

THE FOREIGN POLICIES OF THE US & FRANCE: CONVERGENCES &
DIVERGENCES: THE CASE OF LEBANON: 2016-2021

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Abstract

Lebanon, the second smallest state in the Middle East, has been influenced by numerous foreign interventions, of which most significant are those by, regional and global powers, the French Republic and the United States of America. Beyond their direct military presence in the past, both the US and France have been constantly accused of meddling in Lebanon's internal affairs. In the past few years, the United States had been regularly imposing sanctions on Lebanese companies and individuals, whereas, more recently still, France was becoming directly involved in the Lebanese political crisis. Indeed, while both USA and France have each, and even together at times, intervened in the internal issues of Lebanon, they have not always agreed on their foreign policy – not just in Lebanon. At times, some of their viewpoints and practices of foreign policy have converged, coming together to meet at a common understanding – at other times still, these have diverged, differing from each other in path and direction. After the Port of Beirut explosion on the 4th of August 2020, the President of the French Republic arrived in Lebanon and assured the Lebanese people that France will help the country find a path to reform. Standing in his way, however, were many obstacles, among which were the United States' sanctions and foreign policy towards Lebanon. Since then, while some suppose that French efforts to get all parties on the table have been significantly delayed and impeded by the United States' foreign policy towards Lebanon, many others believe that France and the United States have been coordinating every step of the way. This thesis studies the convergence and divergence of American and French foreign policy, taking Lebanon as a case study and specifically after the 31st of October 2016. It provides an up-to-date reading of the current foreign policy of the US and France towards the situation in Lebanon and of where these policies could be heading in the future.

Introduction

Since the times of the ancient Greek civilization to our modern present day, states have been interfering in the internal affairs of other states, most of the times against the will of the latter, for their own national interests. Foreign intervention is a very broad term used to describe several types of interaction between foreign states and internal actors of a single country. It can include diplomatic engagement, mediation, military force, economic sanctions, or even mere rhetorical or symbolic support. The notion refers to change – the idea that foreigners react or anticipate incidents within another state. (Paquin & Saideman, 2010)

Particularly, small states – countries with a relatively small population and economy and with considerable migratory flows and capability limits – have been especially susceptible to foreign intervention, largely due to their size and the constraints of the latter. In areas like the Middle East, one of the regions that has been a fertile ground for foreign interventions since its earliest history, the geopolitics and the demographic composition of its countries have both been attractive to global powers for centuries. As such, Lebanon, the second smallest state in the region, has been particularly influenced by foreign interventions time and time again.

In fact, international interference in Lebanon has shaped much of its history and politics. Global and regional powers have not only shaped the internal dynamics of the country, but many believe that they also set the stage for future crises. Lebanon's borders, its National Pact, its Taef Accords, and even its internal divisions, are the result of foreign intervention in the country.

Two countries among these global and regional powers who have had a significant say at several points in time in Lebanon's internal affairs are the French Republic and the United States of America. In fact, historically, France is the power whose interference in Lebanon has been the most direct, as the country was under French mandate from 1920 to 1943. To this day,

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Lebanon has been strongly holding on to the remnants of that mandate – the country's constitution, its institutions, many of its laws and regulations, and its educational system are all elements that date back to that period. Nevertheless, Lebanon's independence from the French mandate was evidently not the end of foreign intervention in the country. Almost fifteen years after, the United States was the one to intervene in Lebanon. In 1958, the US military was deployed to Lebanon for around three months in Operation Blue Bat and aided the Lebanese government's forces in protecting Lebanese territory from Egyptian and Syrian threats of subverting Lebanon by their United Arab Republic (Reidel, 2019). While American troops left the country shortly, they were back in 1982, along with French troops too, under the Multinational Force in Lebanon after a ceasefire that was brokered by the US between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization to pull out of the Lebanese conflict then (Cimbala & Foster, 2010).

Beyond their direct military presence, both the US and France have been constantly accused of meddling in Lebanon's internal affairs. In the past few years, the United States had been regularly imposing sanctions on Lebanese companies and individuals, whereas, more recently still, France was becoming directly involved in the Lebanese political crisis. Indeed, while both USA and France have each, and even together at times, intervened in the internal issues of Lebanon, they have not always agreed on their foreign policy – not just in Lebanon. At times, some of their viewpoints and practices of foreign policy have converged, coming together to meet at a common understanding – at other times still, these have diverged, differing from each other in path and direction.

More recently, since 2019, Lebanon began struggling with multiple crises – nationwide protests and roadblocks, political deadlock, especially with the presence of a powerful armed non-state actor, economic and financial crises, social tensions and instability, endemic corruption, violence, and security concerns, and, as is the case globally, the COVID-19

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pandemic. To top it all, an explosion occurred at the Port of Beirut on the 4th of August 2020, killing 218, to date, (Wilkins, 2021) and injuring 7,500 victims, leaving around 300,000 individuals homeless, (Stone, 2021) and causing 15 billion USD in property damages in and around the capital (Hussain & Cohn, 2020). Only two days later, the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, arrived in Lebanon and assured the Lebanese people that France will help the country find a path to reform. Standing in his way, however, were many obstacles, among which were the United States' sanctions and foreign policy towards Lebanon. Since then, while some suppose that France and the United States were coordinating every step of the way, many others believe that French efforts to get all parties to the table have been significantly delayed and impeded by the United States' foreign policy towards Lebanon. Although the foreign policy of the United States in general towards the Middle East differs significantly from that of the French, not only in interest, but also in principles and guidelines, approaches, and values, these differences were even more significant under the Trump administration. Nevertheless, with the change of administration in the US on the 20th of January 2021, French authorities were hoping for a slightly more lenient American foreign policy that would allow them to take the lead and begin brokering change in Lebanon. Indeed, in a call on the 24th of January 2021, President Macron and US President Joseph R. Biden highlighted their mutual views and willingness and agreement to cooperate on mutual foreign policy priorities, including the stability and peace in the Middle East – particularly on the situation in Lebanon (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2021).

The issue of the convergence and divergence of American and French foreign policies has become one of the most discussed issues in recent international, regional, and local affairs with good reason. For Lebanon, whose internal conflict has been one of the most significant political conflicts currently, American and French agreement, or disagreement, could bring about the much-anticipated change the country has been yearning for. More significantly,

especially for the Middle East, Lebanon is considered as an Iranian proxy in Iran's conflict with Saudi Arabia. Thus, US and French foreign policies in Lebanon reflect their greater foreign policy towards the region and the consequent possibility of bringing stability to the Middle East. In reality however, the foreign policies of each of France and the US have diplomatic repercussions not only on the Middle East, but for the current international balance of power as well. Indeed, such convergence and divergence have a substantial effect on international relations, as they reflect the more general power dynamics, competition, and status and prestige between two of the greatest global powers.

This thesis studies the convergence and divergence of American and French foreign policy, taking Lebanon as a case study and specifically after the 31st of October 2016. It provides an up-to-date reading of the current foreign policy of the US and France towards the situation in Lebanon and of where these policies could be heading in the future, be it to cooperation or competition. It does so by addressing the general background on the political context, tackling the factors that explain the foreign policy of each of the US and France and their application to the case study, and discussing the American and French policies towards Lebanon and their instruments.

Literature Review

Introduction

A lot has already been learned about the convergence and divergence of American and French foreign policy by past researchers in the field who tend to generally agree on the topic but might also disagree at times. Nevertheless, the general body of knowledge on the topic at hand, built by those researchers, is not entirely free of flaws or loose ends. In fact, this gap is what this thesis proposes to answer.

Accordingly, the literature review aims to indicate where this thesis fits into the context of the already-existing knowledge on the topic. This review lays the groundwork for the thesis, showing why the latter has value in the larger scheme of academia.

The search of the literature was divided into the following bodies: comparative foreign policy, foreign policy guiding principles of the US and France, and American and French interests in Lebanon and the Middle East.

Comparative Foreign Policy

The first literature body reviewed is focused on comparative foreign policy, because this thesis is based on comparative foreign policy analysis, comparing between the American and the French foreign policy towards Lebanon. There are countless academic writings regarding comparative foreign policy. However, the literature of Paul M. Kattenburg; James N. Rosenau; Charles F. Hermann; Valerie M. Hudson; Marijke Breuning; Ryan K. Beasley, Juliet Kaarbo, Jeffrey S. Lantis, and Michael T. Snarr; James A. Caporaso, Charles W. Kegley, and Dina A. Zinnes; Gregory Peacock; Ib Faurby; Steve Smith; and Stephen J. Andriole, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Gerald W. Hoppel; have been chosen for this literature body because they discuss the most relevant and popular theories with regards to comparative foreign policy. The theories on the traditional practice, *raison d'être* and history of comparative foreign policy, its

significance and successes, problems and limitations, and needs and possible paths for its future will be reviewed below.

To begin with the traditional practice, *raison d'être*, and history of comparative foreign policy, Paul M. Kattenburg explains that the practice in comparative foreign policy traditionally was to examine individually and randomly the foreign policy of certain powers and then compare and attempt to discover a pattern where possible. However, since the 1960s, James N. Rosenau has attempted to measure the relative strength of a series of variables perceived as related to the foreign policy-making process of governments around the world. This scientific approach is dedicated to the concept of repetitions and consistencies in state behavior, with the goal of developing theoretical generalizations about foreign policy and international relations more broadly. (Kattenburg, 1974) Indeed, James N. Rosenau wrote that it is essential to direct the study of foreign policy to comparative analysis because the main theoretical challenges cannot be overcome otherwise. He explained that repeated experiences of several national systems should be closely compared to begin understanding political processes and systemic adaptation. Rosenau argued that, that way, theoretic curiosity is met, and reliable data can be accumulated on which options and recommendations can be given. (Rosenau, 1968)

In response to Rosenau, Charles F. Hermann explained that activists for comparative foreign policy have two traits: first, they seek to direct foreign policy study to all nation-state types and other international actors, and second, they want to set foreign policy theories that empirically lead to verifiable generalities. That is, the comparison principle is adopted in two methods: first, to determine that the inquiry scope is supra-national, and second, to propose the need for adopting comparative analysis in scientific investigation. (Hermann, 1972)

The comparative foreign policy sub-field itself, as explained by Valerie M. Hudson, was established by those who took up the challenge of James Rosenau to create a multilevel

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cross-national foreign policy theory and then put it through thorough empirical testing. She writes that within the field of foreign policy analysis, behaviorism is the most obvious in the sub-field of comparative foreign policy. Indeed, scholars of comparative foreign policy suggested the study of an event in foreign policy as the tangible object of an attempt to influence international relations. Thus, events became comparable along behavioral lines and could be aggregated along meaningful theoretical dimensions. However, in the 1980s, the study of comparative foreign policy diminished. Hudson explains that the term itself started to sound gullible and quaint. This growing criticism and self-criticism exposed a series of inconsistencies in the comparative foreign policy approach that required resolution before any improvement could be considered. These included, first, that methods for comparative foreign policy theoretically required parsimony but methodologically required detail and distinction. Second, scholars started to wonder whether their methods were helping them in attaining their theoretical objectives or hindering them from ever attaining them. And finally, comparative foreign policy was being pulled between a research goal very policy relevant but similar to the result of traditional experts on specific nations (predicting something about a certain country at a certain time in a certain set of conditions), and a research goal not highly relevant to policy but would render the scholar a generalist and a scientist (a grand unified theory). The author explains that the latter goal and the requirements of aggregated empirical testing were dropped in favor of the necessity to adopt middle-range theory, as was Rosenau's founding vision and initial goal. (Hudson, 2013)

Comparative foreign policy is a significant field due to its many successes. Marijke Breuning believes that analyzing foreign policy from a comparative and systematic perspective has the capacity to lead to knowledge that is much more useful than simply being aware of historical facts. She believes that a systematic explanation of foreign policy cases as either different or similar can aid decision-makers to design proper responses. Exploring foreign

policy from the comparative lens, be it for the different decisions taken by the leaders of the same state or comparing them with those of many states, has the benefit of enabling the determination of patterns in the processes of decision-making and in the decisions themselves. Indeed, this could offer knowledge about the behavior and ramifications of foreign policy deeper than that provided by exploring singular cases and making simple conclusions. The author writes that without the potential to compare events, it would be very hard to evaluate what lessons can be learnt for certain cases – and deducing a faulty lesson from a specific case, or making a wrong conclusion, could sometimes have a disastrous impact on policymaking. (Breuning, 2007)

Ryan K. Beasley, Juliet Kaarbo, Jeffrey S. Lantis, and Michael T. Snarr add that they believe in the significance of a theory-motivated comparison to have a better understanding of the interpretation and nature of foreign policy generally. They write that, while some researchers have let go of the term “comparative foreign policy” because of its previous link with inductive, quantitative, and positivist approaches, comparing behaviors regarding foreign policy frequently reflects similarities and differences that constitute the building blocks of deeper scientific social research. The authors use the comparative method to find out similarities and differences between foreign policies and identifying patterns of behavior. They explain that state differences, and the differences in their international situation, create a diverse image of the methods through which they behave in international relations. (Beasley et al., 2013)

The main attention of comparative foreign policy is the actions and policy of governments focused on external relations, as explained by James A. Caporaso, Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley Jr., James N. Rosenau, and Dina A. Zinnes. The comparative method includes developing falsifiable confirmable generalities and explanatory theory that can be empirically investigated through systemically comparing similar variables. They believe

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that among the accomplishments of scholars in comparative foreign policy are the development and refinement of the main principle of foreign policy and behavior, the elaboration of measurements for several variables, and significant data collection bases in some fields. (Caporaso et al., 1987) Herrmann along with Gregory Peacock also add that there is proof, upon reviewing the collective work in the field and in other contributions, of an accumulation of a theoretical understanding and of a conceptual evolution of foreign policy. (Hermann & Peacock, 1987)

