

Juan Rial

# THE QUESTION OF THE MILITARY IN LEBANON



*Roman ruins in the city of Tyre in a state of abandonment. Lebanese Armed Forces checkpoint in the south of the country. Makeshift camp for Syrian refugees in the Marjayoun region.*

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Presented here is the vision of a Latin American analyst with experience in the processes of the reconfiguration of military forces following the dictatorships, and the change in the regional and international scene produced by the disappearance of the internal and external Soviet empire.

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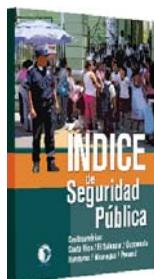


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# THE QUESTION OF THE MILITARY IN LEBANON

## The Lebanese Armed Forces: Evading the Temptation of Becoming an Actor in the Political Struggle, while Remaining as a Corporate Institution

*The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) are at the center of the security situation in Lebanon today. support of central countries through an International Conference for assistance programs, the donation of four billion dollars from Saudi Arabia for the purchase of military equipment, and the operations carried out in the face of the advances of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant - ISIS - in the border zone with Syria, are some of the pieces that constitute the scene.*

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The subtitle that summarizes our thesis appears to be contradiction, but its overtones are rooted in reality. Lebanon is a heritage of the Ottoman Empire, where 17 confessional units coexist. The 18<sup>th</sup> - the Jewish - practically disappeared following the conflicts of 1958 and 1975. It is the only Middle Eastern country that contains such confessional diversity, including an important number of Christians. Within this framework, the Lebanese Army - the relevant military force - has been in a constant process of construction, "de-construction" and resurgence following very difficult conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

Two fundamental principals inform the Lebanese Army. In accordance with the doctrine of its creator, General Fouad Chéhab (French trained), it is a force that should reflect the community dimensions of Lebanese society (that never pointed towards a centralism of the

national State), and from there its formation into units marked by their confessional nature. But, at the same time with a trait that moves in the direction of embodying the Lebanese national identity. To manage the contradiction implies "neutrality" in the face of intra- and inter- confessional, family, and clan etc. conflicts. This neutrality should extend also to regional-international conflicts.

This idea of "neutrality" covers the entire Lebanese entity as a State. The national pact of 1943 - a pact that was realized fundamentally between the *Christian Maronites* and the *Sunni Muslims* - in some manner removed the possibility of having a united instrument that monopolized the use of violence (or threat of violence). The political formula surrounding the pact is: "neither East, nor West", providing the origin of a fragile entity, more or less stable, based in constant negotiation, a custom that is on the other hand a heritage of the old commercial character of the country.

The Sunnis accepted the independence of Lebanon, leaving aside pan-Arabism in exchange for the acceptance of the Arabic charac-

<sup>1</sup> The concept was expressed very adequately by Ambassador Frederic Hof at the III Regional Conference organized by the Center of Strategic Studies of the LAF in 2013, page 33: "In many ways this precarious Republic - Professor Michael Hudson's term - is a tiny replica of the empire that ended 90 years ago. The once key element of the Ottoman system, the Sultan, was replaced by a National Pact. Whether or not the One Lebanon citizenship ethic embodied by the Lebanese Armed Forces can take root and grow in a peaceful Lebanese version of the Arab Spring remains to be seen."

\* The article largely follows the direction set out in the excellent study *Re-construire une Armée Nationale. L'exemple du Liban depuis 1958*, carried out by Emma Soubrier and published in 2013 as "Cahier du Retex" of the Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi de Forces -CDEF, Division Recherche et Retour d'Expérience (Paris: Ministère de la Défense, Armée de Terre, February 2013). We also took into account the study by Hubert Dupont "La nouvelle armée libanaise. Instrument de pouvoir ou acteur politique" published in *Confluence Méditerranée* (Paris: Édition l'Harmattan, Printemps 1999, N° 29) and the study of Aram Nerguizian, *The Lebanese Armed Forces. Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Syria Lebanon* (Washington DC: CSIS, 2009). This latter study contains important information about the structure, equipment and budget of the LAF. We also considered the views of my colleague C.Perelli, who has significant experience in Lebanon, and L.Cnel.AX, who works as an expert in the country of the Levant.

ter of the country by the Maronites. This way, Lebanon became part of the Arab League and opposed the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel, yet its participation in the first Arab-Israeli war was marginal.

This fragile arrangement confronted its first test with the 1958 crisis. The then Maronite President – Camille Chamoun – took the side of those opposing the preachings of G.A. Nasser and the creation of the UAR (United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria), seen as an important regional and confessional threat. The Muslims, on the other hand, viewed Nasser's pan-Arab (albeit secular) doctrine with certain sympathy. The conflict was settled through the intervention of the United States and the multinational force that followed, with the Lebanese Army a mere spectator to the process.

