messaging shows how local perceptions, exacerbated by the contradictions in U.S. declarations, reinterpreted the bombardment through the filters of collective memories and expectations. Even if the West was packing and abandoning them, even if the naval bombardment was strictly circumscribed in its objectives, the Christians still refused to believe that they were being left alone. The *New Jersey* saved their lives and they saw in its sixteen-inch shells the 'red line' they hoped for and a 'parting gift' – an emotionally and positively-charged concept. The red line requested by the GOL and rejected by the administration was granted 'synthetically' through the violent use of a 'superior ship'.<sup>177</sup> Intentionally or not, it compelled the Syrians to stop their shelling of civilian areas and deterred them from invading, directly or through their Muslim proxies, the GOL-Christian zone. Moreover, in his last meeting with Rumsfeld, Gemayel said that "*if you pull out the Marines, that will mean that you are quitting because you can't stand the heat, and I'll have to make an arrangement with Syria or I'll die*".<sup>178</sup> For Gemayel, the gunfire provided a breathing space before he 'capitulated' after the Marines' withdrawal. It also covered the redeployment of the Marines to their ships. But this action had also an undeniable expressive dimension as it displayed the U.S. powerless rage at what has become a blatant strategic failure.

The GOL's doubts about the accuracy of naval fire and the conflict about its diplomatic meaning merged with the confusion about the real effects of the *New Jersey's* bombardment, producing a strange narrative which mixed an American-centred conflict opposing the Navy to the other services with Lebanese perceptions of naval diplomacy in the wake of the U.S. retreat from Lebanon. The case of the accuracy, even the reality, of the *New Jersey's* firing is key in understanding how the synergy between multiple unrelated factors shape the perceptions of naval diplomacy. As discussed, there were already lingering doubts in U.S. military circles about the ability of the *New Jersey* to deliver precision fire like the surgical strikes executed by the *A-6 Intruders* and *A-7 Corsairs* during the air raid of December 4,

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<sup>176</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Dur.

<sup>177</sup> Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p.102.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Dur.

doubts which were fought by Lehman. Following the February 8 bombardment, it was *'impossible to get a precise idea of the targets hit by the shelling'*, with sources speaking of twelve civilians killed, while the Druse alleged that one hundred civilians were killed without any military target being hit.<sup>179</sup> A Syrian military spokesman pretended that *'dozens of civilians had been killed and wounded...but no Syrian soldier has been hit'*, belying the Pentagon's announcement of the destruction of the Syrian military headquarters in Lebanon.<sup>180</sup> One day after the bombardment, foreign reporters toured one of the Druse-controlled areas where the naval fire had allegedly razed civilian dwellings, and noticed *'less damage than reported'*. They were incapable of ascertaining Druse claims as *'many batteries are mobile'*, meaning that the naval fire could have been directed at them - as the habit of positioning artillery amid civilian areas was widespread. Moreover, the journalists reported shells hitting a town in the Beqaa valley situated at barely twenty kilometres from the Syrian border, vindicating Lehman's claims ever since the December raid that the *New Jersey* could have taken out even the artillery located beyond the Mount Lebanon range.<sup>181</sup>

But the debate about the accuracy of the *New Jersey's* fire went further when according to Lehman, a CBS-News crew interviewed a Syrian officer who naturally claimed that the Syrian army suffered no losses. In the U.S., journalist Dan Rather uncritically reported this declaration, consecrating the narrative that the *New Jersey* was inefficient.<sup>182</sup> Navy circles recognised a problem in accuracy and attributed it to two factors. According to Rear Admiral Dur, *'The first was that the DOD did not want to put spotters on the ground or in the air; the second was the bad ammunition whose burning rate was problematic because the old computers in the fire control system did not factor in the age of the powder'*. Dur, who had previously suggested equipping the Marines onshore with FASTABs, added that *'with a spotter, the battleship's fire would have been adjusted. But this would have meant more commitment than the chain-of-command wanted to see. Hence, the firing was unadjusted and went in the general direction from where the Syrian fire came'*.<sup>183</sup> Lehman confirmed this analysis, saying that *'the weather was terrible and no spotter available. When the first salvo is fired, you are never sure where it's going to land, "if it is hitting the right island", because of*

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<sup>179</sup> OJ, February 10, 1984.

<sup>180</sup> *Al-Baath*, February 9, 1984; *As-Safir*, February 11, 1984.

<sup>181</sup> NYT, February 11, 1984; Interview with John Lehman; Lehman, *Command of the Sea*, p.320.

<sup>182</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Dur.

*the atmospheric of the jet stream at 32,000 feet. With a spotter, accuracy is down to 150 feet.* Later Lehman had ten *Pioneer* drones bought from Israel to equip the battleship with spotters.<sup>184</sup> What also added an element of mystery to the whole story is that the TARPs, that could have scouted the bombarded area for damage assessment, were discontinued by EUCOM after the shelling without explanation.<sup>185</sup>

Another layer of confusion was brought by the issue of the delegation of firing. According to NSDD 111, 117, and 123 the self-defence of Marines and the TARPs placed the decision to fire back with the Marines commander onshore. But this was the theory. Dur recalls the dramatic February 8 meeting in Gemayel's bunker. *'Shells clearly hit the Palace and were falling around the [U.S. ambassador] residence'*. Dur called the Marines commander and asked *'why we were not returning fire as per NSDD 123? The Marines commander went to the Sixth Fleet commander, who went to CINCNAVEUR, who went to USCINCEUR in Stuttgart to get permission to return fire. The New Jersey began firing almost two hours after the original call'*. Dur added that *'maybe the man in Stuttgart called the JCS who called Weinberger...'*<sup>186</sup> Worse, for Schultz, *'the orders issued by the President were not the orders received or implemented by commanders at the point of battle'*, as at each layer *'risk assessment created a bias against action'*.<sup>187</sup> This was well noted by Gemayel who considered *'that officers' hesitations took away most of the effects intended by Reagan'*.<sup>188</sup> Mixed with the local proclivity for conspiracy theories, disappointment with U.S. policies, and loss of trust in America, all these elements produced the Lebanese side of the 'inaccuracy narrative'. Replicating the 'imaginary' targets of Suq El-Gharb, allegations that the *New Jersey* had fired blank shells spread, with the populace minting the word '*New JersA*' (*jersa* refers to the notion of shaming ridicule in Lebanese idiom) to mockingly designate the battleship. Even the Druse leadership who initially spread the news of massive civilian losses, begging the French to intervene and stop the bombardment, indulged in this narrative, alleging that *'most of the shells were blank'*.<sup>189</sup> Rational leaders such as Pakradouni said that *'nothing happened. Too*

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<sup>184</sup> Interview with John Lehman.

<sup>185</sup> Lehman, *Command of the Seas*, p.327.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Rear Admiral Dur.

<sup>187</sup> Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.228.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Marwan Hamadé; see also the meeting of the same Hamadé with the French Embassy, asking for France's intervention to stop the shelling in Telegram from Embassy Beirut to Quai d'Orsay, February 8, 1984, 0047-SUP, ANMO-LIBAN, LA-I-2-4, 1983-89, AD.