Nevertheless, comparative foreign policy is not void of limitations and problems. In fact, Ib Faurby describes that the field of comparative foreign policy suffers from two main problems: framework development for empirical investigation and the application of the comparative method to studying foreign policy. He describes that the field's theory is not strong, and its methods not considered enough. (Faurby, 1976) Caporaso, Hermann, Kegley Jr., Rosenau, and Zinnes have further written that critical difficulties face this field of study. These include the repetitive introduction of typologies that lack theoretical ingress, an over-reliance on aggregate data of national events and attributes that limit innovative initiatives for research, the conceptualization of comparative foreign policy that may have rendered the introduction of dynamic methods hard, and the primary framing of significant findings in terms of ad-hoc hypotheses. (Caporaso et al., 1987) In criticism of the theories of Caporaso, Kegley, and Zinnes, Steve Smith argues that the authors treat the limitations of one approach of comparative foreign policy as general to all methods of foreign policy analysis. Smith is adamant that their definition of comparative foreign policy is very narrow and that they hold a certain methodological perspective. This, he says, undermines the value of foreign policy analysis while being unsuccessful in creating an approach that goes from data collection to theory development. (Smith, 1987)

Herrmann and Peacock add that comparative foreign policy lacks empirically verified hypotheses amid a widespread impression that the combined propositions do not make revelations about foreign policy more than each individual finding does. They also explain that the field lacks the characteristics of a normative science with a generally agreed-upon paradigm. However, they believe that theory development expectations in comparative foreign policy impact one's evaluation of the achievements of the field. (Herrmann & Peacock, 1987)

Regardless, many of these scholars suggest possible paths for the future of comparative foreign policy. For instance, Stephen J. Andriole, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Gerald W. Hoppo elaborated their own framework for comparative foreign policy, built to mitigate their grievances about the state of this field of study, of social scientific research, and its irrelevance to the community in charge of policymaking. The framework they have built can be adapted to a range of utilitarian and analytical objectives. Nevertheless, they underscored that adopting their framework needed a significant number of problems that needed to be faced, most notably with regard to explanation, specification, and operationalization. (Andriole et al., 1975) Faurby also argued that a deeper interaction between empirical and theoretical work is needed, along with the development of a specific comparative technique to be used as the connection between theory and research method application to empirical knowledge (Faurby, 1976). Furthermore, while Caporaso, Herrmann, Kegley Jr., Rosenau, and Zinnes admitted that none of their suggested new initiatives can enable the confrontation of the field's relatively poor theory-articulation state, they still attempted to propose some humble strategies to empower researchers to adopt theoretical thinking (Caporaso et al., 1987).

Once the literature on comparative foreign policy has been reviewed, laying the theoretical basis for this thesis, the literature bodies reviewed hereafter focus more directly on the background of the topic and on issues that explain the foreign policies of the US and France towards Lebanon.

Foreign Policy Guiding Principles of the US and France

There are numerous academic writings regarding the foreign policy guiding principles of the US and France. Accordingly, this literature body was divided into two.

USA

The literature of Fraser Cameron; Erdoan A. Shipoli; Dexter Perkins; Richard H. Owens; Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay; Charles Kupchan; Inderjeet Parmar, Linda B. Miller, and Mark Ledwidge; James M. McCormick; and Jeffrey D. Sachs have been selected for this literature body, as they tackle the most popular and relevant theories on the foreign policy guiding principles of the US. The theories on the existence of guiding principles, the principle of neutrality, the principle of isolationism and no entangling alliances, the principle of pre-emption, the relationship with international institutions, and other foreign policy guiding principles will be reviewed below.

Fraser Cameron has explained that there is no agreement between the US's Founding Fathers about the principles that should guide American foreign policy beyond the policy of isolationism or non-entanglement with other countries. He writes that a review of the history of the US makes it not shocking that USA has had a hard time in finding its foreign policy guiding principles after the Cold War ended. (Cameron, 2003) Erdoan A. Shipoli adds that, although many debate the guiding principles of American foreign policy, there are many others who believe that the US does not have any foreign policy principles and runs on the fuel of the Cold War only (Shipoli, 2018).

Still, many other scholars have explored the foreign policy guiding principles of the United States. Among these, Dexter Perkins mentions the principle of complete neutrality in European wars, which was one of the oldest principles in American diplomatic history. However, he points out that the principle of neutrality is clearly undergoing decay. (Perkins,

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1941) Richard H. Owens also explores the principle of neutrality that was applied as an efficient guiding principle in the foreign policy of the US. He explains that neutrality was a valid and solid principle in American Foreign Policy until World War II. (Owens, 2009)

Perkins mentions the principle of no entangling alliances as one of the foreign policy principles of the United States, one of the oldest principles in American diplomatic history (Perkins, 1941). Cameron has also explained that the only agreement between the US's Founding Fathers about the guiding principles of American foreign policy is around the policy of isolationism or non-entanglement with other countries that has an old historical tradition (Cameron, 2003). Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay clarify that President George W. Bush, in his first thirty months in office, redefined and even discarded many of the guiding principles governing the US's foreign policy. As such, he relied on ad-hoc coalitions and evaded permanent allies. (Daalder & Lindsay, 2003) Indeed, Charles Kupchan included a dismissal of allies as one of the guiding principles of American foreign policy under the George W. Bush administration (Kupchan, 2007). Nevertheless, Inderjeet Parmar, Linda B. Miller, and Mark Ledwidge explain that after the Cold War ended, with the threat of the Soviet Union no longer existent, the US increasingly had no ongoing necessity to cut back the tendencies of its foreign policy in light of the sensitivities of its alliances in Europe. The authors highlight that alliance harmony was hence not a strategic necessity anymore for the period after the Cold War and stopped being a principle guiding American foreign policy. (Parmar et al., 2009) James M. McCormick also analyzed the impact of two crucial traditions in foreign policy history of the US, a dedication to isolationism and a dependence on moral principle as foreign policy guidelines. He explains that these two traditions heavily shape the essence of past foreign policy of the US, and the beliefs and values that lie beneath this dependence still influence American global orientation. McCormick acknowledges that, while this explanation reflects the central perspective of America's early history, other views question this perspective.

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Contradictory explanations point to national or realist interest foundations of the foreign policy of the US. They also point to its tendencies of expansionism across the American continent and in international relations during the US's first century. However, the author explains that the shock of the second World War and its ramifications resulted in the denial of the US's international isolationism, even as a dedication to moral principles as a guiding principle to foreign policy was maintained. Yet, as the Cold War ended and terrorism emerged, the appeal of these traditional foreign policy principles reappeared. This was reflected in President George W. Bush's primary adoption of a more isolationist and unilateral approach and, later, a commitment to new globalism in the fight against terrorism. (McCormick, 2013)

Daalder and Lindsay explain that President Bush emphasized a proactive principle of preemption in his foreign policy and gave little importance to reactive strategies of containment and deterrence. (Daalder & Lindsay, 2003) Kupchan also describes the guiding principles of American foreign policy during the George W. Bush administration to include a policy of preeminence and preemption (Kupchan, 2007).

Cameron has written that Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points Speech" that set out, in 1918, the principles that should guide American policy included the principle of collective security rather than the desertion of the balance of power system (Cameron, 2003). However, Daalder and Lindsay explain that, later, President George W. Bush for instance depended on the US's unilateral exercise of power rather than on international institutions and rule of law as a guiding principle for his administration's foreign policy (Daalder & Lindsay, 2003). Indeed, Kupchan also includes distance from international institutions as a guiding principle (Kupchan, 2007).

Among other guiding principles, Perkins explores the foreign policy principles of the United States, mentioning a reluctance to make binding commitments regarding the engagement of American armed forces in war and the idea of the freedom of the seas. This

reluctance became a permanent characteristic of the foreign policy of the US from the year 1800 onwards. The author further elaborates on the Monroe Doctrine, a foreign policy principle of action which consisted of principles that include: the no-transfer of the new world territory from a power to another without American consent, the principle of non-intervention, Pan-Americanism in diplomatic action, and equal opportunity and no discrimination in international trade. (Perkins, 1941)

Moreover, Cameron contends that Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points Speech" included self-determination, general disarmament, and a call for open diplomacy as principles that should guide American foreign policy. After 1947, however, the fight against communism became the US foreign policy's guiding principle. (Cameron, 2003)

Additionally, Shipoli explains that many describe the principles guiding American foreign policy with the set of ideas including Hamilton's emphasis on strong government and backing of businesses, Wilson's emphasis on the US's democratic mission, Jefferson's emphasis on the importance of safeguarding American values domestically, and Jackson's emphasis on economic and military power (Shipoli, 2018).

Furthermore, Jeffrey D. Sachs argues that the principle of American exceptionalism has reached a dead end. It is not applicable anymore as the US is not the dominant power any longer. Thus, he claims that this principle does not work anymore to guide the US's foreign policy efficiently, and that it has not done so for a while. (Sachs, 2018)

France

The literature of Pernille Rieker, Øivind Bratberg, Frederic Bozo, Timo Behr, Patrick Muller, Nurettin Yigit, Fabien Terpan, Dominique Moïsi, Michael Harrison, and Miroslav Sedivy have been selected for this literature body, as they tackle the most popular and relevant theories on the foreign policy guiding principles of France. The theories on the principle of the belief in a strong Europe, the principle of French grandeur, the principles of preference for

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multilateralism, having an international role, dedication to a “mission civilisatrice,” reliance on principle more than pragmatism, global reach with former colonial relations, independence, and other foreign policy guiding principles will be reviewed below.

Øivind Bratberg writes that a summary of French policy after the war could originate in a set of broadly shared principles, regardless of the significant political transformation that was happening then. One of the important guiding principles he extracts is the belief in a strong Europe under French leadership. (Bratberg, 2011) Frederic Bozo has also identified the same foreign policy principle, as he writes that the quest for the European project is a guiding principle because the additional influence presented by Europe has long offered France’s only chance of maintaining its weight in the international system (Bozo, 2016).

Timo Behr believes that the French foreign policy towards the Arab world, its “politique arabe,” was guided by strategic principles that include the preservation of French exceptionalism (Behr, 2008). Patrick Muller agrees, explaining that France’s *politique arabe* defends France’s exceptionalism (Muller, 2012). Bozo has also pinpointed that French foreign policy’s guiding principles do in fact include the pursuit of “rank” (Bozo, 2016). Nurettin Yigit further elaborates that it is French President Charles De Gaulle’s foreign policy, the Gaullist approach, that had a strongly held self-conception that can be described by the term “grandeur” (Yigit, 2015). However, Pernille Rieker explains that it is actually since 1945 that the foreign policy of France has been guided by the specific principle of reviving France’s greatness, or grandeur, defended in the context of the exceptionalism of the country. (Rieker, 2017) He has also reflected on how France’s exceptionalism, or grandeur, remains a guiding principle of the foreign policy of France (Rieker, 2018).

Another important guiding principle Bratberg extracts is a preference for multilateralism, with the EU and UN as central vehicles, partially functioning as counterbalance to the power of the US (Bratberg, 2011). Indeed, Bozo adds to the French

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foreign policy's guiding principles, not just the pursuit of rank, but the search for an international system too, because only a balanced and stable world order can ensure French and European interests. (Bozo, 2016). Fabien Terpan has also written that the foreign policy principles defended by France comprise French emphasis on ideals that include multilateralism (Terpan, 2019).

Bratberg has highlighted a guiding principle of similar significance: France's independent impact on the international system, reinforced by robust presidential power (Bratberg, 2011). In fact, Rieker also writes that France's foreign policy has long asserted its stated principle of having an international role (Rieker, 2017). For instance, Muller explains that the focal positions of France's *politique arabe* included a French leading role in the Mediterranean, a principle that became institutionalized in France's foreign policy (Muller, 2012).

Behr believes that the French *politique arabe* was guided by strategic principles that also include its dedication to a "mission civilisatrice" (Behr, 2008). Indeed, a respected civilizing mission founded on France's republican legacy is another important guiding principle Bratberg extracts (Bratberg, 2011). Muller has also explained that an important element is cultural diplomacy, especially its emphasis on "la Francophonie." He writes that the focal positions of France's "politique arabe" included the importance of close cultural and political links with the main Arab countries, as this principle also became institutionalized in France's foreign policy. (Muller, 2012) Yigit writes that De Gaulle generated a set of guidelines that have shaped French foreign policy up to this day, among which closely linked with the French policy of grandeur is the idea of civilizational mission. (Yigit, 2015)

Another important guiding principle Bratberg extracts is a reliance on principle more than on pragmatism (Bratberg, 2011). Such principles, Terpan writes, include French emphasis

on ideals including respect for UN decisions and international law, human rights, and democracy (Terpan, 2019).

Dominique Moïsi writes that French foreign policy guiding principles have been drawn from a combination of realism and idealism. He argues that these principles, which have always been existent in foreign policy but to different degrees, include generosity towards the Third World. (Moïsi, 1981) In fact, an apparent standing of global reach with former colonial relations is another guiding principle Bratberg extracts (Bratberg, 2011). For instance, Muller has explained that France's *politique arabe* defends the remainder of the French colonial empire in the region (Muller, 2012). Behr also believes that the *politique arabe* was guided by strategic principles that include a historic engagement in the region (Behr, 2008).

Michael Harrison has explained that the specific foreign policy guidelines during De Gaulle's presidency include independence in national defense. He writes that French governments will, on the long-term, have to stick to such principles. (Harrison, 1984) Muller agrees, elaborating that focal positions of France's *politique arabe* include its focus on independence, a principle that also became institutionalized in France's foreign policy (Muller, 2012). Yigit has also written that independence is one of the principles adopted in foreign policy from the Gaullist approach (Yigit, 2015).