Antoine Messarra points to a consensual system with multiple balances that supported itself through the use of the Army as a supra-community body, supposedly responsible for restoring order after crises that endangered the entire system. In a certain manner Messarra sought to attribute to the Army a political role as a “moderating” body, avoiding polarizations and playing a sort of arbitrating role.

General Chéhab, by then President, reaffirmed the doctrine of neutrality. Decree N° 136 of June 1959 banned all forms of party affiliation for military personnel.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1958 and 1964 the Army sought to be a “reforming” power, restructuring itself along well-known lines (“neutrality” towards

communities and confessions as the basic principal). And from 1964 until 1970 it became a guardian of the civil power through its intelligence body known as *Deuxième Bureau* (Second section of the General Staff). But its actions finally led to its dissolution.

Some authors consider that between 1958 and 1970 the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) were effectively a “government in the shadows”, supporting Maronite Presidents through the actions of the *Deuxième Bureau*. But this action simultaneously promoted a pan-Arab and pro-Palestinian opposition that undermined the LAF, which was unable to prevent the 1975 crisis, thus leading to its dissolution and the disappearance, at least for a time, of the Lebanese state entity.

A prior attempt at reconciliation and negotiation at all costs, which did not lead to good results, had followed a similar line. Towards the end of 1969, Emily Boustany, then Commander-in-Chief of the Army, signed an agreement with the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Yasser Arafat in Cairo, which was also approved by then President Charles Hélou, in what was an event that strongly influenced Lebanon's subsequent history. The agreement provided the PLO with freedom of action in Lebanese territory - where an important number of Palestinian refugees were installed, and for the creation of autonomous areas where authority would lie with the PLO.<sup>3</sup> The PLO could supposedly not ignore Lebanese authority, and its activities had to be coordinated with the General Staff of the Lebanese Army. Through this, Arafat took another step in his career, in accordance with the idea expressed at that time: “Give me a square kilometre and I will control the country”.<sup>4</sup>

Antoine Messarra considered this agreement to be the epitome of Lebanese political culture:

2 For Antoine Messarra, member of the Constitutional Council and professor of Law at the Université Libanaise, the principle of a neutral army (al-jaysh al-muhâyid) justifiable due to the fear felt by the army («peur pour l'armée») would be better explained as fear towards the army («peur de l'armée»), that a political actor arises in search of altering the confessional balance or to exercise corporate power (cited by Sobrier). With the Lebanon in reality an “oligarchy of godfathers”, of “community lords”, they could not support the building of a national military force that would threaten community and local authorities and their related businesses. Its security would be based on external support, such as those promoted by Chamoun in 1958 with U.S. and France. See A. Nasri Mesarra, *La gouvernance d'un système consensuel: Le Liban après les amendements constitutionnels de 1990* (Beirut: Librairie Orientale, 2003). While LAF personnel passed from 3,000 to 4,000 in 1948 to some 13,000 in 1965, this growth was less than the rate of demographic growth. In the same period Syria went from 8,000 to 60,000 men. At the same time, Lebanon's military equipment was minimal and of low quality.

3 The number of Palestinians, and very importantly their leaders, increased and they became principal actors following the expulsion of Fatah and the PLO from Jordan (in September 1970).

4 Cited by Samantha Power in *Chasing the Flame* (London: Penguin Press, 2008) referring to Carina Perelli's memory of Sergio de Mello, who used to like to cite Yasser Arafat saying “Give me a square kilometre, and I'll control the country.”



*LAF checkpoint close to the Blue Line, towards the south of Naqoura.*

commitment and negotiation at all costs. It was to be the seed of the next big crisis.

Since the Six Day War of 1967, in Lebanon there have lived some 400,000 Palestinian refugees. The Cairo agreement gave the PLO authority to control these camps between 1969 and 1975, and it began forming armed militias among the refugees to launch attacks against Israel. Through this it achieved control of a large portion of the south of the country, leading to sporadic clashes with the Lebanese Army. Faced with this threat to their traditional power, Lebanese Christians began arming themselves, a phenomenon which was followed by the “militarization” of various political and religious groups.

By 1971 the situation was out of control and the much-weakened Lebanese government was unable to maintain order. As a result, fierce clashes broke out in Beirut between the Christians of the east of the city and Palestinians from various camps, and by April 1975 these clashes had expanded to the rest of the country. In the face of the Army’s inability to impose order, militias arose, and this quickly

led to the Army’s rupture as a corporate entity.

A report carried out by a special parliamentary commission established that by January 1976 5% of military personnel had deserted, while 24% of the Interior Security Force (ISF) had followed the same route.

These desertions fueled the creation of militias in events that marked the porosity between the Lebanese Army, in a process of decomposition, and the confessional groups.

In January 1976, at the bequest of Sunni officers, the Arab Lebanese Army (ALA) made its first appearance in the Bekaa Valley, and shortly thereafter (in March) the Free Lebanon Army (FLA) appeared in the north of Beirut, led by a Christian Colonel. A few days later, in Marjayoun (near Nabatieh) Major Saad Haddad founded what became a more permanent militia: the South Lebanon Army (SLA), another Christian formation.