*much ado about nothing*'.<sup>190</sup> Gemayel was the most critical, repeating that '*the battleship's impact was zero, without a single victim. We do not even know if they shot live ammunition or intentionally aimed at empty areas...Jumblatt was laughing* [which again contradicts Druse complaints]'.<sup>191</sup> Even a military leader such as Abou-Nader recalled his entourage saying that the Americans were '*digging tennis courts and football fields for Jumblatt; these were declaratory shells*'.<sup>192</sup>

Hence, instead of shaping perceptions, an imaginary naval diplomacy was 'shaped' by a compendium of factors, some purely technical, others political and psychological. The result was that with the *New Jersey*, the whole U.S. strategy and prestige were devalued: With the Christians who felt abandoned; and with their foes who ridiculed a powerless Superpower. Naval diplomacy fell victim to the perverse effects of the capital ship. In the eyes of onshore observers, the latter subsumes the rest of the fleet but also, its country's diplomacy of power. Any perceived failure of the capital ship will become his country's failure. Conversely, the capital ship will carry all the setbacks and 'sins' of its nation.

The naval bombardment continued until the last days of February and the final re-embarkation of the Marines. It was always a retaliatory bombardment and never a pre-emptive action, a fact bitterly denounced by GOL and Christian circles. For them, MNF2 failed because, from the beginning, '*...[it] limited itself to retaliate to fire hitting it, as if the security of [Beirut] was not its concern...it was only when the situation neared quasi-genocide that, fearing criminal complicity, the West decided to intervene but calibrated its response, still refraining from preventive action...*'.<sup>193</sup> The departure of the Marines was accompanied by the pull-out of the Italian contingent and preceded by the discreet exit of BRITFORLEB on February 8. As for the French, they remained in Beirut until the second half of March 1984.

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<sup>190</sup> Interview with Karim Pakradouni.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Fouad Abou-Nader.

<sup>193</sup> OJ, February 15, 1984.



Figure 36 – Playing on the Lebanese pronunciation of the word Druse (Dursey): America strangles Jumbatt saying to him: “If you are an old Dursey, I am a New Jersey”, *Le Réveil*, February 9, 1984.

For the Christians, the failure of MNF2 ended the cycle of Western ‘protective’ naval interventions commenced in the nineteenth century. The Eastern Question was temporarily resolved in favour of the Muslim majority. The Christian press reports about the Marines’ withdrawal were full of photographs and nostalgia. ‘*The Star-Spangled banner does not float anymore over Beirut*’.<sup>194</sup> *An-Nahar* titled a page displaying pictures of Marines and their equipment with the carefully chosen words ‘*On the Path of the Crusades*’, explaining that the bunker system built by the Marines were ‘*the most sophisticated fortifications built in Lebanon since the Crusades*’.<sup>195</sup> A few days later, on the same fortifications, stood a Muslim reporter from *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi*. He wrote ‘*Oh God! how elating is this visit...I stand on their bunkers, empty and silent like graves...On the ruins of their barracks which were ... shattered by the action of our suicide martyrs, heroes of our people...*’. He then reflected that ‘*...the ugly American is still in view...he is in his fleet, off...Beirut, reeling from hatred for this little people who has forced him to return to the sea...We must get rid of the view of these warships...*’.<sup>196</sup> A bitter disappointment with the West became widespread among the Christians, but also among several Muslims, essentially conservative moderate Sunnis. The Christian mental delinkage with the West occurred during the massacres of the ‘Battle of the Mountain’, a remake of those of 1860. But if then a European naval intervention came explicitly to ‘save them’, in 1982 four NATO ‘Christian’ powers stood passively while the killings unfolded.<sup>197</sup> The Christian leadership had tried to adapt its perception of Western naval diplomacy to the conditions of the Cold War. ‘*As Christians, we avoided mixing religion and politics. We*

<sup>194</sup> OJ, February 26, 1984.

<sup>195</sup> *An-Nahar*, February 25, 1984.

<sup>196</sup> *Al-Kifah Al-Arabi*, March 1984.

<sup>197</sup> See for example article in *Le Réveil* of September 17, 1983, titled ‘Lebanon’s Western Sickness’ & OJ, February 20, 1984.

*identified with values. We thought that the West had an interest in preserving these values in the East. But we were wrong*'.<sup>198</sup> It had no other choice but to stick to the U.S. option until the very last moment. As late as January 1984, responding to critics from ministers in the GOL about U.S. policy, Salem snapped back saying '*Were it not for the New Jersey, you wouldn't be meeting here today*'.<sup>199</sup> During the dramatic days of February 1984, Rumsfeld reported Gemayel saying: '*I have only one wish, one desire, I am for you. I will serve the US policy to the end*'.<sup>200</sup> This lack of alternatives slowed the drift towards total estrangement from the West. The Christian leadership tried to remain realist. Despite his sceptical attitude regarding the reality of the U.S. use of force, Gemayel wrapped up the Christian leadership final perception of naval diplomacy by saying that:

*'We cannot say that U.S. naval diplomacy was a total failure. They said to the Syrians "here are your limits". The whole thing was not "junk". The message was "beware don't abuse, don't embarrass us". The armada had to be useful for something. Therefore, we cannot say it wasn't efficient. It is the image of the bottle half-empty because Lebanon did not get what it wanted, and half-full because the naval force was ultimately deterrent...The Americans left because they were sure, thank also to intense backdoor diplomacy, that the others [Syrians] have understood. There was a new balance of power. And a last message from the U.S.: "We leave you alone now, but don't tempt the devil"'*.<sup>201</sup>

Summing up the Lebanese historic relationship with naval power the leader of the Shi'a Amal movement, Nabih Berry, analysed the difference in education, mentalities and references between Christians and Muslims. He concluded that '*their answers to the same question will be diametrically opposed. One will consider that President Chamoun acted as a hero when he called the Americans in 1958, the other will see him as a traitor. How do you want to build a country in these conditions?*'<sup>202</sup>

This chapter has shown how, in a short period, the West's most prized naval assets – carrier/naval air and the *New Jersey* – were 'spent' and devalued due to the combination of

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<sup>198</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>199</sup> *An-Nahar*, January 12, 1984.

<sup>200</sup> Telegram from Rumsfeld to George Shultz, February 7, 1984, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Near East and South Asia, Rumsfeld-Saudi Arabia, Box 46, RRL.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Amine Gemayel.

<sup>202</sup> OJ, February 12, 1984.

operational and political factors with increasingly entrenched local perceptions of a powerless and deceptive naval power. The intervention of the *New Jersey* crystallized on the battleship the new configuration of local perceptions where the Syrian camp was joined by its Christian/GOL opponents in sharing – for different reasons - the narrative of ‘fake’ bombardments with ‘blank’ shells. The West’s lack of resolve translated in an unfavourable balance of relative interests, violating one of the key principles of coercive diplomacy.<sup>203</sup> As a result, its kinetic attempts to establish a new *status quo* and shift the unfavourable position of challenger to the Syrian camp were doomed. Despite the immediate sense of failure, the unfolding outcomes of the MNF operation revealed a more complex reality, defying any simplistic approach to its effectiveness. Nevertheless, the MNF episode momentarily closed the Eastern Question and would remain the last significant coercive naval diplomacy action in the Levant to this day.