Among other guiding principles, Miroslav Sedivy argues that non-intervention became an important guiding principle in French foreign policy in the early 1830s and served as a weapon against Austria's dominance in Italy (Sedivy 2019). Moïsi also writes that French foreign policy guiding principles include ambiguity towards the United States and firmness towards the Soviet Union (Moïsi, 1981). Moreover, Harrison has explained that the specific foreign policy guidelines during De Gaulle's presidency, include a special status as an Atlantic ally, dependence on a national nuclear arsenal, and opposition to a strong bipolar world order (Harrison, 1984). Additionally, Muller discusses that France's *politique arabe* adopted Arab

progressive nationalism, with which France's policymakers formed close personnel and diplomatic ties through its leaders, portraying France as a decolonization champion (Muller, 2012). Furthermore, Yigit writes that one of the principles adopted in foreign policy from the Gaullist approach is activism. The author adds that closely linked with the principle of grandeur is the idea of potential presence as well. (Yigit, 2015)

American and French Interests in Lebanon and the Middle East

With regards to American and French interests in Lebanon and the Middle East, several academic writings have been published. On that basis, this literature body is split in two.

USA

The literature of William Quandt, Jacob Abadi, David Schenker, Ileana M. Carusso, James R. Stocker, Samir Khalaf, Mattia Toaldo, The American Task Force for Lebanon and the Middle East Institute, Hanin Ghaddar, Anne Marie Baylouny, Irene L. Gendzier, Jack Covarrubias and Tom Lansford, David Wight, Frederick H. Fleitz Jr., Henrietta Wilkins, and Peter Seeberg were chosen for a review of American interests in Lebanon and the Middle East. This body was divided into the main theories reviewed below: the existence of interests; Cold War calculations and the containment of communism; economic interests, especially petroleum and trade; the US's special relationship with Israel; Lebanon's strategic location; Lebanon's major Palestinian refugee population; the containment of Iranian influence in the region; the preservation of political pluralism; the preservation of liberty; and other interests.

William Quandt has reiterated that the US does not have any essential interests in Lebanon (Quandt, 1984). Indeed, Jacob Abadi has also written that, in the late 1960s, there was no foreign policy interest in Lebanon for the US, as the country declined in its business importance and ceased to be the intermediary for oil agreements (Abadi, 2020). Since then, David Schenker has explained that Lebanon is a weak and small country with little natural

resources and no petroleum, and thus has not been perceived traditionally as an American national security policy interest in the Middle East. He suggested that, in recent decades, Lebanon has been a “backwater” of American foreign policy, except for the two military interventions that were conducted by the US in Lebanon in 1958 and 1982. Considering Lebanon’s perceived negligible strategic value to the US, the latter has significantly favored to stay away from Lebanon. For most of the years between 1989 and 2009, the American administration has considerably considered its relations with Beirut from the perspective of Syria and the Israeli Syrian peace process. The latter had, by the 1990s, become the chief American interest in Lebanon, and thus the issues of Lebanon began to fall within the prism of Syrian American links. (Schenker, 2009) Ileana M. Carusso also suggests that some may claim that Lebanon has restricted strategic interests to the US. Contrary to several US partners in the region, Lebanon does not have any American military bases, petroleum fields, international waterways, industrial or military power, or important trading relations with the US. (Carusso, 2011) James R. Stocker has thus concluded with the possibility that American policy towards Lebanon might not have been the result of interests, but of neglect simply (Stocker, 2016).

Still, many other scholars have explored the foreign policy interests of the United States in Lebanon and the Middle East, even historically. Quandt suggested that the US did have several significant interests at stake in Lebanon, including preventing Lebanon from becoming a catalyst for a major Israeli Syrian war that could have included threats of intervention by the USSR (Quandt, 1984). In fact, Abadi explained that, in 1949, foreign policy decisions in USA were moved by Cold War calculations and the US’s wider interest in containing the communist threat (Abadi, 2020). Samir Khalaf has also written that the American intervention in the late 1950s in Lebanon should not be considered as the West’s commitment to the interests Lebanon portrays. Instead, Lebanon was a proxy for different larger interests in the region. Indeed, the American administration was interested back then in curtailing the growth of communism and

radical Arab nationalism, which were considered as jeopardizing US essential interests in the Middle East, especially its supply of petroleum. (Khalaf, 2002)

Additionally, Stocker has written about a set of interests that have historically motivated the US to intervene more directly in Lebanon, including the strategic interests of the Cold War. Indeed, amid the Cold War, worry about the expansion of the influence of the Soviet Union was portrayed in economic and military aid, political intervention, and covert action. In the early 1960s, attempts to promote an agreeable Western-oriented alliance in the region had resulted in failure, and the American administration focused on enhancing its relations with the countries of the Middle East that they considered as friendly to the interests of USA, Lebanon included. (Stocker, 2016) Mattia Toaldo also wrote that the United States was drawn into Lebanon in the early 1980s due to its Cold War fears (Toaldo, 2012). Even today, The American Task Force for Lebanon and the Middle East Institute write that one more failed state in the region would negatively affect American strategic interests in the Middle East. The US has important strategic interests to endorse a solid and prosperous Lebanon, including counteracting the intrusion by China and Russia (Middle East Institute & the American Task Force for Lebanon, 2020). Hanin Ghaddar also explains that one hard-power cause that could motivate the US to become more deeply engaged in Lebanon is preceding Russia and China to the leadership of the region. (Ghaddar, 2020)

Abadi explains that, in 1949, USA became interested in Lebanon to be allowed to fly over Lebanese land on its way to KSA to guarantee its large oil reserves. Thus, foreign policy decisions in USA were moved by trade considerations, petroleum especially. (Abadi, 2020) Anne Marie Baylouny also discusses the idea that American interests in the period between 1940 and 1950 in Lebanon were dominated by the significance of oil interests and trade. After the second World War, American petroleum companies and business considered Lebanon a significant location for profit in the Middle East. To American petroleum interests, the country

was focal to the pipeline that terminated in Lebanon, the Trans-Arabian pipeline (TAPLINE). Lebanon was an entryway, not just for petroleum and gold to get to Western countries, but also for the West's goods to reach the East. Thus, American interests wanted Lebanon to remain unconditionally economically open to the West. (Baylouny, 2014) In a similar manner, Irene L. Gendzier has explained that, between 1945 and 1958, the control of petroleum was a factor in American foreign policy in the Middle East after World War II. She explains that, in the American intervention in Lebanon, petroleum interests within the context of larger financial, economic, political, and strategic interests were involved, as Lebanon was the transit country to which the pipeline was under the control of TAPLINE. Although Lebanon had no petroleum resources, it was one of the countries through which pipelines passed to the Mediterranean. By then, American airlines were also negotiating bilateral contracts in the country too. Gendzier thus explains that Lebanon fit within the American commitment of its civilian and military plans to guarantee access to oil, the construction of bases, the acquiring of airway rights, and the larger agreement on trade expansion in the Middle East. (Gendzier, 2006)

Jack Covarrubias and Tom Lansford have also written that the basis of the interests of the US in the Middle East rest solely on economic lines. After the Cold War, the US was interested in preserving a western-centric stability in the region to guarantee the free flow of energy from the Middle East. In fact, the main American interventions in the area were done with this interest in mind. (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007) Stocker has also explored that USA had economic interests to intervene more directly in Lebanon, with petroleum being the most significant of these, in the country. Since the 1930s, Lebanon was the endpoint for a petroleum pipeline that originates in Baghdad, and, since the early 1950s, for TAPLINE from KSA. However, Stocker acknowledges that even those who argue that economic interests were a factor in American foreign policy towards Lebanon during that period, cannot completely

justify American attention to Lebanon, especially as the TAPLINE's strategic significance was reduced by the late 1960s. (Stocker, 2016)

Toaldo believes that the United States was drawn into Lebanon in the early 1980s due to the US's special relationship with Israel (Toaldo, 2012). Similarly, Covarrubias and Lansford write that the main American interventions in the area were done with the US's traditional support for Israel in mind as an interest (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007). Stocker also describes another set of interests that have historically motivated the US to intervene more directly in Lebanon, including the Arab Israeli conflict. He explains that, while Lebanon had not been the subject of attention of Western accounts of American foreign policy towards the Arab Israeli conflict, Lebanese, Palestinian, and other Arab narratives frequently describe Lebanon as the center of American policy towards that conflict. (Stocker, 2016) The American Task Force for Lebanon and the Middle East Institute also outline American interests that include preserving security on the Israeli border to prevent another war (Middle East Institute & the American Task Force for Lebanon, 2020).

Schenker explained that Lebanon's focal geographic location highlights mixed strategic interest of the US in Lebanon (Schenker, 2009). Carusso also suggested that some might highlight Lebanon's strategic position as a buffer zone between Syria and Israel as an American foreign policy interest in the region (Carusso, 2011).

David Wight has written that, in the late 1970s, the American administration depended on the intervention of the Syrian forces in Lebanon because some segments of the Lebanese and Palestinian groups challenged American perceived interests in the Middle East during the Cold War. He writes that the American administration became more adamant on protecting its interests that way. (Wight, 2013) In fact, Carusso suggests that some might highlight the country's major Palestinian refugee population as another interest for American foreign policy in the Middle East (Carusso, 2011).

Frederick H. Fleitz Jr. believes that the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL) serves the American foreign policy interest of containing the influence of Hizballah, Iranian-backed terror group, in the South of Lebanon. (Fleitz Jr., 2002) Covarrubias and Lansford also claim that the main American interventions in the area began with the interest of preventing the rise of a prospective nuclear power such as Iran. (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007) As such, Carusso explains that current American policy towards Lebanon focuses on the containment of the Iranian sphere of influence while preserving stability and security in the Middle East. With regional players such as Iran, Syria, and KSA, competing for influence in the Levant, the author writes that Lebanon has become the stage for a proxy war. (Carusso, 2011) Henrietta Wilkins agrees, suggesting that during the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, the United States' interest was in abolishing or harming Hezbollah to deteriorate the position of the alliance between Iran and Syria and push USA's own larger regional interests. The United States perceived the war as a chance to face the Syrian Iranian alliance working against American interest in the region in Iraq and to change the balance of power in the Middle East in its favor. (Wilkins, 2013) For instance, Peter Seeberg has explained that American interests in the 2004 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 were linked to the containment of Syria in the Middle East, countering Hezbollah, and thus reducing the influence of Iran in the region (Seeberg, 2016). The American Task Force for Lebanon and the Middle East Institute also outline American interests that entail counteracting the influence of Iran and its proxy Hezbollah (Middle East Institute & the American Task Force for Lebanon, 2020). Ghaddar has also explained that one hard-power cause that could motivate the US to become more deeply engaged in Lebanon mostly is providing the Lebanese people with an opportunity to form a new political system that cuts down Hezbollah's size. (Ghaddar, 2020)

Quandt suggested that the US's significant interests at stake in Lebanon include preserving the political pluralism (Quandt, 1984). The American Task Force for Lebanon and

the Middle East Institute have also written that the US's important strategic interests to endorse a solid and prosperous Lebanon include maintaining Lebanon's unique specimen of tolerance, coexistence, openness, and inclusive diversity of cultures and communities (Middle East Institute & the American Task Force for Lebanon, 2020).

Quandt also proposed that the US's significant interests at stake in Lebanon include preserving the intellectual liberty of important value to ties with the West in the Middle East (Quandt, 1984). Schenker has also argued that Lebanon is an intellectual center of the region and has an important influence in forming Middle Eastern trends. This also highlights the mixed strategic interest of the US in Lebanon. (Schenker, 2009)

Among other interests, Abadi writes that even prior to the cold war and its consequent increase in commerce and growth of the oil industry, American interest in Lebanon was primarily confined to missionaries and legation members in the country's capital (Abadi, 2020).

Moreover, Covarrubias and Lansford write that the main American interventions in the area began with the interest of stopping any single specific country in the Middle East from getting too strong and decreasing anti-Western feelings (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007). Additionally, Quandt suggested that the US's significant interests at stake in Lebanon include proving in Lebanon that American diplomacy can play a beneficial role, regardless of whether decisive or not, in shaping incidents (Quandt, 1984). Furthermore, Carusso contends that some might highlight Lebanon's traditional role as a speaker for the US with the Arabs as another American foreign policy interest in Lebanon (Carusso, 2011).

The American Task Force for Lebanon and the Middle East Institute also write that the US's important strategic interests to endorse a solid and prosperous Lebanon include preventing another failed state in the Middle East that could create new heavens for terrorism and new refugee flows. Another such interest is supporting an expanding collaboration with

the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) as the only reliable government agency to protect Lebanon's territorial integrity and security. (Middle East Institute & the American Task Force for Lebanon, 2020)

Ghaddar has also explained that several hard-power causes could motivate the US to become more deeply engaged in Lebanon include polishing its leadership credentials in the region and guaranteeing supply lines to Syria (Ghaddar, 2020).

France

The literature of Jack Covarrubias and Tom Lansford, Timo Behr, Patrick Muller, Henrietta Wilkins, Joe Macaron, Peter Seeberg, and Charles Thepaut were chosen for a review of French interests in Lebanon and the Middle East. This body was divided into the main theories reviewed below: economic interests, security risks, a claim to great power, a politically sympathetic coalition in the region, countering Soviet and American influence in the Arab world, cultural interests, French Arab bi-nationals, and other interests.