Attempts to rebuild the Army were unsuccessful, and in 1982 it was clear that the militias followed the game played out by the Syrians and Israelis, which supported the Muslim and

Christian militias respectively. Up until 1984, the Army, in a situation of complete paralysis, was replaced almost in its entirety by the militias.

In 1983 then President Amin Gemayel, together with the Commander of LAF, General Ibrahim Tannous, attempted once more to rebuild the Army, increasing its personnel from 25,000 to 35,000 in a move that entailed the imposition of obligatory military service. General Chehab had never favoured this option, arguing that it would entail budgetary difficulties, but in reality responding to concerns over its impact on the LAF's consensual inter-confessional balance.

The idea was to form an army of citizens, with conscription a form of integration that sought to overcome communal, confessional, religious and class factionalism. However, the ability to evade conscription through the payment of a monetary fee indicated strong resistance to the idea.

The new Forces were organized on the foundation of twelve brigades, each fairly homogeneous in terms of their religious integration and distributed according to regional compatibility – a characteristic that also contradicted the idea of a military force integrated by citizens. The same criteria were applied to the Special Forces. For example, the brigade formed by Druze (N° 11) was based in the Chouf mountains; N° 12, Sunni, was located in Saida. The 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade, with its Christian base, was located in the east of Beirut, and the 6<sup>th</sup> (Shiite) in the Bekaa Valley. A few were mixed, such as the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Composed of Christians and Muslims, it was deployed in downtown Beirut in the area separating the two sectors.

This attempt, however, failed. The Army was unable to contain the Israelis, while also failing to supplant the militias.

Fractured, with deficient personnel and equipment, the military apparatus was unable to restore order. The Arab League sent a deterrent force that legitimized Syria's military presence from 1976 onwards; of the 35,000 troops sent, 25,000 were Syrians. It was also Syria – with help from Saudi Arabia – that promoted

the Taif Agreement in 1989, with L. Brahimi acting as a mediator-promoter. But let's return to events further back for now.

The Israeli invasion of 1978, which brought them up until the Litani River, liquidated Palestinian resistance in the zone, strengthened Haddad's army, and led the UN, through Resolution 426, to send the first UNIFIL mission. It was unable, however, to contain the conflict.

In 1982 Israel went further still in its attempt to suppress the Palestinians, arriving in Beirut.<sup>5</sup> While it achieved that the PLO and its leader Arafat moved to Tunis, they were unable to hold this position and retreated back south of the Litani River. UN troops established themselves in the south of Lebanon, while an ad hoc coalition formed by the US, France, Italy and the UK attempted to restore peace in the capital, but ended up failing.<sup>6</sup> The UN received a mandate to assist in reorganizing the government and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

The resistance in the south of Lebanon became protagonized by Shia militias, first AMAL<sup>7</sup> and then Hezbollah, as Israel withdrew, a task that was completed in 2000, when the South Lebanon Army also broke apart and disappeared. The area had now become shared, de facto, by UNIFIL troops, militias, and Hezbollah "politicians", who now controlled most of the municipalities in the area.<sup>8</sup>

5 Well remembered in the media for the massacre of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Chatila camps in Beirut, which was committed by Christian militiamen with no opposition from the Tsahal (Israeli Defense Forces). The camps were rebuilt and still exist today.

6 In October 1983 an unknown group called "Islamic Jihad" sent two suicide truck bombs. One struck the cantonment of U.S. marines of the Multinational Force, and the other French paratroopers. President Reagan decided to withdraw the US contingent, precipitating the end of the mission.

7 Created in 1974 as the Movement of the Forsaken and as Lebanese resistance militia regiment. Its base were Shiites, who in addition to the confessional difference felt excluded for reasons of class and social structure. The symbol of the movement in Arabic means "hope." Its initial appeal was secular, non-confessional, appealing to the sense of community and territorial belonging. It eventually grew to fourteen thousand militia and fought the "War of the Camps" against the Palestinians between 1985 and 1988, with support from the Syrians and Druze. It then had to confront a rival group originating in its ranks, the "Party of God", or Hezbollah. With violent confrontations between them in Beirut, Hezbollah prevailed by 1988.

8 Hezbollah created a memorial and commemoration space (Mleeta) in Nabatiyeh to the south of the headquarters of the South Lebanon Army in Marjayoun, where it affirmed its character as the only force that fought and defeated Israel.

The relative inaction of the Lebanese Army during the Israeli invasion hurt its legitimacy, a situation that ran parallel to the disappearance, for a long time, of Lebanon as a nation state, despite its republican-representative institutions continuing to formally exist. It was supplanted by the very diverse communities, their militias, and political movements, in addition to Syrian and Israeli forces and those of UNIFIL in the south, which struggled to assert itself as a separation force. The Lebanese Army remained, however, as part of the country's formal institutional structure, and following the Taif Accords it went in search of a renewed reconstruction.