Figure 37 – Betting on the West: Suffering Lebanon Shares the Values of the West, *Le Réveil*, November 24, 1983.

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<sup>203</sup> George et al., *The Limits*, pp.216-228.

## Chapter IX – Conclusion

Based on the assessment of the interactions between historical perceptions of naval power and its employment in the Levant during the Cold War, we define naval diplomacy as:

*the use of maritime assets as instruments of political dialogue, in an implicit or explicit coercive mode, to tentatively manage the expectations and manipulate the perceptions of state and non-state actors to achieve tactical and strategic objectives.*

The thesis has demonstrated the centrality of Luttwak's concept of *suasion* through the key role of perceptions. As products of the postmemories of traumatic historical events and of subjective reconstructions of the past, the perceptions Lebanese and Levantines developed of foreign navies were characterised by an emotional and irrational dimension which created a specific mental framework for the employment of coercive naval diplomacy. In such a context where signals can be involuntarily or consciously misconstrued, the effectiveness of naval diplomacy must be questioned, and the interpretation of its results becomes hazardous. As discussed in Chapter 2, the effectiveness issue has been explored and tentatively measured by scholars. This thesis follows Le Mière's position that each naval diplomatic event is unique and that attempts to extract predictive patterns and 'principles' out of samples of varying sizes and intelligibility are hazardous enterprises. Excluding the detailed, though narrow, case studies included in Blechman & Kaplan and in George et al., most works concerning the effectiveness of naval diplomacy suffer from a superficial understanding of the individual events. The holistic model of naval diplomacy developed by Rowlands is a counterpoint to these attempts. By showing the multiplicity of messages and stakeholders and their feedback effects, it makes the comprehensive understanding of a particular event particularly elusive but still a *sine qua non* for the evaluation of its results. The model infers that a particular incident can show a 'failure' in terms of immediate coercive tactical achievements but 'success' in terms of the medium and long-term effects of such 'amity' actions as military cooperation or humanitarian action. Time – implicitly built in Rowlands' model - is indeed a primary parameter in evaluating the effectiveness of naval diplomacy. What is considered an abject failure such as the MNF experience in Lebanon appears, with hindsight, more ambiguous in its results. The 'red line' imposed on the Syrians took hold for several years

before being erased following geopolitical shifts of historic proportions – the fall of the U.S.S.R. and the First Gulf War. As Gemayel expressed it, naval diplomacy was a *'bottle half-full because the naval force was ultimately deterrent'*. The regional state system was preserved, probably the primary long-term objective of both Superpowers, as the Lebanese convulsions threatened to 'balkanise' the delicate construct of the Levantine nation-states. For the U.S. domestic stakeholders, the 'noise' of *New Jersey's* guns successfully transformed the Marines retreat into a 'dignified' withdrawal, alleviating its impact on the presidential election which Reagan ultimately won. U.S. military cooperation with the LAF, akin to nation-building, led to deepened ties with this key institution which continue to this day and are the bedrock of the U.S.-Lebanese relationship facing Iran's Hezbollah.

Time/hindsight help also to test the validity of the widely accepted judgement that the 1958 landing was a success. If its primary strategic motive was to thwart further Nasserist gains, reach a compromise with Nasser, and keep the Soviets at bay, then the results were positive over the next decade. Indeed, Siegel's data base reveals a drastic fall in the use of U.S. naval forces in the Levant between 1959 and 1967, indicating that the 1958 defined *status quo* took hold before being uprooted by the June 1967 War and the emergence of the Eskadra. The landing itself and its immediate aftermath deployed an array of hard and soft power. U.S. political, economic and cultural influence in Lebanon – the region's financial and intellectual hub – spread thanks to calibrated soft power actions such as U.S. Aid grants of grain, a spending spree by Marines on liberty, regular visits by the Sixth Fleet, and a strengthening of American corporate and educational interests. America progressively dethroned France in Lebanese Christian mindset and the American University of Beirut became the educational hub for the regional elites. However, the 1958 operation failed to address the historical roots of the Lebanese problem which would ultimately lead to the devastations of 1975-90 and to the 'ill-fated' MNF. But even this aspect could hardly be considered a failure. If, according to Cable, success or failure are relative to intentions then there is no indication that Eisenhower ever intended to solve centuries of accumulated sectarian prejudices.

The role of soft power and 'amity' actions in measuring the effectiveness of two Cold War naval diplomacy events in Lebanon also shows that there is no neat distinction between an overwhelmingly coercive Cold War naval diplomacy and a dominantly cooperative post-Cold War/post-modern one. The Cold War's essentially coercive context relegated, in the perceptions of the global public, cooperative naval actions to the backstage. But as discussed,

they had been recognised as a category of naval diplomacy by Martin, Turner, and Booth. As illustrated by Lebanon, cooperative actions were facilitated when an amphibious element was involved. In 1958, the Marines fanned across Christian areas to provide reassurance and test the attraction of American prestige. Hard and soft power were intermingled in the evacuation of the PLO elements from Beirut in August 1982 – its humanitarian dimension managing Arab sensitivities and its military-political one satisfying Christian and Israeli demands. The same mix was repeated with MNF2 after the killings in the refugee camps: protect the latter while supporting the re-building of Lebanese sovereignty, itself a mixed hard-soft endeavour. The Italian contingent focused on providing healthcare to the Palestinian refugees while French troops on leave roamed restaurants and bars in Christian East-Beirut to reassure and win (back) hearts and minds. In parallel, the Hautecoeur mission, which was celebrated with a cocktail on a French frigate, brought financing for francophone educational institutions. Cooperative actions were also executed even when the amphibious projection was lacking. In September 1970, while the Sixth Fleet signalled its poise to Syria, the U.S. deployed a field hospital in Amman to cater for Jordanian wounded, civilians and military.<sup>1</sup> And in 1990, reacting to a new Syrian artillery onslaught on Lebanese Christian areas, France sent a hospital ship escorted by the *Foch* CTF to simultaneously signal to Syria its displeasure and send calibrated reassurances to the Lebanese with the hospital ship collecting wounded civilians.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, naval diplomacy in the Levant faced several issues that circumscribed its action and defined its limits; the nature of the theatre, its cultural and political characteristics, and strategic and operational inconsistencies.

## **The Nature and Structure of the Theatre**

Throughout the Arab-Israeli wars, the Powers generally stationed their respective fleets at some distance from the theatre of operations.

In the two Lebanese episodes, naval power was projected ashore *inside* war zones. If in 1958 nobody dared calling America's bluff, this was not the case in 1982-84. Then, naval power was sucked into a confrontation with a land power consisting in the SAA and its Palestinian and Lebanese proxies. They were reinforced by the Soviet Union which, by

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<sup>1</sup> FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol.XXIV, Doc.332.