Jack Covarrubias and Tom Lansford write that the French government's good relationships with Middle Eastern states are economically significant for the French. Indeed, economic links are significant interests to France's foreign policy towards the Middle East, particularly with past colonies such as Lebanon. In fact, France uses this aspect of its relations with the Arab states as a tool to empower its links with these states and establish a strong economic relationship. Thus, the authors conclude that, economically, France has gradually expanded its engagement in the region, rendering it essential to its foreign trade and to the expansion of its impact in the region. (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007) Timo Behr also argues that France's interests in the Middle East include the preservation of low energy prices and an open environment for European investment and commerce. By turning France from a colonial state to a champion for self-determination and sustaining its engagement in the region,

the French strategy attempted to ensure interests for itself that include trade benefits. (Behr, 2008)

Patrick Muller agrees, explaining that France's "politique arabe" has been driven by significant economic interests closely related to larger regional concerns. Indeed, France positioned itself as a key trade partner and weapons supplier to states in the Middle East, and, by the 1960's second half, 90% of French petroleum imports originated from the Arab world. Although French's ration of petroleum imports from the region was decreased by the 1990s, the Mediterranean was still focal to its energy policy. The French Republic also established solid trade relations with single Arab states and became a chief external investor and aid provider to many of these. (Muller, 2012) Similarly, Henrietta Wilkins suggests that the region of the Middle East is an important segment of the international system because of its material and strategic significance. Indeed, it is rich in essential mineral resources. Wilkins explains that this has led France and other Western states to engage in policies with the aim of broadening their power in the Middle East. She writes that by destroying any chances for a regional economy and allowing these powers of the West to have economic access to the Middle East, this system prevented the region from becoming a united and powerful economic power that could threaten the interests of the West. (Wilkins, 2013) Moreover, Joe Macaron argues that France is seeking to run and rebuild the Beirut port after the August 2020 blast. He adds that France has an interest in reinstating French investment in the mobile phone industry in Lebanon. Another major economic interest for the French in Lebanon is the exploration of natural gas, especially with Total, a French energy company, leading the multinational coalition that signed the agreements for exploration and production with the Lebanese government for its offshore gas blocks. (Macaron, 2020)

Covarrubias and Lansford also write that the growing focus of France's administration on worries about terrorism in France have formed the formulation of French Arab foreign

policy. The French government's good relationships with Middle Eastern states also play an essential role in a soft power campaign that seeks to make the country less of a target for terrorism. Indeed, France's close distance to the region makes it strongly feel the impact of disruptions in the Middle East. (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007) Behr also suggests that France's interests in the Middle East, especially due to its geographic proximity, include the limitation of migration and the fight against terrorism (Behr, 2008). Muller agrees as well, explaining that France's "politique arabe" has been driven by significant strategic interests closely related to larger regional concerns. Due to the close geographic distance, France's security institutions have been especially worried about the increase of security risks in the Arab world since the 1990s, including migration, socio-economic growth, and fundamentalism. (Muller, 2012) Wilkins has also suggested that the region of the Middle East's terrorism and immigration matters have broader political and economic consequences (Wilkins, 2013).

Covarrubias and Lansford have written as well that France has sought to portray itself as the leader of the developing world, especially in the Middle East, to empower its status in the international community. The French government seeks to encourage good relationships with Middle Eastern states as a method of enhancing its position in the region and, more broadly, in the European Union and even the international community. Covarrubias and Lansford further explain that French pressure for Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon aided in an attempt to present itself as an actor for justice and a voice for weaker states internationally. Thus, the authors conclude that, politically, France seeks to push states in the Middle East to follow its lead in international matters, hence widening its impact worldwide. (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007) Behr also suggests that France's role in the region serves the Gaullist understanding of France's exceptionalism. By turning France from a colonial state to a champion for self-determination and sustaining its engagement in the region, French strategy attempted to ensure interests for itself that include a claim to great power. (Behr, 2008) In the

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same line of thought, Peter Seeberg claims that, for instance, in 2007, it was crucial for France to show the media that it had not forgotten Lebanon – its historical ally. For the author, by giving France a political image for giving Beirut significant funds, France was interested in relaunching itself as a significant actor in the Middle East. (Seeberg, 2009) Joe Macaron further explains the motivations behind the French initiative, claiming that, after the blow French influence suffered after France failed to identify a Turkish warship going to Libya, France found the chance to reaffirm its role in the Middle East through Lebanon (Macaron, 2020).

Covarrubias and Lansford also point that France uses its relations with previous colonies among Arab states as a tool to empower its links with these states and establish a strong political relation. The state also implements comprehensive French culture and language programs in the area, in Lebanon as such, to aid in forming a politically sympathetic coalition. (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007) Behr also suggests that France's interests in the Middle East include a peaceful balance of power in the region (Behr, 2008). As such, Charles Thepaut explains that the spheres of the foreign policy of France perceive Lebanon as vital to a balance in the region (Thepaut, 2020).

Covarrubias and Lansford also write that the growing focus of France's administration on the semi-contention with the US has also formed the formulation of French Arab foreign policy (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007). Behr also suggests that France's interests in the Middle East include countering against Soviet and American influence in the Arab world, as France's role in the region provides the republic with a unique position in the evolving West-East rivalry (Behr, 2008).

Covarrubias and Lansford have also written that the growing focus of France's administration on the promotion of "la Francophonie" has also formed the formulation of French Arab foreign policy. The French government's good relationships with Middle Eastern states play an essential role in a soft power campaign that seeks to spread French influence in

the world. The authors point that cultural links are significant interests to France's foreign policy towards the Middle East, particularly with past colonies such as Lebanon. In fact, France uses this aspect of its relations with the Arab states as a tool to empower its links with these states and establish a strong cultural and societal relationship. Thus, the authors conclude that France implements comprehensive French culture and language programs in the area, in Lebanon as such, to increase France's impact subtly under its soft power campaign and to aid in forming a culturally and socially sympathetic coalition. (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007) Behr also suggests that by turning France from a colonial state to a champion for self-determination and sustaining its engagement in the region, French strategy attempted to ensure interests for itself that include a transformed feeling of mission in the world (Behr, 2008).

Covarrubias and Lansford write that the growing focus of France's administration on its own considerable population of Arabs in France has also formed French Arab foreign policy (Covarrubias & Lansford, 2007). Indeed, Thepaut explains that a vibrant and big society of Lebanese French bi-nationals live in France and have formed a constituency that has expectations of France caring about Lebanon (Thepaut, 2020).

Among other French interests in Lebanon and the Middle East, Wilkins suggests that the region of the Middle East is a vital transit route bridging the West to the East. This comes in addition to Israel maintaining close links with the West. (Wilkins, 2013) Moreover, Macaron further explains that the domestic dimension in France gave President Macron a chance to shine on the international scene after the impediment of the French municipal elections (Macaron, 2020).

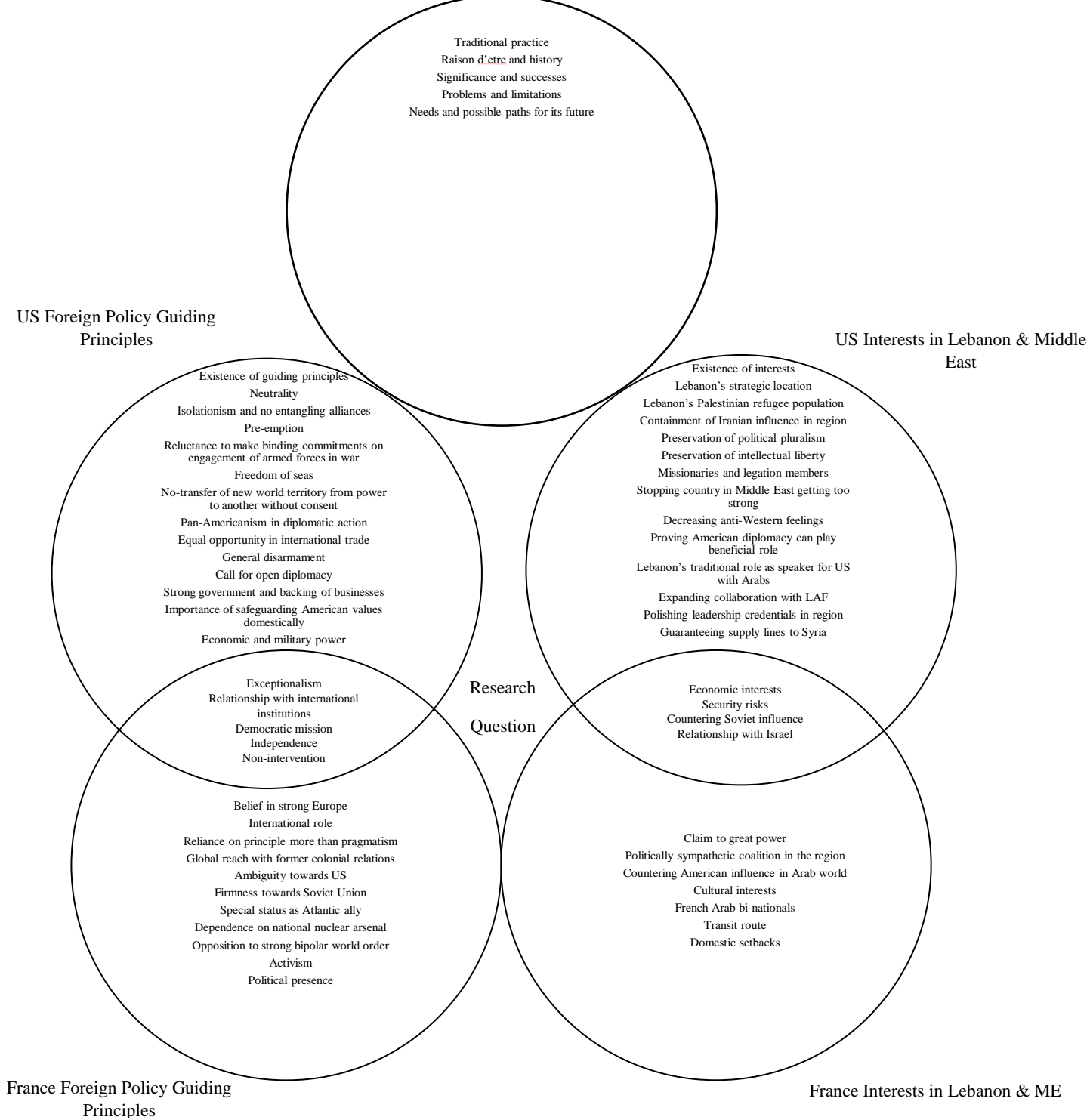
Conclusion

To conclude, this literature review laid the existing general knowledge and background for this thesis and efficiently reflected the value of the latter within the context of this field. The academic value of the literature previously presented and reviewed is very significant,

especially with the popularity and the relevance of these writings to each of the literature bodies, and sub-bodies, at hand. However, while there are numerous and countless academic writings generally agreed-on regarding the topic, the general body of literature still has some loose ends. Thus, this thesis is tailored to fit the gap portrayed in this literature review. In fact, the theories on the foreign policy guiding principles of the US and on the foreign policy guiding principles of France intersect at the general principles of exceptionalism, relationship with international institutions, democratic mission, independence, and non-intervention. Similarly, the theories presented on American interests in Lebanon and the Middle East and on French interests in Lebanon and the Middle East intersect at the specific interests of countering Soviet influence, economic interests, security risks, and the relationship with Israel. From here, there still remains a gap in the general body of literature on the topic. The above reviewed studies do not address the question of an up-to-date reading of the current foreign policy of the US and France towards the situation in Lebanon, of where these policies could be heading, and how they could be in the future. This thesis, hence, aims to fill the gap presented, answering the following research question: How could the current interaction – competition or cooperation – between France and the US unfold in Lebanon?

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Comparative Foreign Policy



Methodology

This methodology introduces the system of methods used in this thesis. It also theoretically analyzes the principles associated with the topic. Now that the literature review of this topic has been presented, the methodology systematically examines the body of methods applied to this field of study to answer the research question previously set: How could the current interaction – competition or cooperation – between France and the US unfold in Lebanon?

The methodology has been organized around five titles: thesis design, sub-questions concerning the topic, tools to answer the sub-questions, the theoretical framework of the thesis, and its outline.

Thesis Design

Since the topic of this thesis does not have an aggregation of elements from which a sample can be selected, its population and sampling are based on the selection of an idiographic case study in which the convergence and divergence of American and French foreign policy can be studied. For this thesis, the case study selected is Lebanon, specifically after the 31st of October 2016, the day the last presidential elections happened in Lebanon. In fact, many consider this date symbolic, as the elections, and the consequent new government, were supposed to make a positive difference in the status-quo of the country, especially after two years of political deadlock on a successor for the former president.

Sub-Questions

To be capable of answering the research question of this thesis, a logical sequence of sub-questions must be answered.

1. What factors explain the foreign policy of each of France and the US towards Lebanon?
2. How have these factors been translating into foreign policy instruments by each of France and the US?

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3. Where have the US and France been converging and diverging in their foreign policy towards Lebanon?
4. Is the current interaction between France and the US unfolding into competition or cooperation?
5. What could be the long-term implications of the interaction between France and the US?

Tools

To be capable of answering the sub-questions, a set of tools must be used. The main tool used for this thesis is desk research based on articles published in academic sources on comparative foreign policy, foreign policy guiding principles of the US and France, and American and French interests in Lebanon and the Middle East; and online articles about the topic and the sub-questions previously set. The desk research will attempt to answer all five sub-questions but will mainly investigate the questions regarding the factors influencing foreign policy and the latter's instruments.

Another primary tool is a set of 11 interviews: 1 with Former US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker; 1 with a French career diplomat and currently Visiting Fellow at The Washington Institute, Louis Dugit-Gros; 2 with experts on US foreign policy, Professor Andrew Bacevich and Hanin Ghaddar; 2 with experts on French foreign policy, Julien Barnes-Dacey and Professor Karim Bitar; 2 with experts on US-French relations, Nicole Bacharan and Professor Michael Shurkin; 2 with experts on US-Lebanese relations, Former US Ambassador Edward Gabriel and Dr. Elie Abou Aoun; and 1 with an expert on French-Lebanese relations, Professor Alexandre Issa. The aim of these interviews is to be capable of getting experts opinions on American and French foreign policy, especially towards Lebanon, and on the relations between these states. Consequently, answers to the five sub-

questions from the interviewees will be sought during the interviews, in a bid to analyze their perspective with regards to the answer to the research question of this thesis.