The militias had no comprehensive proposal for Lebanon, but instead only for their respective communities and leaders. They constituted embryos of totalitarian community states, with powers of life and death in their settlement areas. They charged taxes, had TV and radio networks, and suppressed all dissent through brutal methods. Each was supported by regional powers and diverse economic interests, while dressed in confessional justifications.

The national symbol of integrity and patriotism was the LAF. While inefficient, it transformed itself (once again) into a moderate option for "national" continuity.

In 1989, General Michel Aoun, who was also the commander of various Christian militias, launched an offensive against the Syrian troops. These actions, together with the fatigue provoked by the communal and sectarian violence, led to a new *consociationalism*: the Taif Accords.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Signed in October 1989, the Taif Agreement was negotiated in the city of Taif (Saudi Arabia) by the surviving members of the 1972 Parliament of Lebanon and chaired by the President of Parliament Hussein el-Husseini. The agreement refers to political reform in Lebanon, and led to the conclusion of the civil war, the establishment of relations between Lebanon and Syria, and the design of a framework for the gradual Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The agreement included a National Pact to restore the political system in Lebanon by transferring some of the power that the Maronite Christian community had had as a privilege under the French colonial regime. The Chamber of Deputies was increased in size (to 128 members), and shared equally between Christians and Muslims, rather than being elected by universal suffrage, which would have led to a Muslim majority. A cabinet was established, also divided equally between Christians and Muslims. The agreement also provided for the disarmament of all national and non-national militias, with the

The violence, however, continued. In one of the scarce interventions, in 1990, brigades of the Lebanese Armed Forces - led by the same Michel Aoun - confronted Christian Phalange militias. In October, Syrian troops annihilated Aoun's positions.

Following the Taif Agreement, the reconstruction of the State and of the LAF was carried out under Syrian control. Although this ignored Lebanese sovereignty as an independent state, it is certain that Damascus promoted the reestablishment of the LAF as a military authority throughout the Mediterranean coastal strip, the most populous area.

From 1992 the Army implemented the "Total Integration" project. With a total of eleven brigades, it maintained the scheme of confessional parity in five of them while the rest, with a body of troops that were 70% Muslim and 30% Christian, reflected the demographic changes registered following the great conflict. Parity was also sought in the relevant specialized units. Budgetary support was requested to enable this reconstruction, and in 1995, 22% of the state budget went to the military and police. Of the 45,000 LAF members, 42,000 belonged to the Army, with this number rising to 55,100 by 1997 (double that at the beginning of the great conflict of 1975). In 1999, troop strength was increased further to 67,900 (27,400 of which were conscripts), while it possessed nearly one thousand armored personnel carriers.<sup>10</sup>

In 1993, aerial bombardments and skirmishes occurred in the south of the country between Hezbollah and the Lebanese Army.

Towards 1995, Syria could count on then LAF Commander, General Emile Lahoud, together with second in command of intelligence, to control its economic and media interests, along with those of the diverse associations, universities, and state institutions.

exception of the Shiite Hezbollah and the non-Lebanese Fatah and Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The rest disarmed themselves. Initially the SLA did not either. Several militias were absorbed into the Army, as was the case with AMAL, which was integrated into the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

<sup>10</sup> The great majority M113, many still in service in 2014. It also had approximately 400 tanks and some 200 artillery, of diverse type and origin.



*Beirut and the coexistence of the old and the new.*

Israeli incursions, such as Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996, did not cease either.<sup>11</sup>

In February 2005, ex-prime minister Rafiq Hariri was killed in an attack. In addition to being prime minister for several terms, he had promoted a large amount of Beirut's reconstruction and had developed a substantial business activity. Despite the creation of an International Tribunal, the implications of an investigation for those responsible for his assassination are so strong that they could not proceed.<sup>12</sup>

11 Codename used by the Israeli armed forces to refer to the 16 day campaign conducted against Lebanon from April 11<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> 1996 in order to end Hezbollah attacks on northern Israel. The Israeli Tsahal conducted more than 1,100 aerial incursions, and bombed Lebanon intensely, employing some 25,132 projectiles. A UNIFIL installation was also attacked by an Israeli projectile, killing some 118 Lebanese civilians. Hezbollah, from its bases in the south of Lebanon, launched 639 rockets into northern Israel, especially in the city of Kiryat Shemona. Hezbollah forces were involved in various clashes with Israeli forces and the South Lebanon Army. Hezbollah used human shields. A ceasefire agreement ended the conflict on April 27<sup>th</sup> 1996.

12 Persons linked to Hezbollah, LAF generals or the police, appeared in the original investigation that was carried out by a Ger-

The LAF, in the face of this assassination, recalled its "Chehabist" roots by reaffirming the principle of "neutrality" and its role of defending the country against the centrifugal tendencies that threatened to devour it. Despite requests from President Emile Lahoud and Prime Minister Omar Karami for the intervention of the Armed Forces to contain demonstrators calling for the withdrawal of the Syrian military from the country, General Michel Sleiman – LAF Commander - refused to execute the order, maintaining the LAF's old position of not acting as a repressor of either the majority or any particular community. Such a position, obviously, helped it to regain its legitimacy and trust.