<sup>2</sup> Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Meilleur*, pp.120-2.

supplying Syria with the latest weapons systems, sending thousands of advisors to man them, had shifted its efforts landward to check the Western naval presence. Indeed, the Eskadra had remained remarkably timid when the NATO armada deployed in late 1983, reflecting Soviet preference for indirect challenge through Syria than through a naval escalation reminiscent of October 1973. Thus, the West's adversaries had selected the continental theatre where Western presence was desperately weak and imposed their choice upon naval power. Moreover, this theatre was essentially a mountain - Mount Lebanon - a *massif* which historically symbolised resistance against the hinterland and openness to the sea. In a twisted replay of history, the mountain was transformed by Syria and its allies in a redoubt against the sea and an appendix to the hinterland. All the MNF drama revolved around the Battle of the Mountain, where the Levant's historic 'mountain' minorities fought against each other and against the West. The Eastern Question was recast in a tactical configuration disadvantageous to sea power. Even naval air in December 1983 had difficulty to adapt to the peculiar terrain where mobile artillery and SAM batteries could be concealed and dispersed in woods and bushes. And it could credibly be alleged, by Lebanese and Syrian propaganda, that the *New Jersey's* sixteen-inch shells dug tennis courts in the wilderness.

Coercive diplomacy ceased to be the monopoly of naval power. By shifting the theatre to the land, Assad succeeded in deploying his own coercive diplomacy, shrewdly calibrating the force applied by his troops or his proxies to remain short of war *vis-à-vis* the Western powers. The use of proxies provided Assad with the plausible deniability he needed to maintain the pressure under the threshold of outright war. His only - undeclared - war was against the GOL. But Assad's threshold, because he was the defender of the *status quo* and because his terrain was a mountain where he used proxies, was higher than the Western one. Therefore, it was U.S. naval diplomacy which dangerously drifted towards the 'upper limit' as domestic pressures and looming international complications pushed the administration into an expressive last stand designed to compensate for the strategic dead-end.

What further complicated the workings of coercive naval diplomacy in Lebanon was that it was exceptionally confronted with non-state actors, a development made possible by the amphibious projection. In 1958, the Muslim and Druse rebels remained in their urban and mountain sanctuaries, directing occasional and inefficient small arms fire at U.S. troops in Beirut or at naval air overflights. In 1982-84, the different pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian sectarian militias mounted heavy artillery-supported offensives against Suq-El-Gharb, the Shuf or West



Beirut, and pounded MNF positions, killing dozens of Western soldiers. On the Christian side, the LAF shared the front with the LF, another non-state actor *de facto* allied with the MNF. If diplomacy is chiefly a communication exercise between sovereign states, what would be the meaning and effect of coercive naval diplomacy applied to discreet sectarian groupings? Was naval power adapted for a type of warfare closer to counterinsurgency than to massive naval shelling rich in collateral damage? Complicating the matter is the fact that in the Levant, as in other parts of the developing world, non-state actors are not only found outside the state, but also in control of it for their own 'non-stately' interests. Indeed, confronting Syria was also confronting the ruthless survival logic of the Alawite community.

Therefore, from the terror attacks on the Marines and French Paras barracks in October 1983 to the artillery duels between the Druse and the *New Jersey*, emerged a naval diplomacy model where the disproportion of means was checked by the disproportion in relative interests. Indeed, the closer one gets to tightly-knit communities and to their fundamental beliefs, the higher the existential stakes for them, increasing their steadfastness in facing the might of the coercer and their unresponsiveness to its naval messaging. Under these conditions, where emotions and world visions based on collective memories of marginalisation and survival significantly determine political actions, the attempts to manipulate cognitive processes faces a wall of irrationality which generates its own distorted understanding of the coercive message.

Furthermore, naval diplomacy faced in Lebanon, but also in September 1970 Jordan, a multiplicity of parties with whom it had to engage simultaneously. Some of these stakeholders were only partially 'themselves' as they were proxies to others. In turn, the higher levels were also engaged in an influence dialectic. If the Druse to a degree executed Syrian wishes, Syria itself was under Soviet influence, but also the Druse who nurtured direct contacts with Moscow. Worse, the Druse cooperated also with Israel. Finally, the Soviets disagreed with some Syrian adventurist policies and had to establish tight control over the most politically sensitive weapons systems. These complex interactions made the impact of a particular coercive naval action applied on the Druse very difficult to evaluate as it irradiated among an array of different interests and political mentalities. How to interpret Jumblatt's defiance and his jihadi-type anti-Western phraseology? Did he believe in it? Was he asked/forced to speak and act the way he did by those who already killed his father? This type of questions, bordering on psychological micro-management, are at a distance from the classical concepts

of naval diplomacy which, as discussed, are essentially dualistic and state-centric, based on the Paretian assumption of pure rationality of the economic agent as applied to strategy and deterrence by Shelling.<sup>3</sup> The American readiness to provide Jumblatt with security guarantees and medical treatment in the U.S. for his sick toddler if he accepted a compromise with the GOL, indicates the level of detailed coordination between naval diplomacy (shelling Jumblatt's forces) and psycho-political management (protecting him and healing his toddler).

## **A Cultural Mismatch**

There was a structural discrepancy between the fundamentals of naval diplomacy and the understanding seapower-attuned Levantine audiences had of it. The former was coded to fit the contemporary global context and integrated concepts of deterrence and coercive diplomacy as well as theories of limited wars that did not always tally with the strategic priorities and emotional visions of history by Arab nationalism or by Christian minorities seeking guarantees in post-Ottoman Levant. Western naval power and Levantine audiences were not communicating properly because their strategic languages were different. Naval diplomacy as a communication exercise was therefore partially inaudible ashore.

In the Levant, two sets of cultural and political values, reflecting the region's naval inheritance from the Eastern Question, interacted with naval diplomacy. The first was the one built around Arab nationalism which adopted an ideological posture hostile to the West under the banner of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. Concentrating all the historic grievances of the Arab and Muslim Levant, this cultural camp adopted a systematically distorted view of the role and actions of Western naval power. Fuelled by the 1956 Suez crisis, it superimposed on an initially prudently sympathetic America all the negative attributes previously attached to British and French imperialism, crystallising them in the Sixth Fleet. Warships became convenient embodiments of a historical grief, their menacing awe symbolizing Western historical enmity better than any other medium. Conversely, Arab nationalism promoted an initially meagre Soviet naval power as its imaginary naval champion, a fleet-in-being which progressively became reality after 1967. The role of the Soviet Eskadra as a naval diplomatic instrument was inflated by the way local stakeholders *needed* to perceive it.

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<sup>3</sup> Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, p.130.