A secondary tool used for this thesis is content analysis, specifically discourse analysis, to study speeches and other government communications by the US and France that have mention of Lebanon. The aim of this analysis is to identify where do the US and France converge or diverge in how frequently they mention Lebanon and in the rhetoric they use when tackling the latter.

For this thesis, a qualitative approach will be the main approach used to give an in-depth understanding of the three literature bodies previously reviewed. While some criticize this approach for being subjective, it portrays the different conclusions and points of views regarding the convergence of American and French foreign policy in general, and the topic at hand in specific. Furthermore, the deductive method is used to understand the literature review authors' proposed ideas for comparative foreign policy and for American and French guiding principles and interests from a general perspective and apply them to their current convergence and divergence in their foreign policy towards Lebanon.

Outline

This thesis is structured as follows: After introducing the topic, presenting the general purpose of this study, reviewing the literature on the topic, and setting the methodology used and applied in this thesis, the general background on the political context will be addressed. This will be followed by briefly tackling the factors that explain the foreign policy of each of the US and France, from a comparative perspective, and their application to the case study. With the same perspective in mind, the American and French policies towards Lebanon and their instruments will then be discussed. Finally, before concluding, the findings and policy implications will be analyzed in terms of convergences and divergences and looking forward to cooperation or competition.

Chapter 1: General Background: Political Context

Since 2005, around fifteen years after the fall of the USSR in 1990 and its consequent unipolar system, the world order has been characterized by a multipolar balance of power – a system led by great, and even super, power states. This has given these powerful countries an overarching ability to lead and influence world politics, economy, and conflicts. The United States of America and the French Republic are two countries among these world powers, if not the most powerful at times, whose global position has given them a significant say in international relations and world affairs.

Indeed, the United States of America, north of the American continent, is a country that combines 50 states in a constitutional federal republic and into the third largest country globally. The world's current superpower, it enjoys, by far, the most influence over the international system due to its unparalleled diplomatic, informational, militarily, and economic power. In fact, the US enjoys a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, its consequent veto power, and unshakable alliances with, not just its neighbors in Latin America, but almost all the global north too. It also is one of the most influential members in the NATO, G-7, and G-20. This has given the country broad political influence on global affairs – an influence further reinforced by the other elements of the US's power. Indeed, information-wise, the United States of America spearheads a global intelligence network, spending on national security agencies and programs more than any other country worldwide, overshadowing the budgets of virtually all possible rivals combined (German, 2015; Director of National Intelligence, 2021). Moreover, the US is the country with an unrivaled air force (Global Firepower, 2021), the highest military expenditure (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2021, [c]), and the biggest arms exports in the world (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2021, [a]). It also owns military bases all around the globe and possesses the second biggest nuclear arsenal worldwide (McCarthy, 2021). This unmatched hard power

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has been the most direct factor to the United States' emergence as the world's hegemon with no military in the world strong enough to balance its might. The US has also been poised to have a significant degree of control over the global economy, as it has the largest national economy worldwide (Bajpai, 2020), headquarters a multiple of the biggest multinational companies, and its national currency is the dominant international reserve currency. Moreover, the US is the number one producer of crude oil, natural gas, and refined petroleum products globally and the largest exporter of the latter (CIA, 2021, [a]). However, the US's global reach goes beyond these four factors, as it also enjoys a significant and widespread soft power, especially with regards to its culture, influencing fashion, music, tv and movies, literature, and even cuisine around the world.

The French Republic, west of the European continent, is a semi-presidential country that has traditionally been among the most important in the world. While not as powerful as the United States of America, France still enjoys a broad degree of influence over the international system due to its significant diplomatic, informational, military, and economic power. Along with the United States, France enjoys a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council and its consequent veto power. It also is a founding member of the European Union and has broad influence in the organization, as well as in the G-7, G-20, and NATO. Furthermore, information-wise, France spends over one billion Euros a year on its national intelligence community (Intelligence Online, 2020). More importantly, militarily, France possesses extremely advanced military technology, has the second largest defense budget in the EU (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2021, [b]), and is the third largest weapons exporter in the world (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2021, [a]). It also owns the fourth biggest nuclear arsenal (McCarthy, 2021) and 12 military bases globally. In fact, France's hard power is one of the factors for its emergence as one of the world's great powers. The French Republic also has considerable economic power and has an extensive

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influence over the economy of the EU. Even overseas, 14 states in the African continent use a currency tied to France's national bank (Aboa, 2019). It also is the third largest exporter in Europe (CIA, 2021, [b]). Moreover, it's important to note that French soft power has an international footprint, among the widest in the world, with its cultural appeal having significant influence on art, film, food, sport, and tourism globally.

As such, this power and position of both the United States of America and the French Republic on the international arena has given them a significant say in international relations and world affairs. In turn, this has allowed these two world powers to intervene in the internal affairs of a big number of countries and most regions in the world.

One region particularly attractive for centuries for the US, France, and even other countries, is the Middle East. The Middle East, the region that spreads from west of Asia to North Africa and encompasses more than 15 states, has indeed been a region historically widely recognized for its geopolitical richness. In fact, the Middle East is located in a strategic position, bridging between Asia, Europe, and Africa. Not only is it a land bridge, but an important air bridge worldwide for trade and transportation too. Contributing to this factor is the geography of the region, as it also is of strategic importance. Indeed, the Middle East possesses seven water straits vital for trade and transportation, with the region being formed of waterbeds, mountains, and deserts, constituting a main obstacle to any possible land invasion to its countries and their neighbors. Moreover, the Middle East is rich with 31 lakes, with rivers in five states in the region, of which three major ones – the Nile, the Jordan River, and the Tigris-Euphrates River – are central to regional claims of water rights and to foreign interests. Consequently, the region's two most important natural resources are its water and oil. Intrinsically, of utmost importance in the Middle East is the fact that it cradles the biggest discovered oil reserves around the globe, amounting to 64.5% of the total reserves of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, with the Islamic Republic of Iran and

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) possessing the region's biggest oil deposits (OPEC, 2019). Additionally, the region connects major oil pipelines from across its territory to the entire globe. One additional significant resource in the Middle East is nuclear power, with three states in the region attempting to acquire it. In fact, the State of Israel possesses 90 nuclear warheads (Arms Control Association, 2020), Iran operates 915 Megawatts of nuclear power with uranium mining and enrichment activities, and the United Arab Emirates powered its first nuclear reactor on its electrical grid in 2020 (Thomas, 2021).

Beyond its geography and resources, the Middle East also is center to some of the most important multinational political conflicts. Indeed, the forcible creation of the State of Israel on Palestinian territory led to the emergence of the decades-long Arab Israeli conflict. While Israel remains today one of the strongest allies to the West, most notably to the United States, a few Arab nations still refuse to recognize Israel – particularly those aligned along the Iran-KSA proxy conflict. In fact, another significant conflict in the region is the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia, involving their proxies. With these two states owning the Middle East's largest oil reserves, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been competing for the control of the region for decades. This has been exacerbated by the religious schism between Sunni and Shiite Islam, as KSA is considered by many to be the leading Sunni state and Iran is a predominantly Shiite country. Throughout the Middle East, other countries with Sunni or Shia majorities have aligned themselves with KSA or Iran respectively for direction – thus indirectly becoming involved in the conflict as proxies to one of the two regional powers and suffering from a great push-and-pull for power and control. Accordingly, for all the region's geographic, political, and strategic features, the region has been a fertile ground for foreign interventions time and time again.

Evidently, the United States and France's power have allowed both states to be among the foreign powers exploiting the Middle East's features and intervening in its internal affairs.

For instance, France was given direct mandate over some countries of the region from 1920 to 1943 and the United States has directly intervened in at least 10 Middle Eastern states in the last century.

One of the countries in the Middle East that has repeatedly witnessed interventions from foreign states is the Lebanese Republic. In fact, Lebanon, west of the Asian continent, is located in a strategic position within the Middle East, on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea and the northern border of Israel. Although the country is among the smallest countries of the region, its geography remains nevertheless important. Indeed, the Lebanese Republic is formed of waterbeds and mountains, making it harder to control its land and easier to intercept information about its neighbors without being detected. Yet, although its importance rather lies in its regional positioning, Lebanon alone is relatively not a powerful state, neither internationally nor even regionally. In fact, diplomatically, while it has traditionally enjoyed strong alliances with its fellow Arab states and with the West, the country's foreign relations have been going downhill since the end of 2016, and even worse since 2018. Militarily, although the Lebanese Republic ranks 29th worldwide in terms of its military expenditure (CIA, 2021, [c]), its national armed forces remain challenged by the presence of heavily armed paramilitary groups within its borders. Lebanon has also been doing really bad economically for almost two years now. Since October 2019, the country has been suffering from financial and economic crises, going through a dragging and severe economic depression. Not only has the real GDP growth in the Lebanese Republic tapered by 20.3% in 2020, but inflation has also skyrocketed to three-digit numbers and poverty has sharply increased, as the exchange rate of the Lebanese Lira to the US Dollar continues to devaluate (World Bank, 2021).

Although Lebanon is rich with rivers and lakes – most of which suffer from pollution or drought, it has no significant natural resources to date. Nevertheless, two of the country's sea blocks are supposed to possess oil resources – one of which is the center of the Lebanese

Republic's maritime border dispute with Israel. However, drilling in that block did not lead to discovering any reservoirs of hydrocarbons. Today, Lebanon's dire situation is the result of decades-long rampant corruption, with a Corruption Perceptions Index of 25/100 – ranking 149th worldwide (Transparency International, 2020). It's important to note that it is actually the country's political system – a consociational parliamentary republic – that paved the way for power-sharing to turn into corruption.

Indeed, local groups allied to regional powers have exploited this system to strengthen their foothold and broaden their gains. This has also rendered the Lebanese Republic victim of regional competition for years. As part of the Arab Israeli conflict, Lebanon has been at war with Israel since 1948. Even though a general ceasefire was brokered in 2006 after the war between the two sides, sporadic hostilities still repeatedly occur, and the Lebanese Republic has yet to formally recognize the Israeli state. This stand-off with Israel has been further aggravated by the presence of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, north of the Israeli border. Hezbollah, a Shia Islamist political party and militant group, has an active paramilitary wing that has fought in the South against Israel, and a political wing in the Lebanese Parliament represented by the Loyalty to the Resistance bloc. However, Hezbollah has also been militarily engaged in conflicts beyond the Lebanese borders, including in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. In fact, the paramilitary group has grown so strong militarily it is theoretically capable of taking power in Lebanon by force due to its advanced military power (Khatib, 2021).

Even as a political party, Hezbollah has been acquiring significant influence over the Lebanese government. On the 31st of October 2016, after political deadlock and presidential vacancy for more than two years, current Lebanese President Michel Aoun was elected to office. While this election, and the consequent new government, were expected to make a positive difference in the status-quo of the country, it was actually the beginning of Hezbollah's stronghold over Lebanon. In fact, Aoun has been a prominent ally to Hezbollah since 2006,

when he established a strategic alliance with the group as head of the Free Patriotic Movement. After Aoun's election, in May 2018, during the Lebanese Parliamentary elections, Hezbollah was capable of winning more seats in parliament than it ever has, acquiring almost 10% of the parliament alone, with 12 MPs – a number that goes up to 70 when combined with the party's allies (Reuters, 2018, [a]). Hence, since Aoun was elected, many have accused his presidential term of being a "Hezbollah era," because the alliance between the two has provided the necessary political cover for Hezbollah to consolidate its grip over the Lebanese government. This has further complicated matters for the Lebanese Republic, especially with Hezbollah's designation as a terrorist organization by at least 26 countries other than the European Union and most Arab League countries. However, what is even more problematic about Hezbollah is the fact that the group is trained, financed, and armed by Iran – making it, effectively, publicly affiliated to Iran. With Hezbollah's recent stronghold over Lebanon, the country has practically become involved in the Iran-KSA proxy conflict, aligned with Iran, and suffering from a great push-and-pull with local groups allied to Saudi Arabia, both domestically and internationally. In fact, diplomatically, it is the Lebanese Republic's indirect alignment with Iran, most notably after Aoun's election and the parliamentary elections, that has been ruining the country's alliances with the Arab states and the West. Lebanon's financial and economic crises have also been exacerbated by the unwillingness of the international community to help Lebanon recover as long as Hezbollah is present in the government. Still, this does not mean that the arena has been void of foreign interventions in the country.

Indeed, the Lebanese Republic has long been suffering from external meddling in its domestic affairs, from the French Republic and the United States of America nonetheless. For instance, the United States has been accused of further complicating Lebanon's economic depression with its foreign policy towards the country and the sanctions it had imposed on companies and individuals in the Lebanese Republic. Even after the Port of Beirut explosion,

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the French Republic publicly expressed its willingness to help Lebanon find a path to reform. Yet, French efforts to get all parties to the table have been significantly delayed and their ambition to begin brokering change in the country has been impeded thus far. Still, in a call on the 24th of January 2021, President Macron and US President Joseph R. Biden highlighted their mutual views and willingness and agreement to cooperate on mutual foreign policy priorities, including the stability and peace in the Middle East – particularly on the situation in Lebanon (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Since then, the United States of America and the French Republic have both been intervening in the internal issues of the Lebanese Republic. Although many believe that these two powers have been coordinating every step of the way, others suppose that French efforts have been hampered by the US foreign policy towards Lebanon. In fact, even prior to this current intervention, the US and France have historically each, and sometimes together, intervened in the domestic affairs of the country. Nevertheless, they have not always agreed on their foreign policy, and not just in Lebanon. Indeed, sometimes, their foreign policies and practices have converged, while, at other instances, they have diverged.