The death of Hariri led to the so-called "Cedar Revolution", which determined the withdrawal of Syrian forces from the entirety of the Lebanese territory.

man prosecutor, who suffered an attack from which he fortunately escaped alive. The court continues to exist, performing purely bureaucratic activities.

In 2006, the latest Tsahal incursion into Lebanese territory was recorded, but their advance was repelled by Hezbollah, which resorted to the unconventional tactics of asymmetric warfare to confront them.

Hezbollah's legitimacy as a militia is based in its social action, providing services to the community and its political counterparts. While Hezbollah cannot compete with a conventional army, it based itself in actions designed to wear down its enemy, engaging in constant harassment (armed propaganda, strikes, and terrorism, etc.) that discouraged and damaged the confidence of the Tsahal.<sup>13</sup>

Upon the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon, the territory was occupied – in accordance with Resolution 1701 of the UN Security Council – by the Lebanese Armed Forces (which did not confront the Hezbollah militia) and by UNIFIL troops, which had been unable to contain the conflict. Neither was it able to disarm Hezbollah's military wing. Instead it was forced to take up a negotiated settlement with this organization, which provided (and continues to provide) social services to local communities and gained political control of the majority of the municipalities UNIFIL's area of operations.

To "share" responsibilities with Hezbollah<sup>14</sup> was a necessity for LAF, whose troop numbers passed from 65,000 to 45,000 in 2005.

In one of the few combat incursions it protagonized, in 2007 the new Lebanese Army destroyed the Fatah al Islam group, one of the "boutiques" which, following the example of Al Qaeda, was founded in the Palestinian camp

of Nahr el-Bared in the extreme north of the country.

Inter-militia struggles continued, however. In May 2008, following a conflict with the government, Hezbollah occupied the streets of Beirut, disarmed the Druze and Sunni militias, and renegotiated the presence of Shiite politicians in government following the Doha agreement.<sup>15</sup>

The Army began "cohabiting" with Hezbollah in the south and in parts of the Bekaa valley. Despite these "adjustments" – which define a LAF that is neither a unique nor a strong national force, and whose capacity to both repel external aggressions and to maintain internal order are low – in the absence of an alternative reference, the institution remains very much relevant to the fragile but persistent Lebanese State. It is a state seeking to survive in a "bifurcated world" (as H. Dupont says), and one, which aims to substitute the nation state through communal structures that, in turn, confront and collaborate among themselves.<sup>16</sup>

### Final Observations

The LAF has tried to resist its leadership becoming presidents upon their retirement,<sup>17</sup>

15 This was achieved through the Doha agreement (Qatar). Hezbollah had manifested itself against the International Tribunal to investigate the death of Hariri. The government coalition, called "March 14", could not escape the opposition blockade and there was no possibility of selecting a replacement for President Emile Lahoud in the allocated timeframe, due to being unable to meet the required two thirds parliamentary majority. Prime Minister Fouad Siniora failed to break the blockade and, as always, the Army remained on the sidelines to avoid a new rupture. LAF commander General Michel Sleiman maintained "neutrality". UN Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1680 and 1701 were mere rhetoric and Hezbollah converted itself into a parallel "armed" force. The agreement reached in Doha required the formation of a national unity government composed of 30 ministers, 11 of which should belong to the opposition forces led by Hezbollah, which constructed the "March 8" alliance. Issues such as the tribunal for the investigation of the assassination of Hariri, the disarming of all militias in Lebanon, or negotiations with Israel, will not be successful without the approval of the Shiite opposition. Likewise, the agreement paved the way for the election of Michel Sleiman as President of Lebanon.

16 A survey conducted in July 2008 by the International Peace Institute found that 76 percent of respondents believed it to be desirable to have a better-equipped LAF to confront the militias. Shortly before the battle against Fatah Al-Islam, a Lebanese firm - Information International – carried out another study that found that, given the continuing instability, 63% of respondents believed it to be convenient for the Army to take temporary control of the country. The LAF resisted the idea of leading a "commissarial dictatorship".

17 The case of Fouad Shihab in 1958, Iskandar Ghanim in 1970, Hana' Said in 1976, Michel Aoun in 1989. Some later became presidents. Dupont considers that becoming president or prime minister puts in question the LAF's "neutrality".

13 This way, instead of facing the infantry and armoured units of the Tsahal in open country, they did so in urban areas, trying to gain influence through the media of the international community, showing collateral damage. They also sought to launch unguided missiles from positions in the Bekaa valley, crossing the UNIFIL area of operations in their trajectory. Hezbollah emerged as the only credible defence against Israel, prompting the Lebanese government to recognize the legitimacy of Hezbollah, while the LAF had a "tolerant" view, accepting this parallel action.