Arab nationalists built a stage on which a propaganda-scripted play opposed Western to Soviet naval power, diverting internal passions towards outside threats, real or invented. This maritime theatrical stage would not have been constructed had the Levantines not been sensitive to naval power as an ordering force. The distortions of reality contributed to shape an imaginary naval diplomacy where the Western fleets were irremediably the convenient villains on which the Arabs' own failures could be blamed. Hence, naval diplomacy as a communication process destined to influence and shape perceptions onshore, was itself framed and shaped by *a priori* perceptions of what Western naval power means or *should mean*: the colonialist (accessorily Christian) enemy.<sup>4</sup> Mobilising the masses against the 'Fleets', the *Asateel*, was an integral part of the Arab nationalist *modus operandi*, from Nasser to Assad. Instead of being objects of naval diplomacy, Arab nationalists became the odd players in the game, building their own virtual naval diplomacy and deploying it against their historic enemy.

The second cultural camp was the one relating to Christian minorities. Built around the concept of the defence of religious freedoms, its core strategic assumption was the alleged readiness, if not the 'duty', of Western Powers to protect these freedoms through the preservation of Lebanon whose very existence as a polity can be traced back to the 1860 intervention, making it literally a product of naval diplomacy. These expectations systematically exaggerated the Powers' 'obligation' for protection, inflated the geopolitical importance of Lebanon, and nurtured a stream of disillusion with naval diplomacy. In 1958, after seeking a compromise with the Nasserist-Muslim side, U.S. diplomacy disrupted the imaginary Christian link with the Eastern Question protective model. As a result, the Christian leadership developed a cynical view of Western protection hoping that the West, even if primarily motivated by regional concerns, would finally come to their rescue. Ordinary Christian citizens recalled the memories of past interventions and tended to believe in the West's ultimate benevolence.<sup>5</sup> A dynamic developed where any sign of support - deemed necessary to reassure the Christians, pave the way for ceasefire, negotiations, and compromises -, such as the NGFS in 1983-84, would stiffen Christian resistance to internal compromise, contributing to lengthening the war, in turn increasing the pressure on naval

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<sup>4</sup> Diplomacy and naval diplomacy as communication processes are analysed in Rowlands, *Naval Diplomacy*, pp 9 & 97-9.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Fouad Abou-Nader.

diplomacy to deliver a ceasefire. Simultaneously, if there was any intent on the part of the Western Powers of using their naval interventions as a message of comfort for Lebanese minorities, this message was devalued by the intended recipients growing scepticism which resulted from the Powers' convoluted onshore diplomacy throughout the Middle East.

Mirroring Arab nationalist distortions of naval diplomacy, a disappointed minorities block progressively transformed the historic image of Western naval power into one of impotence and deception. Naval deception was seen as the natural translation of Henry Kissinger's alleged *realpolitik* - the infamous and never proven 'Kissinger Plan' to redraw the borders of the Levant at Lebanon's expense – from which U.S. policy in 1982-84 was supposed to derive.<sup>6</sup> A Lebanese Christian-led narrative emerged where Western naval power, namely the U.S. Sixth Fleet, was worse than inefficient: fake. A centuries-old imagined friendly and protective naval diplomacy was displaced by one firing 'blank' shells at 'imaginary' targets.

For all Lebanese, leaders or populace, Christians or Muslims, Western interventions are necessarily naval in nature.<sup>7</sup> Disembarked U.S troops in 1958 were labelled the 'Fleet' or the 'Pirates' by the Nasserists insurgents while the MNF in 1982-84 was perceived by all Lebanese factions as being chiefly a naval expedition. Local perceptions established an organic symbiosis between troops ashore and warships offshore that went beyond the latter's supporting role and was confirmed by the special status of the Marines, the emblem of the Sixth Fleet which subsumed all the other 'fleets'. Both cultural camps shared a common view of the operational modalities of naval diplomacy. The latter had to be 'expeditionary' to be understood and taken seriously. Old-style gunboat diplomacy, as it applied in 1840 and 1860 in Lebanon, and in 1882 and 1956 in Egypt, was the dominant naval reference. The tropism was reinforced by the 1958 landing and by the MNF experience. No room was left for nuances. Warships movements and deployments choreographed to communicate messages and instigate suasion were interpreted through the unique angle of preparations for landing or for direct, massive power projection. If this misperception sometimes benefited the deploying naval power as it happened during the September 1970 Jordanian crisis when Syria feared an imminent U.S. intervention and pulled back its forces, it more often led to distortions and confusions. Indeed, the Sixth Fleet and Royal Navy presence off Crete during the June 1967

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<sup>6</sup> Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention* pp.1-5.

<sup>7</sup> All the Lebanese leaders interviewed by the author reacted identically to the same question.

War could only be justified by the fantasized naval airpower projection on June 5. Equally, the significant naval deployment off Beirut in 1983 had no meaning for most local observers if it was not to launch a large-scale attack on Syria and its allies. And the image of the mighty *New Jersey* was quickly downgraded in Levantine leadership circles because the U.S. insisted too much on the warship's psychologically deterrent value and on the hope of not having to use it. Deterrence, the Cold War dominant strategic concept, was not fashionable in the Levant.

### **The Distorting Role of the Amphibious Component**

The communication of intentions through naval power depended also on the presence of an amphibious element and on how it was structured and deployed. The main operational difference between the 1958 landing and the 1982-84 onshore presence was their respective size and posture. The coercive messaging is not the same when nearly 6,000 Marines were reinforced by 8,000 U.S. Army troops with armour and heavy artillery as in 1958, and when the four-nations MNF presence in 1982-84 amounted to only 4,000 relatively lightly armed soldiers with stringent defensive-only ROEs. However, the difference in perception is not only a function of quantities and pure kinetics. After all, in 1958 and 1982, both forces were supported by overwhelming naval surface and air assets. But for the third parties interpreting the data, the 1958 landing reflected a strategic poise and injected a strong dose of 'irrationality' and uncertainty about what the U.S. force would do next: would it invade U.A.R.-Syria and connect with the British coming up from Jordan to topple the new Iraqi Republic?<sup>8</sup> Would it crush the local Nasserist rebels? Or would it go against Egypt? Moreover, the size of the intervention and the political messaging around it fitted in a strategic vision where the U.S. was upholding Western vital interests in the preservation of the regional *status quo* against a Soviet-backed Nasserist challenger. The value of these aims for the West was at least as high as the ones attached by the Nasserists to the control of Lebanon and the preservation of the Iraqi revolution.