Chapter 2: US and French Foreign Policy Factors and their

Application in Lebanon

There are various factors that explain the foreign policies of each of USA and France, and hence why they may differ or resemble (Beasley et al., 2013). These different and distinct elements typically influence and impact the foreign policy of any state, both domestically and externally. Thus, it is important to study the factors that explain the foreign policies of each of France and the US, especially towards the Middle East and the Lebanese Republic, to begin building an understanding of their convergence and divergence and how the current interaction between France and the US could unfold in Lebanon.

Domestic Factors

Factors that explain foreign policies of states from a domestic perspective are made up of elements within the borders of a country that act as a source for foreign policy. These internal features of the political system include citizens and their groups, government institutions, and individual leaders. (Beasley et al., 2013)

USA

There are countless domestic factors that have influenced and that explain the foreign policy of the United States of America. These most notably include the main government institutions – the President, Congress, and bureaucracy – the role of the societal environment, the role of groups – such as the foreign policy establishment, corporations, elite networks, and the public opinion, among others.

Main Government Institutions

To begin with, foreign policymaking in the United States is primarily based on the infrastructure of the executive branch, which is established by a system of departments and agencies linked to the presidency.

Although the constitution of the United States gives the president a precise role related to foreign affairs, over time, the American presidency has acquired more responsibilities, to the extent that it has become vital to the implementation of a successful foreign policy. In that regard, executive prerogative has given the executive the authority to exercise its power, without the support of Congress, even in emergencies during which the president could also act outside the framework of the constitution. (Cox & Stokes, 2018) In fact, previous “strong” presidents have played an active role in the expansion of executive power with regards to foreign issues and national security, frequently perceived under the framework of emergency. Since the presidential figure portrays leadership and embodies the responsibility of the government to protect the security and interests of the US, the widespread agreement among national leaders and the public opinion that the world order required an active American role internationally also contributed to the need for a strong leadership within the presidency. (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018) Although several presidents have been held back in their expansionism policy by Congress, the growing link of US national security with the attainment of international security has had a significant role in focusing power with the president. Moreover, the president’s personality is frequently envisaged as pivotal in the determination of the direction of foreign policy. Since the president has the authority to identify context, timing, and importance of a range of matters, the combination of the presidency’s characteristics with the president’s individual characteristics gives a comprehensive understanding of this office. (Cox & Stokes, 2018) Indeed, a president’s personal tendencies

bridge between the decision-making process and the institutional setting of foreign policymaking (McCormick, 2018).

Nevertheless, the enlargement of the American president's powers on foreign policy issues has not been unchallenged. Depending on the president in office and the political situation, the American Congress has developed either a more aggressive role or a more accepting one. Although the president's preeminence on foreign policy issues cannot be rebuffed, Congress still plays a role in shaping this situation. For instance, in 1973, Congress passed the 1973 War Powers Act, restricting the authority of the president in committing US troops to war and demanding they be consulted when he has the intention to do so. (Cox & Stokes, 2018) Congress also supervises budget expenditures and funding, which means that, when it comes to foreign policymaking, committees in Congress have the power to review programs and budgets of foreign policy agencies and to make decisions on how funding could be spent, including limits to spending on foreign aid that could impact other foreign policy goals. Furthermore, many consider that Congress represents the public opinion on foreign policy issues and that its position permits it to affect foreign policymaking, both directly and indirectly. Although Congress's success in influencing foreign policymaking in the United States has been eroding, (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018) its influence can still expand should partisan opposition resist the president's foreign policy practices, especially when the party the president belongs to does not have the majority (Cokes & Stokes, 2018).

It's important to note that the institutional setting in the United States also includes other branches of government, departments, and agencies with duties for foreign policy decision-making, management, and execution (McCormick, 2018). In fact, only major matters of foreign policy get to the executive's higher offices, making most foreign policy decisions the outcome of bureaucratic compromise (Cox & Stokes, 2018). The executive branch, composed of numerous agencies and departments as well, is populated by career experts who

push their perception of convenient responses by the US to foreign issues and even their personal interests. (McCormick, 2018)

In an interview with Former Assistant Secretary of State on Near Eastern Affairs, David Schenker, he explained that Middle East and Lebanon policy in the US varies from administration to administration, as there are some administrations that are more interested in Lebanon than others (Schenker, 2021, [b]). In an interview with Professor Andrew Bacevich, Professor Emeritus of International Relations and History at the Boston University and President of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, he clarifies that during President Barack Obama’s tenure, American foreign policy in the Middle East was founded on the unwillingness to risk US troops on the ground in the region, and instead relied on stand-off military capabilities that can keep US adversaries off-balance and weak (Bacevich, 2021). Thus, as described by Schenker, President Obama viewed Lebanon strictly in the context of Iranian policy (Schenker, 2021, [b]). Based on an interview with Professor Michael Shurkin, Director of Global Programs at 14N Strategies, the Obama administration seemed to be taking a conciliatory tack with Iran (Shurkin, 2021), and even, based on an interview with Hanin Ghaddar, Friedmann Fellow at The Washington Institute, gave the Iranians everything they wanted (Ghaddar, 2021). Whereas some administrations put pressure and saw Lebanon as an area to contest regional Iranian influence, the Obama administration saw Lebanon as a place not to pick a fight with Iran and hence was very hands off and did not have a Lebanon-specific policy (Schenker, 2021, [b]).

In January 2017, less than three months after the election of Lebanese President Michel Aoun, Donald J. Trump, who belonged to the Republican Party, came into office as the President of the United States of America. Trump’s foreign policy towards the Middle East included a “maximum pressure” campaign based on which the United States pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA) – the Iran nuclear deal. He thus had signaled

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that the US was going to be hard on Iran, but still didn't really want to start a war, as put by Shurkin (Shurkin, 2021). Dr. Elie Abou Aoun, Director of Middle East and North Africa Programs in the United States Institute of Peace, explains that the Trump administration was vetoing anything that might bring money or cash influx for the Syrian regime, and Trump's approach used Lebanon and Iraq as part of his maximum pressure campaign (Abou Aoun, 2021). As Former US Ambassador Edward Gabriel, President and CEO of the American Task Force on Lebanon, put it, for many years, the US has been linking Lebanon to other issues in the region. He even goes back in history and explains that, for much of the latter half of the 20th century, Lebanon policy was often seen through the lens of American national security concerns. Lebanon itself was the first US military intervention in the Middle East in 1958, which was justified by the US in terms of the Cold War. Whether it be the Lebanese Civil War, Syrian Occupation, or the 2006 conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, US policy towards Lebanon has always been in reference to larger regional interests. (Gabriel, 2021)

However, Schenker explains that, in the Trump administration, the policy towards Lebanon not only looked at the country as a place to contest Iranian regional meddling, influence, and hegemonic ambition, but also saw the Lebanese people as partners and friends of the United States and inclined towards the West. US policy towards Lebanon is a little bit convoluted because the Middle East plays a part in the Lebanon policy, as the region plays out in the country. Still, during the Trump administration, there was a Lebanon-specific policy based on working with American allies to invest in the Lebanese Armed Forces, working with the latter to the extent possible, gaining insight into Lebanese politics and military, strengthening US allies to the extent possible, and encouraging reform through tough love for Lebanon. (Schenker, 2021, [b]) However, many others contest that, for Trump's administration, Lebanon was never perceived through more than the Hezbollah lens. During his first three years only, the Treasury Department added around 1,070 names annually to its

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sanctions list – more than double the number added under each of the Obama and Bush administrations – at least 20% of those sanctioned have links with Iran and the states where the latter wields influence: Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon (The Economist, 2020, [b]).

As a testament to the role of Congress in foreign policy, Trump's maximum pressure campaign did not go unchallenged. When he was elected, the Republicans had locked in the control of the Congress. Two years later, however, the Congress became split, with Republicans controlling the Senate and the Democrats controlling the House. Consequently, for the first two years of his presidency, President Trump was invincible in foreign policy issues, whereas his next and last two years were challenged time and time again by the Democrats. For instance, in October 2019, the American Department of State informed Congress that the National Security Council and White House budget office had made the decision to block 105 million US Dollars in foreign military aid to Lebanon that Congress and the State Department had already approved. American diplomats and members of Congress fiercely opposed the decision, after which the hold was reverted (Zengerle, 2019).

In January 2021, Joseph R. Biden came into office as Trump's successor – with him, however, the Democrats locked in the control of the Congress entirely. Therefore, till January 2023 at least, President Biden will continue to enjoy strength when it comes to bipartisan challenges to his foreign policy priorities. With regards to the Middle East, the Biden administration had promised to return to the JCPOA and offer some sanction-relief to Iran in return for containment of the latter's nuclear program. However, today, less than a year into his presidency, Shurkin says that the Biden administration is actually at loss about what to do with Iran (Shurkin, 2021). In an interview with Nicole Bacharan, French historian and political scientist, she admits that it's not very clear what the Biden administration's strategy in the region is. It seems that the focus is Iran, but they don't really know what to do with the Iranians. Additionally, although they have a special envoy to Israel, he is merely focused on the border

demarcation issue with Lebanon. (Bacharan, 2021) Bacevich believes that it's too soon to tell what the Biden policy in the Middle East is going to look like. Although the Biden administration is serious about wanting to get the US back in the JCPOA, it appears that the negotiations are difficult and have been complicated by the change of government in Iran (Bacevich, 2021)

As such, Biden's policy towards Lebanon remains ambiguous, although Schenker considers that until now there has been some continuity with the previous administration (Schenker, 2021, [b]). Ghaddar agrees and proposes that while everybody thought that the Biden administration was going to be a copy of Obama's, Biden's team has been holding their ground and are not compromising the way the Iranians were expecting them to compromise. Thus, Biden's administration is a little bit less compromising than Obama's, is not giving the Iranians what they want, and hasn't left the region for Iran, as Biden wants to find an agreement, to deal with people in the region and the Iranians, and to coordinate with the Europeans. (Ghaddar, 2021) Although Abou Aoun concurs that, while Biden tried to walk back from the maximum pressure campaign, he did not lift any sanctions yet, he nevertheless sees some flexibility when it comes to Biden's sanction waivers to Iran in both time and scope. Even if Biden hasn't rescinded the Caesar Act, his administration has also lifted the veto on cash influx for Syria and is being more flexible with the Syrian regime. This was reflected in the American embassy's initiative to broker a gas deal for Lebanon that passes through Syria. (Abou Aoun, 2021)

Nonetheless, as explained by Shurkin, since the Obama administration and to this day, the American policy has been really in flux. They're anti-Hezbollah and anti-Iran, but there's also an antipathy towards being involved in the region after their experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, all the Americans can give on Lebanon is merely wishful thinking and wishful statements about talks and negotiations, but there won't be much action. In reality,

the American foreign policy has really changed because there's a war fatigue nowadays and Middle Eastern oil matters a lot less. (Shurkin, 2021) This feeling is shared by Abou Aoun, who reiterates that this trend of disengaging and the unwillingness to intervene militarily anymore is not new and started years ago – before the Biden and Trump administrations, as much as it is unusual for three different administrations to agree. Lebanon is included in this policy, because the US doesn't want any files that might drag them into a direct involvement. For instance, on many occasions, they even pressured Israel to avoid doing anything that will force the US to intervene in the region. (Abou Aoun, 2021)

Societal Environment

The societal environment in the United States of America has been an important factor of the internal features of the political system that explains the foreign policy of the country. Indeed, the American political culture – its basic values, beliefs, needs, and self-images widespread among Americans about their political system – is an essential explanation of the US's foreign policy. In its most basic sense, this culture is translated in the kind of political institutions and values that policymakers from the US seek to export to other countries. These values include a favoritism for democracy, capitalism, individual liberty, due process, self-determination, free enterprise, human rights, equality before the law, and minority rights. Although public opinion leaders in the US continue to be prodigiously internationalists in their foreign policy direction, divisions remain apparent among public opinion over the nature of the US's internationalism. As such, the political culture, foreign policy beliefs, and attitudes of the public and the role other actors have in forming political priorities in the US and conveying them to the government and foreign policy officials is a strong explanation of the United States foreign policy and practices in the international arena. (McCormick, 2018)

The Middle East, of which most countries are dictatorships that repress their populations, has been a sturdy challenge to American political culture and its

internationalization. In a region where autocracy, lack of liberties, violations to due process and human rights, and oppression of minorities are all rampant, American policymakers have had a particularly hard time exporting their basic values and beliefs. As such, the democratization of the region and its transformation into one aligned with the American societal environment has been a factor in the US policy towards the region.

Role of Groups

There are other unorthodox actors that have also been factors that explain the foreign policy of the United States. The “foreign policy establishment” that gathers former government officials, army members, academics, think tanks, and corporation, forms and explains foreign policy in USA by preserving a continuing direction over time. The foreign policy establishment in the US frequently pawns possible risks to its organizational “culture” in order to preserve the existing state of affairs and foster a specific approach and direction regarding foreign policy.