14 "Any attempt to strengthen the LAF so that it can fight Hezbollah will fail. Close to 30 percent of the officers corps is Shia and, given that the LAF is a reflection of Lebanese society, it cannot be ordered to act militarily against one or another (or its community)." See Nerguizian, *The Lebanese Armed Forces: Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Syria Lebanon* (Washington: CSIS, 2/10/09), p. 3.

but this has happened on several occasions; in such cases, the President does not maintain its authority within the corporation, which has a new head, but instead becomes a political actor with a military background.

The reconstruction of a Lebanese national armed force is based on the concept developed in the 90s of "security sector reform" (SSR). It is based on a holistic character, with a plurality of actors, roles, functions and responsibilities, but one that responds to the need for the entire sector to be under the control of the legitimate political authority.

LAF's experience was also informed by that of countries with generalized problems of integration, social cohesion, multi-ethnic and/or multi-confessional demography, violence and widespread fear.<sup>18</sup>

The relationship between political power and armed corporation (civil-military relations in the old jargon), as in many countries in conflict, is bidirectional between the political power - represented by the Minister of Defence and the political apparatus of the ministry - and the armed corporation, through their leadership.

On the other side of the relationship, protection of the corporation leads it to practice neutrality and to disobey, or to change the direction of, commands to intervene.<sup>19</sup> This is done when it is considered convenient: when the country's stability - fragile indeed - or that of the corporate unit, are at stake.<sup>20</sup>

18 Nigeria, Bosnia, Angola, and Iraq are clear examples. The multi-ethnic problems in Latin America didn't lead to the creation of (armed) political movements at the command of minorities (sometimes real majorities in number). They only produced non-armed movements that evolved along the "NGO model".

19 One of our interviewees noted the different attitude towards incidents in Saida and Tripoli, where militias recently operated in 2013/14, (Saudi Arabia and the Future Party were accused of supporting them in order to support the Syrian President). The task force sent to Saida and Tyre was the same, as was its command. In Saida they negotiated, and in Tripoli they replied with repression. In this they followed the actions of ex-LAF commander Michel Sleiman, when he opposed the orders of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and his supporters of the "March 14" coalition in the face of the "March 8" coalition, which has Hezbollah at its foundation.

20 A senior officer expressed to Nerguizian: "Our challenge is not in the implementation of difficult orders. We can carry out difficult orders. What would make things difficult for the [LAF] is if in the future we are given orders that we could not in good conscience execute without hurting Lebanon and the [LAF]." Cited by Nerguizian in the document already cited, p.11.

The pillars of an army are its personnel, training, equipment and what in jargon is called its "moral strength".<sup>21</sup> This last one is of fundamental importance to LAF's future. As a mirror of Lebanese society, this corporation also reflects its problems: the coexistence of seventeen communities and the antagonisms between their leaders and interests, which shelter in their communities and confessions and in a framework in which a multitude of regional and global actors are at play.

In this context, since its inception the LAF has oscillated between paralysis, deconstruction and constant exercises of re-foundation.

Observers hope to see a combative LAF, but its cadres are conscious of the challenges present in abandoning their tradition. Doing this in the past almost led to its disappearance.

To maintain the principles inherited from Fouad Chehab and the structure created by Amin Gemayel is a challenge for this "young" LAF, which desires to be a national institution. The question is, without a strong state and in constant institutional crisis, is this possible?

The temptation of making the armed corporation play a stronger role in politics could lead them to play a moderating role<sup>22</sup>, and more so than embodying a commissarial dictatorship.<sup>23</sup> Others, however, would like it to embody the interests of just one sector.

21The ability to embody corporate interests, which in jargon is called "military spirit", and the capacity for internal circumscribed powers ("esprit de corps") and all that covered by "rituals" and ceremonies that reinforce it. In the face of personnel and equipment weaknesses, these attributes are substantial and addressing and directing them corresponds to LAF command. Press releases indicate that Saudi Arabia will provide a substantial sum, about three thousand million dollars, to purchase equipment that shall be of French origin. Christians remain opposed to compulsory military service, and the cost of a professional army is great for the State. According to one interviewee, it is estimated that, between salaries and other expenses, to maintain a Lebanese soldier requires around USD 12,000 annually.

22 In the Spain of the late twentieth century, especially following the trials of the first republic, the Army tried to act as a moderating force between political factions that threatened to destroy the unity of the State. But factionalism led to constant "pronouncements". Finer, which refers to this characteristic, holds that all corporate military forces are an instrument with a determined intent (purpose instrument). See Samuel Finer, *The Man on Horseback* (London: PallMall, 1974). In the case of the LAF, the purpose is to maintain in it the national state identity of Lebanon.

23 See Carl Schmit, *La Dictadura* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1962). Original in German, published in 1922.

## WHAT CAN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTE TO SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND DEFENCE IN LEBANON?