Conversely, in 1982, the West announced from the onset that its mission was a pure presence-peacekeeping operation, geographically limited to the Greater Beirut area and in time. No menacing uncertainty as to its aims, no strategic poise and commitment were communicated to the Syrian camp. Thus, from the onset, the West had defined against itself

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<sup>8</sup> The concept of irrationality in deterrence is developed by Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp.36-43.

an unfavourable balance of relative interests. As shown by Alexander George, the '*asymmetry of motivation*' must play in favour of the coercer.<sup>9</sup> The more pronounced the asymmetry of motivation is in favour of the coerced, the higher the '*enforcement costs*' for the coercer which, by construction, he will not be willing to incur.<sup>10</sup> This was the case as the West confronted adversaries whose interests in Lebanon were clearly existential. For Assad, it was essential to control Lebanon, not only for the fulfilment of the Greater Syria ideology, but also for the survival of his own regime and Alawite minority community. For the Soviet Union, Syria was the last available conduit for regional influence. For the Palestinian organisations, Lebanon was the last possible theatre of confrontation with Israel, a *sine qua non* for their strategic relevance. For the Lebanese Druse and Shiites, the war was the means to achieve political and social demands they considered critical. For them, opposing the Western fleets was a matter of historic revenge, for they accused them of having unjustly promoted Christian pre-eminence through their repeated interventions.

Moreover, if the West thought it benefited from the strategic advantage attributed to the upholder of the *status quo*, it was wrong because the real *status quo* was the one resulting from the chaos of seven years of Western neglect, and from which Syria, but also Israel, greatly benefited. Referring again to George, it is more difficult to compel a party to renounce hard-earned assets than to deter it from initiating his attack.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the asymmetry of motivation was further aggravated, and the West's unfavourable position as *de facto* challenger was translated in - and compounded by - the subdued nature of its onshore presence. U.S. naval kinetic escalation attempted to compensate for the rigidity of the land presence, but its impact was relative, succeeding only in defining a temporary red line for the Syrians not to trespass. Coercive naval diplomacy was submitted to the '*law of diminishing marginal credibility*' as the variable element - application of naval force - was increased while the others - strategic resolve manifested in the Marines ashore - remained fixed at low levels.<sup>12</sup> The application of coercive naval diplomacy inside an active war zone blurred the distinction between the ongoing fighting and the application of naval force. The latter became one belligerent among others, actor and victim of the escalatory spiral it came to prevent.

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<sup>9</sup> George, *Forceful Persuasion*, p.13.

<sup>10</sup> The expression '*enforcement costs*' is discussed in Freedman, *Strategic Coercion*, p.30.

<sup>11</sup> George et al., *The Limits*, p.23.

<sup>12</sup> The economics-derived concept of '*diminishing marginal credibility*' is developed by Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*, pp.78-9.

The sound of its guns was diluted in the general mayhem and their effects were lost in the fog of war.

The use of coercive naval diplomacy is intricately linked to the initiator's level of vital interest in the conflict he came to manage. The advantage of warships is that they could be engaged and retrieved without commitment. They are thus theoretically adapted to situations where the initiator has strong but no vital interests and could redeploy if things went further than tolerable. However, when an amphibious element is added, commitment is established and must be sustained or risk loss of prestige and credibility. In naval diplomacy, depending on the strategic and tactical configuration, amphibious projection could constitute a complicating, ambivalent element. It is the prime signifier of intent and commitment, a potential tripwire.<sup>13</sup> It could even be used to hide, momentarily, the absence of genuine vital interests or of strategic clarity. What saved the 1958 landing was probably its overwhelming size in relation to the kinetic intensity of the crisis ashore and, most importantly, to its duration. But had the landing been opposed, had the Lebanese war continued and the U.A.R. stiffened thanks to resolute and concrete Soviet support as would Syria do 25 years later, the display of such huge static and passive power would have also been submitted to the 'law of diminishing marginal credibility' as it was clear from the onset for the Eisenhower Administration that the troops were not sent to Lebanon to fight.

### **The Limits of 'Multilateral Naval Diplomacy'**

If one excludes the loose coordination between the Royal Navy and the Sixth Fleet prior to the 1958 landing and during the June 1967 war, naval diplomacy was predominantly executed by a single power which was able to (relatively) clearly communicate its intentions and produce the type and level of suasion it had planned. In 1958, the U.S. not only insisted on landing alone in Beirut, but in limiting British intervention to Jordan it cleared the naval theatre from any risk of complications that would have stemmed from Nasserist propaganda claiming a new Suez (which it anyway did, but with considerably reduced credibility) and that would have blurred the naval diplomatic message. The humiliation imposed on the French navy - forced into a stealthy one-night-only visit to Beirut - only reinforced this will to 'de-pollute' the naval messaging. The only exception to this pattern was the MNF. In it, four

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<sup>13</sup> The concepts of commitment and tripwire are discussed in Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp.47-8.

nations with different regional priorities and strategies gathered four navies with four cultures and practices of naval diplomacy. The only posture they shared was in pretending that their presence was justified by the protection of their troops ashore.

A structural absence of consistency at every level of planning and executing naval diplomacy contributed to seal the fate of the MNF. What would have happened if, instead of prevaricating, the DoD had participated in the French air raid in Baalbek in November 1983? Not only the kinetic effects would have been far more indisputable, but the link with the October bombings would have been blatant and so the retaliatory nature of the raid, an essential pre-condition for the credibility of the coalition. Conversely, how to interpret the different 'diplomatic' actions of the French navy when France's top diplomats allege that there was '*les bateaux*' but '*no French naval diplomacy*'?<sup>14</sup> Was it enough justifying France's largest and longest naval deployment since Suez - with the bulk of the *Escadre de Méditerranée* mobilised, and the rotations of its two carriers monopolised over four years - with the sole objective of protecting the French contingent?<sup>15</sup> The Lebanese press was at a loss connecting the carriers' rotations with France's declared aloofness from involvement in a 'civil war'. As a result, French naval initiatives suffered from the same deficit of intelligibility for which French diplomats publicly blamed the American naval actions.<sup>16</sup> French scepticism of U.S. coercive naval diplomacy was reproduced in internal documents mocking the Sixth Fleet's use of kinetic force.<sup>17</sup> Or what did the Italian naval presence have in common with the U.S. one? The former strictly interpreted its mission to 'protect' the Italian contingent ashore, a force chiefly involved in 'sanctuarising' the Palestinian refugee camps and their surroundings where it engaged in a predominantly humanitarian operation. Apart from a brief menacing closing on Beirut at the beginning of the battle of Suq El-Gharb, the Italian navy remained uninvolved, with Italian diplomacy repeatedly declaring its opposition to any involvement in a 'civil war'.

The latter element was the convenient excuse for the European members of MNF to hide behind a strictly defensive line. If there was any possibility to expand their original mission of protecting their troops ashore into a more proactively coercive one, it was buried

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Francis Gutmann.

<sup>15</sup> Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Meilleur*, pp.138-9.