Outside of the bureaucratic mechanism of the political system in the US, other actors, such as corporations and philanthropic organizations, can all be perceived as influencing foreign policymaking too. Federal agencies are impacted and held responsible by external actors that represent the public opinion on foreign policy through advocacy or lobbying. Of special importance in American foreign policy is the role that the “Israeli lobby” plays, through organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that lobbies and raises bipartisan funding and money to affect the United States’ position on issues related to Israel and its strength in the Middle East. (Cox & Stokes, 2018) Professor Andrew Bacevich explains that there are very few things in American politics today where there is a bipartisan agreement, but one thing on which agreement exists is the US commitment to the security of Israel. Although Israel actually enjoys very considerable security and doesn't really need to rely on the United States, it is largely for US domestic political reasons that this commitment to Israel remains very strong and that is then a factor that shapes the US policy. (Bacevich, 2021)

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Some have also proposed that USA had become increasingly dominated by the elite – military, corporate executives, and the federal executive. For instance, others have proposed that corporate elites have asked different administrations to adopt a foreign policy intended to increase the international control of the US, for the sake of corporate revenue rather than domestic priorities, often under the guise of promoting democracy or spreading freedom. In fact, corporate elites are another vital actor in the US because they are closely knit within the foreign policy establishment in forming planning and decision-making processes through business networks and economic resources, hence permitting the design of an economic “worldview” that shapes the general foreign policy direction. Processes between Wall Street and Washington can be spotted throughout successive administrations irrespective of the party in power. As such, policymakers in the US are not only connected to the business elite but are also frequently deemed an essential component of the latter, with American foreign policy being strongly affected by corporate leaders with international orientations. Business priorities thus impact towards which policies on international issues funds are targeted. Nowadays, the energy and financial industries, in addition to the defense sector, have gained a growing significance in defining American interests abroad. This has been evident in the American policy of creating an international economic system that encourages open markets and free trade. Indeed, the US’s support worldwide, often militarily, has been targeted at political systems that would maintain that system at the cost of democracy and human rights. Another actor frequently overlooked in its influence on American foreign policy are research institutes and think tanks. However, this network of knowledge elites has a crucial role in designing the American foreign policy establishment, setting agendas, and gathering consensus on foreign policy issues. (Cox & Stokes, 2018)

Public Opinion

Abou Aoun adds the public opinion as another domestic factor that has influenced the foreign policy of the US. The public opinion in the US has been traumatized by the failures of Afghanistan and Iraq. The public realized that even if they deploy hundreds and thousands of soldiers and pay billions, if not trillions, of dollars, the Americans can't fix problems as they used to think. They went to Afghanistan and Iraq, used both hard and soft powers, and the only outcome is a mess. This led the public opinion in America to refuse to pay taxpayers' money and send their children to fight endlessly. This is a factor that Trump played on in 2016 when he was campaigning during the presidential election, claiming to be against those interventions and wanting instead to end the commitments of the US abroad. (Abou Aoun, 2021)

France

Domestic factors that have interacted with French foreign policy have also influenced the latter. Of special importance are French presidents and their governments, national identity, domestic opinion, and nonstate actors, among others.

French Presidents and Their Governments

French presidents and their governments have been the most important factor among the internal features of the French political system that explain the foreign policy of France. Essentially, the nature of modern foreign policy decision-making and organization in the French Republic was founded by the 1958 Constitution of the Fifth Republic, which rendered the president the only guardian of foreign policy at the cost of the rest of the French government. As such, in the Fifth Republic, the president is elected through universal popular elections. When backed by a majority in the French Parliament, he becomes omnipotent. Thus, under these typical circumstances, presidents in France have consistently managed the broad lines of defense and the foreign policy of their country. This is also due to the fact that the head

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of the armed forces is placed under the power of the president who is bestowed with the only authority in the country when it comes to using nuclear force. Accordingly, all essential decisions related to foreign policy come from the president. Political institutions had been established increasing the executive power in such a way that national power can be maximized to pursue foreign policy. (Beasley et al., 2013) For instance, the Ministry of Armed Forces has limited influence on strategic issues and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MfEFA) is just as conforming and obedient. The sidelining of ministries has led to cuts in human resources in the MfEFA for example. In fact, successive presidents have established their own diplomatic apparatus, whereas their ministers were battling to build their independence and were frequently marginalized from the advancement of foreign policy. Additionally, with the presidents appointing their prime ministers, the latter have consistently had a backseat role in the behavior of foreign affairs. When things go sour for a president, ministers have frequently been scapegoated and fired. (Lakomy, 2010) Even popular and considerably successful prime ministers have been perceived as contesting the power of the president and were often fired too (Beasley et al., 2013). When cohabitation has happened, with the parliamentary majority being different than the presidential party, the cabinet and thus the prime minister have come from parties opposing that of the president. During these considerably short times, the president in France loses his influence on internal policies and is obliged to share his power on defense and foreign policy issues with the cabinet, hence confronting this narrative. (Lakomy, 2010) Still, even then, the broad lines of French foreign policy remained undaunted because they were backed by both sides of the aisle and by parties in parliament too. On that basis, presidents, and the governments they have appointed, have consistently had a healthy majority in the parliament and consequently extremely limited disputes on the development of foreign policy in France. (Beasley et al., 2013)

In May 2017, six and a half months after the election of Lebanese President Michel Aoun, Emmanuel Macron was elected to office as the President of the French Republic, succeeding outgoing President Francois Hollande. One month after, he locked in an absolute majority in the French parliament's National Assembly (Chrisafis, 2017). Consequently, from 2017 to this present day, President Macron has been invincible in managing the guidelines of French foreign and defense policy. Even with the defection of some assembly members from his party's bloc in May 2020 (McAuley, 2020), he has still enjoyed the authority to make all foreign policy decisions. After the Port of Beirut explosion that happened in August 2020, Macron went to Lebanon for two official visits, visited Iraq for official meetings with his counterparts, and strengthened France's military presence in the Middle East with the deployment of naval forces that include a frigate and helicopter carrier to east of the Mediterranean Sea (Cook, 2020).

In an interview with Professor Alexandre Issa, Lecturer and Research Associate at Sciences Po Paris, he clarifies that Jacques Chirac was the last French President who really had good relations with Lebanon in the sense where France was present in the country. Till mid-2017, with Hollande in power, there wasn't really a French foreign policy in Lebanon as omnipresent as before. The revival of the French foreign policy in Lebanon came with Emmanuel Macron, who has wanted to give back to France its place in international relations – not only from a hard power point of view but also from a soft power one – which explains why he's engaging more with the former countries under French mandate. (Issa, 2021) In an interview with Professor Karim Bitar, Professor of International Relations at Universite Saint Joseph in Lebanon and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for International and Strategic Affairs in Paris, he agrees that, in the past five years, there has been a new dynamism of French diplomacy, particularly after the election of Macron, who felt that it was important for France to reaffirm its presence in the Mediterranean. He thus had to react to the situation in Lebanon

and the collapse of the Lebanese financial system. Macron was warned that the financial collapse was imminent as of 2017 because he is close to many Lebanese financiers and bankers who told him that the function of the Lebanese economy was becoming a Ponzi scheme. Therefore, Macron was watching Lebanon very closely and put together a team of senior experienced diplomats. Usually, the diplomats that he chose to deal with the Lebanese dossier were diplomats who knew both Saudi Arabia and Iran. For example, Bruno Foucher, who was the ambassador in Lebanon and Iran and, when he was younger, was for a while in Saudi Arabia. Emanuel Bonne, who heads the diplomatic cell at the Elysée, is also someone who, as a student of International Relations, studied very closely the dynamic of proxy wars between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Another reason Macron took the lead in Lebanon is his attempt to maintain traditional French foreign policy. In reality, the country is very charged for many French Eastern Christians who are perceived as distant cousins. Thus, Macron also has an interest in not allowing rival right wing politicians to present themselves as protectors of Lebanon, or Eastern Christians, while he stays idle. There were many other politicians, like Francois Fillon and others, portraying themselves as wanting to help Eastern Christians, even though some of those are, for instance, closer to Putin or softer on Assad. (Bitar, 2021) Issa concurs that, especially with the presidential elections upcoming in France, Macron had to repeatedly come to Lebanon because he felt like nothing was moving. In reality, the electoral aspect is important to take into consideration, especially with a lot of French-Lebanese in France who have a strong lobby compared to that of other countries. (Issa, 2021) Amid the recent instability in his approval ratings, many have accused Macron of adopting a foreign policy, especially towards the Middle East and Lebanon more particularly, which would help him overcome the re-election challenge he will be facing in 2022. His difficulty in overturning the disappointment of French voters with his domestic performance could have pushed him to reach for a role on the global stage to distract the audience at home.

National Identity

Additionally, politics of national identity in France dictate that it should be a global power (Rieker, 2017). The French are firm believers in the perspective that their country has a unique role in the world. This key belief is rooted in the 1789 French Revolution, after which France's army and administrators contributed to the evolution of most of Europe into communities in which more democratic and representative institutions, along with the rule of law, could eventually be rooted. Thus, the French Revolution was a decisive core factor in the continent's contemporary history, especially in its transformation from monarchies to democracies. In several states in the continent, the French language also became the language of the elite. These cultural achievements had ensured that, by the 1900s, political figures in France shared the belief that their country was and should remain a civilizing beacon to the rest of the globe. The perception that the French Republic has a "mission civilisatrice" (civilizing mission) in the globe remains nowadays. For several years, the government of France has made special emphasis on messages of democracy and human rights, especially in developing countries, Eurasia, and central Europe. Numerous French officials have been very insistent in pursuing the spread of French values internationally. Indeed, French influence and rank globally are significant to policymakers in France. Its seat in the United Nations Security Council, strong links with some Arab states and former colonies around the globe, power elements, and human rights evocation have become pivotal to French national identity in the international order. (Belkin, 2011)

In an interview with Julien Barnes-Dacey, Director of the Middle East & North Africa program at the European Council on Foreign Relations, he explains that France sees the Middle East as a place where it can demonstrate some of its global stature and to show itself as more than just a European power, but a UN Security Council power as well. That's why there isn't always great coordination between France and other European states in the Middle East, a

region where it thinks it can act unilaterally on a level-parity with other global powers. (Barnes-Dacey, 2021) Many have thus considered France's intervention in the Middle East, especially in Lebanon, as only fitting with the French need to show its "grandeur" and affirm itself on the international arena as a major power with a "mission civilisatrice." Following that logic, French national identity would explain why France's foreign policy leaders wanted their country to act as the region's civilizing beacon amid its multiple crises, especially after an event as tragic as the Port of Beirut explosion in Lebanon, emphasizing on democracy, human rights, and other French values. Hence, France's strong links with the Middle East, most notably Lebanon its former mandate, and its human rights evocation have been vital to its pursuit of global rank and influence as part of its national identity. In reality, French politics of national identity and its domestic image of "grandeur" explains why France is making an effort to portray some foreign policy success in the Middle East after making no gains from its high-profile initiatives in Iran, Syria, and Libya recently (Irish, 2020).

Domestic Opinion

Throughout the years, domestic opinion in France has backed, or accepted to say the least, the foreign policy power concentration in France around the French president. In fact, there hasn't been any serious incidents in which the French have called for a change in the French Constitution to decrease executive power, nor has there been wide contests to the rate at which the French Army is being deployed overseas. Furthermore, the general public appears to have a relatively high threshold of acceptance for fatalities among the army. (Beasley et al., 2013) Professor Alexandre Issa reminds that there are a lot of dual citizens with both French and Lebanese passports. Therefore, when there are elections, the French count on their votes as well. There are also a lot of purely French people living in Lebanon whose interests France cares about. (Issa, 2021) Nevertheless, the public opinion's restricted role in the process of foreign policymaking in France has not resulted in a very effective policy unhindered by

national challenges and capable of focusing only on international influences. The government of the country suffers the cost of marginalizing the public from the process of foreign policymaking. Instead of being capable of pursuing an effective and independent policy, decision-makers in France appear to be continuously occupied with soothing a weak compromise among the elite. (Risse-Kappen, 1991) The reality is that, in France, the making of foreign policy has become the realm of few individuals – a rigid and closed web of “grandes ecoles” graduates. Thus, it has been the members of these political elites, focused around the President of the Republic, who have been adjudicating on foreign issues of domestic interests. (Beasley et al., 2013)

However, Professor Michael Shurkin argues that the French foreign policy establishment and the French electorate really care about Lebanon and fantasize about having a lot of influence in the country and shaping it in a way that suits the French fantasies of Lebanon (Shurkin, 2021).

Nonstate Actors

The rise of French civil society has pushed towards the evolution of the traditional approach to the development of foreign policy in France. Nowadays, it is not just the opinion of intellectuals and the public that counts in the country, but that of nongovernmental organizations too. In the past, they have staunchly backed humanitarian interventions abroad. Moreover, with many governmental industries becoming privatized, especially in the age of information, the private sector is also becoming more confident and autonomous. (Beasley et al., 2013)

External Factors

Factors that explain foreign policy from an external perspective are comprised of elements beyond the borders of a country that push states to behave in a specific manner. This

international environment includes the organization of the international system, the features of modern international relations, and the behavior of other states. (Beasley et al., 2013)

USA

There are numerous external factors that have influenced and that explain the foreign policy of the United States of America. These most notably include globalization, the distribution of power, the distribution of attitudes, alliances and alignments, and the behavior of other states towards the US, among others.