This small Middle Eastern country lives in a constant state of fragility in one of the most politically volatile areas of the globe. By contrast, Latin Americans live in an area where the overall scenario seems rather quiet and predictable, although public security leaves much to be desired in many countries.

Lebanon is an atypical Middle Eastern country where, despite the crises and thanks to constant accommodations, the legacies of the Ottoman Empire are maintained, particularly in relation to the coexistence between the diverse faiths and identities. In Latin America, "transplanted peoples", some the heirs of emigrants of European origin, and others of slaves that came from many parts of the African coast, coexist with indigenous peoples. It is, in essence, a social formation of mestizos, the product of a colonial past governed by sex, the cross and the sword.

In this diverse past, however, both Lebanon and the countries of Latin America have a common characteristic: upon these societies they have built States in accordance with the formalities of the liberal republics that emerged after the moderated path introduced by Bonaparte's regime following the French revolution.

The military - the "armies" - played a predominant role in this process. In Latin America the armed groups who staged fights for independence and were then part of long confrontations as part of partnerships with civil factions gave way, in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, to armed corporations whose heart was (and is) a corps of professional officers trained in military academies. They basically followed two models: the French and Prussian. The navies, meanwhile, followed the British model. U.S. influence was noted in the Caribbean and in Central America, but it only aimed at the creation of National Guards, bodies charged with the preservation of public and political order but devoid of transcendent ends tending to national purposes. U.S. influence was noted throughout Latin America during and after World War II, notably with regard to tactical doctrines, equipment and its employment, but not in relation to the "transcendent" mission of military forces.

This idea of transcendence appears in the official histories of the armed forces in the region: most

consider the army to be the founder of the state, while in more than one case, it is considered to precede it.

Professionally, the forces did not stop intervening in politics, protagonizing institutional ruptures. In general, they led "commissarial dictatorships", in many cases supporting a military leader in alliance with civilian support, and only very occasionally involving the upper echelons of the armed corporation in the daily management of political affairs.

This experience has cost them legitimacy, having lost in political terms the confrontations they faced in the second half of the twentieth century. They survived the fall of the regimes they had led, but their subsequent accommodation has meant that they have to accept a much diminished role compared to what they considered their role to be "when they commanded". The Lebanese Armed Forces followed the lines of the French tradition of being a neutral force in terms of confessional or identity-based groups and their political expressions, and sought to apply this principle consistently, even when confronting reconstruction processes after having split and disintegrated in the face of conflicts that involved the entire Lebanese society. Although the Lebanese Armed Forces sought to keep to the lines of the consociational political pact, they could not avoid the fractures that led to their deconstruction after 1958 and 1975.

In Latin America, the armed forces also had their dissents, but they did not lead to paralysis and destruction; the forces expelled, imprisoned or fought those that did not follow the orientation of the majority. Today, where in many countries they have witnessed the political triumph of their past "enemies", they traverse the path of accommodation.

It is about precisely recounting the path trodden in Latin America, disseminating what have been the changes in relations with political powers (civil-military relations), what are their missions, and what are their roles in relation to the society they must serve, so that their Lebanese counterparts have an experience regarding what can be done and, more importantly, what roads are advisable to avoid.