<sup>16</sup> *Le Réveil*, September 20, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum from Embassy Washington to Quai d'Orsay, December 14, 1983, 0047-SUP, ANMO-LIBAN, LA-III-C-1, AD.



under the pretext of 'civil war'. Consequently, their navies lost the flexibility needed for naval diplomacy. Towards the Lebanese crisis, the European fleets privileged passive suasion. Even the French retaliatory strikes were construed as self-defence and excluded any support to the GOL and the LAF, and any unilateral act of coercion against Syria and its allies. As long as the MNF remained in its presence and catalytic phase, it was easy for the French navy to deploy a proactive naval diplomacy of 'champagne and canapés'. But when the Syrian-led onslaught begun, France's diplomatic priorities hindered the conversion of its navy into a full coercive instrument. Lastly, what sort of image did the MNF send to its foes when the Captain of the *Fearless*, a Royal Navy LPD sent in support of BRITFORLEB, declared that if *"I put my ship in sight of anti-government forces, it would be a provocation"*?<sup>18</sup>

Hence, not only did the MNF contributors publicly display their differences but the naval diplomacy of each of them remained opaque as much to its partners as to the local parties. The divergences between the MNF contributors as to the employment of force in support of diplomacy led to the isolation of U.S. naval diplomacy, a fact aggravated by the latter's extraordinary deployment of power, and to its loss of intelligibility and credibility in the eyes of the adversary. They contributed to deepening the 'asymmetry of motivation' and gave the Syrian-led camp *carte blanche* in its deployment of the 'civil war' narrative. They deprived the West of a coherent naval diplomacy and of the reactivity and the capacity to fine-tune, in concert, force levels and structures for a more efficient messaging of resolve and strategic consistency.

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<sup>18</sup> OJ, December 30, 1983.

## Appendix A

### The Lebanese and Arab Newspapers and Journals

The criteria that governed the selection of the following newspapers and journals were their status as recognized representatives of a government or political/ideological current/party; their reach; the relative quality of their editorials and reporting; and the accessibility of their archives.

#### Lebanese Arabic-Speaking Newspapers

Before the 1975-90 War, Lebanon was the Arab world's intellectual and publishing hub with dozens of publications and publishing houses benefiting from a quasi-total freedom of speech and writing unknown in the rest of the region.

***Al-'Amal (The Work)*** was founded in 1936 as the mouthpiece of the newly constituted Christian-based Lebanese Phalange Party (*Al-Kataeb* in Arabic). It reflected the party's centre-right, Christian-inspired social and economic vision as well as its staunchly patriotic stance opposed to transnational ideologies such as pan-Arabism and pan-Syrianism.

***Al-Kifah Al-Arabi (The Arab Struggle)*** was a weekly political magazine founded in 1958 as an Arab nationalist, pro-Nasserist publication. After the June 1967 War, it espoused the Palestinian struggle and naturally favoured the Palestinian then the Syrian-led camp during the 1975-90 War. The journal was unable to dismiss suspicions of PLO funding. It ceased publication in 2015.

***An-Nahar (The Day)*** was founded in 1936 along a moderate and centrist editorial line. Its Greek-Orthodox owners (the Tueini family) attempted to maintain a balanced approach between the more militant Maronites and their equally militant Muslim rivals. During the 1975-90 War, the journal adopted a pro-GOL stance critical of non-Lebanese meddling in the country's affairs – namely Syria, the Palestinians, and Israel.

***As-Safir (The Ambassador)*** was founded in 1974 and published by Talal Salman, a Druse left-leaning, Arab nationalist-sympathetic editor. The journal attempted to hold a left-of-centre position which was overwhelmed during the 1975-90 War by a strong pro-Palestinian and pro-Syrian reporting, and by a natural sympathy for Jumblatt's Druse-dominated PSP. The journal ceased to exist in 2017.

***Beirut Al-Massa (Beirut Evening)*** was founded in 1947. It represented Sunni-dominated Arab nationalists. It was one of the Nasserist opposition's main outlets during the 1958 crisis and remained faithful to its Nasserist agenda during the 1975-90 War, adopting a staunchly pro-Palestinian stance that led to suspicions of PLO funding.

***Sawt Al-'Uruba (The Voice of Arabism)*** was founded in 1937 as the mouthpiece of the newly created Sunni-dominated *Najjadeh* party. It naturally adopted the party's militant Arab

nationalist stance. Nasserist during the 1958 crisis, it was staunchly pro-Palestinian during the 1975-90 War and did not shy away from sectarian-tainted reporting.

## Lebanese Francophone Newspapers

*Le Réveil* was established in 1977 by Amine Gemayel, eldest son of the Phalange Party's founder Pierre, as support for his political ambitions. It started by translating in French the articles published in Arabic in *Al-'Amal*, then took a more independent line when Amine became President of the Republic in 1982. During the MNF presence in 1982-84, the journal adopted a pro-American stand and generally reflected the GOL's views.

*L'Orient-Le Jour* or *LorientLejour*, was the result of the 1971 merger of two leading francophone dailies, *L'Orient* and *Le Jour*. Both had been founded during the French Mandate by Christian businessmen with centre-right leaning. Strongly patriotic, opposed to Arab and Syrian transnational ideologies, the journal naturally adopted a pro-GOL stance during the 1975-90 War. Delivering high quality analyses, its freedom of tone led it repeatedly to criticise all the parties involved in the fighting, from the Palestinians to the West all through the Lebanese Forces and the GOL.

## Arab Newspapers

### EGYPT

*Al-Ahram (The Pyramids)*, one the Arab world oldest dailies, was founded in 1875 in Alexandria by Lebanese Christian émigrés. Its original liberal, centrist positioning was lost when it was nationalised by Nasser in 1960. It became the regime's mouthpiece under the editorial management of one of Nasser's closest advisors, Mohammed Heikal. Despite its ideological stance and thanks to Heikal's moderate views, *Al-Ahram* always kept a certain quality of analysis and reporting, shying away from the excessive style of more militant Arab nationalist outlets. It is still Egypt's most popular daily.

*Al-Akhbar (The News)*, founded two months before the Nasserist revolution of July 1952, *Al Akhbar* and its sister publication, *Akhbar Al-Yom (News of the Day)*, adopted the Nasserist stance and remained close to government circles under President Anwar El-Sadat (1970-81). Its reporting during crises times was relatively less sophisticated and less measured in tone than *Al-Ahram's*.

### SYRIA

*Al-Ayyam (The Days)* is one of Syria's oldest newspapers. Founded in 1931 along a liberal editorial line reflecting the country's merchant class, it drifted into Arab nationalism with the creation of the U.A.R. in 1958. Its reporting during the Lebanese 1958 crisis was militantly anti-Western and pro-Soviet. From 1963 onwards, it was sidelined by more militant Baath-controlled outlets which became the regime's mouthpieces during most of the crises examined in this thesis.

***Al-Baath (Renaissance)*** was founded in 1948 as the Baath party mouthpiece and became state-owned once the party seized power. Contrary to the Egyptian press during the Cold War which benefited from a certain degree of freedom in writing about non-controversial strategic topics, *Al-Baath* and its sister publications, *Al-Thawra* and *Tishreen* were the organs of the Syrian government in all aspect of political and social life.

***Al-Thawra (The Revolution)*** was founded in 1963 following the coup that propelled the Baath party to power that same year. It is government property and sticks to the official stance in all matters

***Tishreen (October)*** was founded by the state in 1975 in honour of the second anniversary of the 1973 October War.

The above three newspapers are characterized by their strident tone regarding the region's main problems. During the Cold War, their anti-Western stance was constant and violent while they extolled Soviet friendship and support. During the Lebanese war of 1975-90, they displayed a heightened sensitivity to the naval factor.

### **Accessibility of the sources**

This thesis relied on three main locations for accessing the Lebanese and Arab press. The first location are the physical archives (microfilms) of the American University of Beirut (AUB) where all the Lebanese newspapers, in Arabic and in French, were accessed. Due to the COVID-19 crisis and the devastation brought by the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020, AUB archives became inaccessible.

The second location is the Dayan Centre at the University of Tel Aviv. The Centre possess a rich collection of Arab newspapers which enabled access to the Egyptian and Syrian newspapers. The archives are microfilmed and were accessed through ordering the required issues to the Centre. They were then scanned and sent to the author.

The third location is the online website *Internet Archives* which offers selected issues of *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Akhbar* but also, other publications. Their collections are continuously enriched with new material. It is important to mention the French translations of selected articles in the Syrian press between January 1983 and March 1984 which were performed by the French Embassy in Damascus. They can be accessed at the *Archives Diplomatiques, La Courneuve* under the following reference: Direction ANMO SYRIE, 0052-SUP Revue de la Presse Syrienne, Boxes 42 & 43.

## Appendix B

### U.S. Navy Ships Rotation off Lebanon 1982-1984

To date, there is no comprehensive list of the different U.S. warships which have rotated off Lebanon during MNF1 and MNF2. Below is a best estimate based on the information collected from the following sources:

U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* Magazine

Mentions in various contemporary newspapers articles (NYT, OJ, An-Nahar, As-Safir)

Ronald Reagan Library: Cables and memoranda

French Diplomatic Archives: Cables and memoranda

British Diplomatic Archives: Cables and memoranda

Frank, Benis (1988), *U.S. Marines in Lebanon, 1982-1984*.

Starting from late September 1983 and until February 1984, the minimal number of U.S. warships present off Lebanon in relation to the MNF mission was fourteen units.

#### 1982

USS *Independence* CV-62

USS *Forrestal* CV-59

USS *Eisenhower* CVN-69

USS *South Carolina* CGN-37

USS *Virginia* CGN-38

USS *John F. Kennedy* CV-67

#### USN warships with 32<sup>nd</sup> MAU

USS *Guam* LPH-9

USS *Nashville* LPD-13

USS *Hermitage* LPD-34

USS *Manitowoc* LST-1180

USS *Saginaw* LST-1188

#### USN warships escorting ICRC-ships evacuating PLO

USS *Wainwright* CG-28

USS *Biddle* CG-34

USS *John King* DDG-3

USS *Macdonough* DDG-39

USS *King* DDG-41

USS *William V. Pratt* DDG-44

USS *Manley* FF-1068

USS *Aylwin* FF-1081

USS *Truet* FF-1095

## **Others**

USS *McCloy* FF-1038  
USS *Seattle* AOE-3  
USS *Sylvania* AFS-2  
USS *Julius A. Furer* FFG-6  
USS *Thorn* DD-988  
USS *Elmer Montgomery* FF-1082  
USS *Mount Baker* AE-34  
USS *Jonas Ingram* DD-938  
USS *Estocin* FFG-15  
USS *Manley* DD-940  
USS *Josephus Daniels* CG-27  
USS *Barney* DDG-6  
USS *McCandless* FF-1084  
USS *Milwaukee* AOR-2

## **USN warships with 24<sup>th</sup> MAU**

USS *Inchon* LPH-12  
USS *Shreveport* LPD-12  
USS *Fort Snelling* LSD-30  
USS *Sumter* LST-1181  
USS *La Moure County* LST-1194

## **1983-1984**

USS *Eisenhower* CVN-69  
USS *Bowen* FF-1079  
USS *Mahan* DDG-42  
USS *Guam* LPH-9  
USS *Belknap* CG-26  
USS *John Rodgers* DD-983  
USS *Virginia* CGN-38.  
USS *Arthur W. Radford* DD-968  
USS *Joseph Hewes* FF-1078  
USS *Pharris* FF-1094  
USS *New Jersey* BB-62  
USS *Tarawa* LHA-1  
USS *Claude V. Ricketts* DDG-5  
USS *Jack Williams* FFG-24  
USS *Ticonderoga* CG-47  
USS *Tattnall* DDG-19

## **3 CTFs together in mid-November following the terror attacks of October 23:**

USS *Independence* CV-62 with CTF-62  
USS *John F. Kennedy* CV-67 with CTF-67  
USS *Eisenhower* CVN-69 with CTF-69

USS **Nimitz** CVN-68, visited (as well 22<sup>nd</sup> MAU **Guadalcanal**) by President Amine Gemayel on 21/3 with US Ambassador & LAF Commander-in-Chief

**USN warships with 22<sup>nd</sup> MAU**

USS **Guadalcanal** LPH-7

USS **Raleigh** LPD-1

USS **Pensacola** LSD-38

USS **Spartanburg County** LST-1192

USS **Fairfax County** LST-1193

**USN warships with new rotation of 24<sup>th</sup> MAU**

USS **Iwo Jima** LPH-2

USS **Austin** LPD-4

USS **Portland** LSD-37

USS **El Paso** LKA-117

USS **Harlan** County LST-1196

**USN warships with 31<sup>st</sup> MAU**

USS **Tarawa** LHA-1

USS **Duluth** LPD-6

USS **Frederick County** LST-1184

**1983- Suspected**

USS **Antrim** FFG-20 (participated in NATO Distant Drum exercise)

USS **Flatley** FFG-21

USS **Moinester** FF-1097

USS **Butte** AE-27

USS **Mount Baker** AE-34

USS **Concord** AFS-5

**Submarines**

**SSNs** 588, 607, 618, 670, 671, 700

**SSNs** 637 & 679

**USN warships with new rotation of 22<sup>nd</sup> MAU**

USS **Guam** LPH-9

USS **Trenton** LPD-14

USS **Fort Snelling** LSD-30

USS **Manitowoc** LST-1180

USS **Barnstable County** LST-1197

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## INTERVIEWS

Dr. Fouad Abou Nader, Former Commander-in-Chief of the Lebanese Forces (1983-86)

Rear Admiral Philp Dur (Ret.), United States Navy; Former Director for Political and Military Affairs-National Security Council in the Ronald Reagan Administration; former Commander of Task Force 60, U.S. Sixth Fleet.

Mr. Amine Gemayel, former President of the Republic of Lebanon (1982-88)

Amiral Alain de Dainville, former Chief-of-Staff of the French Navy (2005-8)

Mr. Lucien George, former correspondent of newspapers *Le Monde* and *La Reppublica* in Beirut.

Mr. Francis Gutman, former Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay (1981-85)

Mr. Marwan Hamadé, Lebanese MP, Vice-President of the *Parti Socialiste Progressiste* (PSP) of Druse leader Walid Jumblatt.

Mr. John Lehman, former U.S. Secretary of the Navy (1981-87)

Mr. Elie Salem, former Deputy-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lebanon (1982-84)

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