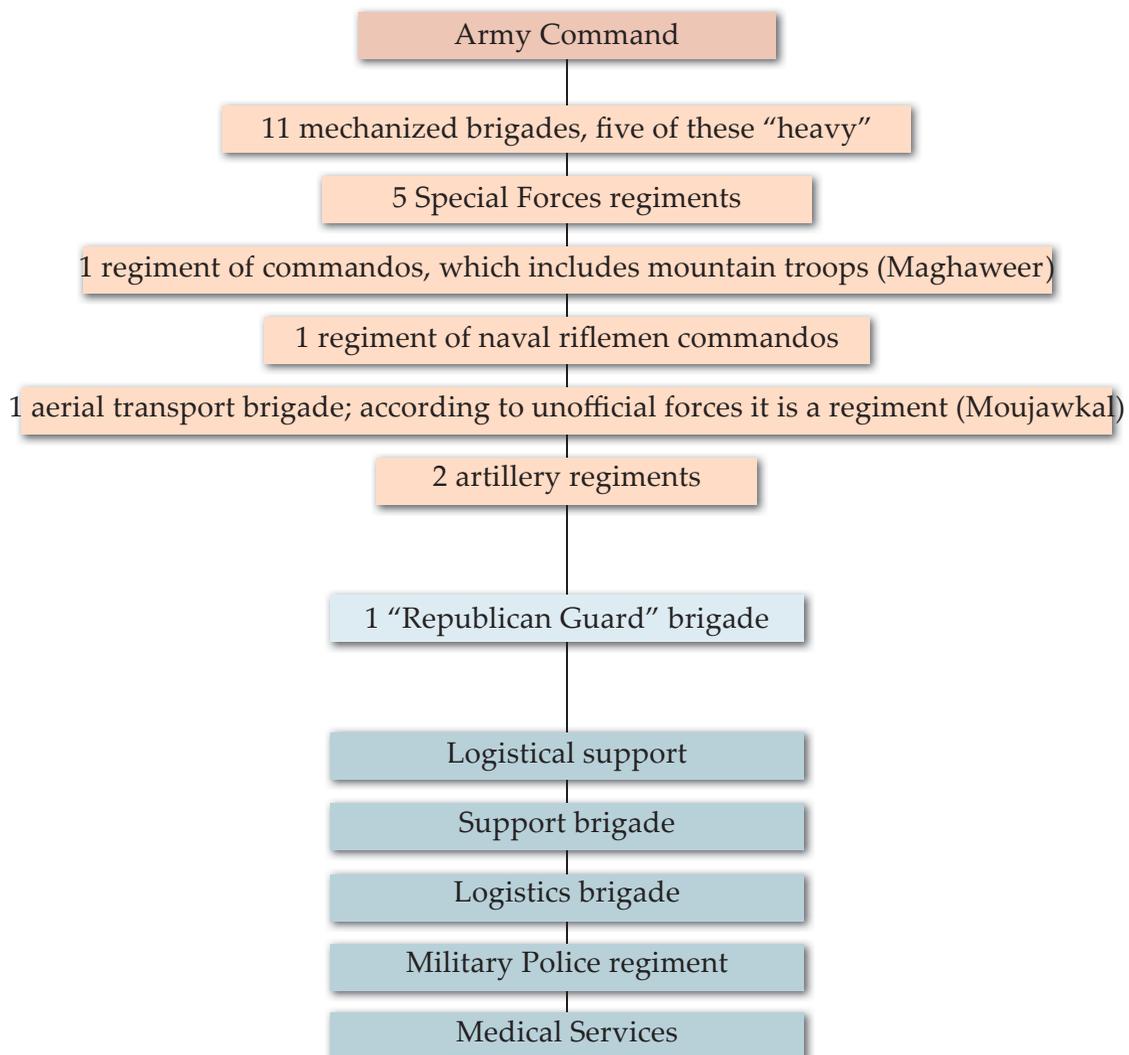
In the opposite direction, so that the Latin Americans take into account what happens in one of the key areas of the world, especially given that so much of the world's destiny in coming years depends on what happens in the Middle East today.

## ANNEX

The Ministry of Defence, beyond being the top in the chain of command, now acts as an administrative section of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Ministry shares its headquarters with that of the command of the Armed Forces and with the Military Museum, in Yarzeh (Baabda District, Mount Lebanon).

The Lebanese Armed Forces are at the command of a Commander-in-Chief. He is assisted by a Chief of Staff and four Second Chiefs of Staff. Several management bodies are important within this structure, including that of intelligence. Another of the relevant management bodies is that of geographic affairs, due to its provision of maps, which is a very sensitive issue in the country.

### Structure of the Lebanese Army



The official website does not refer to engineering units (instead a construction unit), or communications. Neither does it refer to a counter-sabotage unit (Moukafaha) or an anti-terrorist force, called Kouwa el-Dareba. This information comes from alternative sources.

Equipment is a mix of Western materials and those of the USSR, including almost 1,000

APC M113 (the majority of those inoperable). In July 2014 it was announced that Saudi Arabia would donate a substantial amount for the purchase of equipment for the Army, to be provided by France.

There are five regional commands. North of Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Bekaa Valley, and South of Lebanon.

Since August 1945, a training school for Army officers has been functioning, now called the Military Academy.

There is also:

An Institute of Basic Training for troops.

A School of Mountain Skiers

A School of Special Forces, which functions for intervention units of this type

The Command and General Staff School "Fouad Shehad"

It is difficult to estimate the number of personnel in the Army. According to some it is around 30,000. Some 15,000 more would constitute logistical support, bringing the total to 45,000. However, it is important to know the number of relevant personnel. It could be between 5,000 and 10,000. Key are the various units of Special Forces. Since 2007, it is a force of contracted volunteers.

### Naval Force

Small force of coastal patrols (around 15 to 25 units of greatly diverging types, sizes and origins), surveillance radars and a land surveillance battalion with its headquarters in the port of Beirut. Its personnel would apparently number around 1,000.

### Air Force

Very small. Operational equipment is restricted to airplanes and helicopters for training purposes only. Apparently there are still 3 British Hawker Hunters in service, although they only fly; their avionics and weapons are completely obsolete.

It has some 50 helicopters from diverse origins, and they have incorporated a further 12 surveillance UAV (Raven class).

There exists a school for training Air Force pilots. Total personnel would be around 100 persons.

A Center of Strategic Studies and Investigation seeks to locate the Force within the regional political framework.

### Interior Security Forces (FSI)

It is the Police force. Under the authority of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities. Apparently it includes some 30,000 personnel. Its personnel initially receive training as a soldier of the Army.

### General Directorate of General Security

This is the general intelligence body. It also issues passports and visas. Its Director is an Army General.