Globalization

To begin with, globalization has been a factor in the organization of the international system that explains the foreign policy of the United States of America. More of a significant limitation to foreign policy, globalization has resulted in an interdependence that reduces the sovereignty of states – that of the US no less. This has made USA more susceptible to the behaviors of other states and these countries, in turn, increasingly susceptible to American policies. Indeed, the penetrability of American borders has rendered it susceptible to flows of ideas, people, and things from abroad. These include terrorists, drugs, extremist political ideologies, diseases, and disruptions in trade patterns. Moreover, globalization has weakened the natural protection the US once enjoyed due to its geography. In fact, the US has become susceptible to Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and cyberattacks. Consequently, financial and economic interdependence, the development of international markets, and the developing role of technology in the international movement of funds renders the US susceptible to economic challenges and decisions around the globe, especially in the Middle East where insurgency and terrorism are at risk of spreading political insecurity. (Mansbach & Taylor, 2017) Professor Andrew Bacevich highlights terrorism as a consequence of globalization that has especially had influence on the US foreign policy in the Middle East. The continuing impact of 9/11 has

radically distorted US policy in the sense that it has contributed to the militarization of US policy. The US response to 9/11 was to wage the so-called global war on terrorism, which gave a green light to go to war in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, and other countries in the region. (Bacevich, 2021)

Distribution of Power

Another external factor of importance in its influence on American foreign policy is the distribution of power in the international system. The distribution of the US's domestic resources, whether political, military, economic, or social, is considered by decisionmakers in the United States during foreign policymaking. Indeed, the latter consider American capacities relative to those of possible enemies and allies. While some believe that the US is losing the economic and military control it had after the 1990s, the United States is not necessarily going through an absolute decline. (Mansbach & Taylor, 2017) Furthermore, Americans have recently been more concerned about internal matters, which they consider as a priority to foreign intervention, especially in the Middle East where solutions brought about by foreign policies appear far beyond the control of the US (Mansbach & Taylor, 2016). It is not that the US now has less hard power – economic and military capacities – than it did during the Cold War, but that other states have considerably increased their own hard power instead. However, the United States is still the only superpower within the international system, but new centers of economic and military power have emerged worldwide. (Mansbach & Taylor, 2017) With not as much relative power anymore, it becomes increasingly politically challenging for the US to intervene in far territories like Syria, Libya, or Iraq, where obvious domestic interests do not seem to be at risk (Mansbach & Taylor, 2016).

The same can be said about the Middle East in general, and Lebanon in specific, where the current distribution of American power in the international system makes it less a priority

for the United States to get involved when both the region and Lebanon, do not present clear threats to the US's national interests.

Although many scholars, especially in the past, have stressed on the importance of oil in the distribution of economic power as an external factor that influences American foreign policy, Professor Michael Shurkin explains that, while instability in the Middle East used to cause problems for the world's oil production and markets – a historic motive for everybody, including the French – the importance of Middle Eastern oil, especially to United States has, diminished in comparison to the last decade. This is because, in the United States, the fracking revolution took place, rendering the US not as sensitive to Middle Eastern oil as it once was. The latter matters now relatively less to the Americans and has become less of a priority. (Shurkin, 2021) This is echoed by Professor Andrew Bacevich who agrees that, while the significance of energy and oil in the Persian Gulf used to be an external factor influencing the American foreign policy towards the Middle East, the United States is not dependent on foreign oil anymore today (Bacevich, 2021).

Distribution of Attitudes, Alliances, and Alignments

The distribution of political ideologies in the international system also influences the foreign policy of the US. The decline of the United States' influence globally, most notably in its reputation or soft power that helps a state in convincing and attracting other countries, has been apparent in the increasingly hostile views towards the US abroad, owing to elements such as American backing for Israel and tensions with Iran. Accordingly, this has influenced some American administrations to behave in specific ways to increase American popularity around the world. There are other aspects through which the value of political views and attitudes in influencing foreign policy is evident too. If the emerging centers of hard power in the world are US allies, the relative weakening in American resources concerns the United States less than if those new centers are possible foes. As such, the fact that France, the United Kingdom,

and Israel are in possession of nuclear weapons does not matter to American decisionmakers because these states are their oldest allies and thus enrich the US's military capacity and reach. Nevertheless, China's growth in its military capacity and the acquisition of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) by North Korea and Iran has been a significant challenge to the national security of the United States because these countries are its foes. (Mansbach & Taylor, 2017)

Similarly, alliances and alignments have also had an impact on foreign policy in the US. These include, for instance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the West, the US-Japanese Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security in Asia, (Mansbach & Taylor, 2017) and the less official alliance with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East (Mansbach & Taylor, 2016). These alliances, coupled with robust economic, political, and social ties among their parties, strengthen the United States' overall abilities and facilitate the reflection of its power globally. Conversely, alliances also restrict the independence of the US by forcing it to morally and legally behave in specific ways to protect or help its friends. (Mansbach & Taylor, 2017)

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker clarifies that there's an outsized interest in Lebanon in Washington, not only because the two countries are old friends, but because there is a large Christian population in Lebanon that many in Congress and Senate are interested in. This is in addition to the fact that Lebanon is very western-oriented and has been influential in the region historically, notwithstanding its size, intellectually and policy-wise (Schenker, 2021, [b]). However, the foreign policy of the United States has, in the last few years, been increasingly viewing Lebanon as a fertile ground for alignment with Iran's ideological foundations due to Hezbollah's growing stronghold in the country. Although a considerable portion of the Lebanese population has a high esteem for the US, the state of affairs within the Lebanese government has positioned Hezbollah in a more powerful place than that of America's allies. Moreover, the United States' informal alliance

with KSA, coupled with American animosity and hostility towards Iran, explains the United States alignment with KSA in the Iran – KSA conflict in the Middle East. This has evidently been reflected on American foreign policy towards Lebanon, especially with Lebanon now being perceived as closer to Iran than it is to Saudi Arabia.

As Professor Michael Shurkin describes, Lebanon is a place in which the Iranians and the Saudis fight for influence, or even the Iranians and Israelis, and that's interesting to the Americans only in terms of the proxy fight against Iran. Ultimately, American policy towards Lebanon is a function of its relationship with and its approach to Iran, and its relationship with the Saudis and Israel. Americans care about the internal makeup of Lebanon only when it comes to Hezbollah because the group represents a regional threat to Israel and is seen as a bad actor in Syria, propping up the Syrian regime. (Shurkin, 2021)

Behavior of Other States towards US

One last set of external factors that explain American foreign policy are the policies and behaviors of other states, especially towards the United States. This is especially the case in the Middle East, where the local public opinion has a negative image of the US for allowing, even blatantly encouraging, oppressive dictatorships for the sake of stability in the region (Mansbach & Taylor, 2016). Most of the actions and policies of other states are often themselves a reaction to those of the United States towards them, as reciprocity influences foreign policy significantly – hostile actions trigger hostile responses and friendly ones generate friendly acts (Mansbach & Taylor, 2017).

France

External factors that explain French foreign policy have heavily affected the latter. Of special importance are “la Francophonie,” multilateralism, specifically through the United Nations and

the European Union, the behavior of the United States of America, and alliances and alignments, among others.

La Francophonie

To begin with, la Francophonie, a cultural and political group of francophone states around the globe, has been a factor in the organization of the international system that explains the foreign policy of the French Republic. These countries, France's territorial conquests around the world throughout history, share similar cultural and political inclinations. Once the decolonization of these countries was completed, French diplomacy could heavily emphasize on its imperial history as proof for France's sustained right to its reputation as a great power. Sub-Saharan Africa would hence become the main part of France's post-colonial strategy. In fact, the French Republic stayed highly engaged in the political and economic issues of francophone states to the extent that, although officially these states had become independent, practically not a lot had differed regarding French influence. This was perceived as a comparatively risk-free path to a reinforced international position for the French Republic, permitting it to contest the status quo of superpowers and distinguish itself from other simply "average" middle powers in Europe. (Beasley et al., 2013)

Sub-Saharan Africa is not the only region with French influence due to its colonial history. Indeed, the Middle East was also split between British, French, Italian, and Russian control from 1916 onwards. To this day, France remains involved in the domestic affairs of its former territorial conquests in the region, even after these territories became independent states, and relies on the Middle East to empower its reputation as a great power. As a former French-mandated territory from 1920 to 1943, the Republic of Lebanon is one of the countries of the region that have maintained close ties with the French Republic after their independence and to this present day. In turn, France has also used its former mandate of Lebanon as evidence of

its right to remain actively involved in the economic and political internal issues of the Lebanese state.

It is well known, as put by Gabriel, that the relationship between France and Lebanon is historic and especially close (Gabriel, 2021). Professor Karim Bitar explains that France has always been one of the most important actors on the Lebanese scene because of France's mandate over Lebanon and because it never stopped, well before the 19th century, building a strong relationship with certain Lebanese communities and then with the entire Lebanese state (Bitar, 2021). This is perceived by Abou Aoun as a colonial mindset that still shapes French policy, as the French still have a patronizing approach towards Lebanon. Macron's visits to Beirut reflect a deeper issue that the French still consider Lebanon as a protectorate. (Abou Aoun, 2021) As clarified by Professor Alexandre Issa, even before Lebanon became a state, there were historical relations between France and the region, especially the minorities – mostly Catholics and Maronites more precisely. Therefore, the French were present in Lebanon before the establishment of the Lebanese state. Lebanon took its independence from the French mandate in a way that maintained relations between France and Lebanon – there wasn't a "divorce" between them. The evidence to that, for instance, is that France oversees writing the drafts of resolutions in the UN Security Council when it comes to Lebanon and, France has been part of the UNIFIL since its creation in 1978. (Issa, 2021) Lebanon has even formalized its special relationship with France by being a member state of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) since 1973 – the only Middle Eastern state member of the organization besides the Arab Republic of Egypt (International Organization of La Francophonie, 2021). Julien Barnes-Dacey agrees that Lebanon has a very prominent place in the French political landscape, given the historical links between the country and the sense in France that there is a special relationship and French responsibility towards Lebanon – and that's unique. France sees Lebanon as falling within the French sphere of influence, and that

drives a special sense of responsibility towards the country. (Barnes-Dacey, 2021) Bitar further describes that the business exchanges between Lebanon and France and the cultural exchanges are very deep, as Lebanon has been considered one of the last bastions of Francophonie in the Near East symbolically (Bitar, 2021).

Multilateralism

Multilateralism has also affected the foreign policy of France, who enjoys vital positions in the framework of multilateral institutions (Belkin, 2011) specifically through the United Nations and the European Union.

United Nations

French foreign policy has relentlessly attempted to guarantee the position of the United Nations as the chief authority on international affairs, particularly the conservation of global peace and security (Beasley et al., 2013). As a permanent member of the UN Security Council holding veto power (Belkin, 2011), this would give France a global influence, much more than its real status of power in the world order. Thus, France has endeavored to ensure that the UN would not be marginalized. Since the 1990s, France portrayed every effort in positioning itself at the heart of the proceedings of the UN, placing itself as a spearhead within the United Nations. This was characterized by its assumption of an unequal portion of the organization's peacekeeping missions. (Beasley et al., 2013) During the past decades, most of the French Republic's record has been steady in adopting the perception that the UN should be the authority to approve the use of force in times of crises (Belkin, 2011), except in the case of Bosnia and Kosovo. Even more recently, France's involvement in several crises in the Middle East through the United Nations offers clear examples of its persistence to maintain the UN Security Council at the center of global issues (Beasley et al., 2013).

On that multilateral basis, the French Republic has repeatedly sought to position the United Nations as a chief authority on Lebanese affairs. Since the Port of Beirut explosion that occurred on the 4th of August 2020, France has taken the initiative to hold three international conferences of support for Beirut and the Lebanese people in the span of merely one year – all three in conjunction with the United Nations. Over 50 states and international organizations participated in these conferences, along with representatives of the Lebanese civil society. (Embassy of France in Lebanon, 2021) France evidently had the capacity to pull off such high-level events on its own, especially with its strong international ties and influences. However, its dedication to holding these conferences in conjunction with the UN can be explained by its commitment to multilateralism.

European Union

Similarly, the European Union has also been an important element of multilateralism to the foreign policy of France. In fact, as one of the EU founders in the 1950s, the French Republic has been a catalyst in attaining increased economic strength and political unity in the organization (Belkin, 2011). Hence, the EU would turn into another major tool for France's sustained pursuit of "grandeur." Instead of reducing the foreign policy aspirations of the French to portray their domestic resource constraints, its high aspirations were conveyed to the EU. The organization, an interconnected international political player under implied leadership by France, would allow the French Republic to continue doing what it couldn't do on its own anymore. (Beasley et al., 2013) Indeed, significant policies in the EU are not viable without the backing of France, as French officials enjoy key roles in the European Central Bank, European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund, and have led all these organizations (Belkin, 2011). French leaders could depict their domestic interests as important European priorities to establish a convincing alternative to American supremacy (Beasley et al., 2013). In fact, some French officials believe that their country does not aspire to be left

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with a continent which would solely be an avenue of regional peace, but instead a power for wide and positive transformation in the region and the globe. Simultaneously, the French hope to preserve a strong status within the EU. (Belkin, 2011) In an interview with Louis Dugit-Gros, French career diplomat and currently Visiting Fellow at The Washington Institute, he explains that working within the EU is one of the main drivers of the French foreign policy in the Middle East. In reality, France works in particular within the EU to strengthen the EU's sovereignty. This includes having the latter involved in crisis-management in the region. (Dugit-Gros, 2021) Gabriel further explains that there certainly is a tradition by many Western nations, especially in Europe, to defer to France for leadership on how the international community should respond to problems in Lebanon (Gabriel, 2021).

As such, the European Union has been a significant element to the foreign policy of France towards Lebanon and the region. Most notably, in July 2021, France was one of the key countries that led the EU to adopt a framework of individual designations against Lebanese political actors (Dugit-Gros, 2021). France led this European effort to intensify the pressure on the Lebanese government, by approving this system of sanctions specifically for Lebanese leaders (Reuters, 2021, [a]). Since August 2020, the French had been making an effort to pressure the politicians in Lebanon into forming a new government capable of rebuilding Beirut and salvaging the country from its economic crisis. Nevertheless, the French Republic's shift to a policy that positions the European Union as a regional authority on Lebanese affairs can be explained by its commitment to multilateralism. In reality, once the political deadlock in the country seemed persistent, France portrayed its priorities in Lebanon as significant European interests, seeking a formal response by the EU. Consequently, this unified European reaction to the situation in Lebanon would allow the French Republic to achieve what it couldn't achieve on its own.

Behavior of the United States of America

Furthermore, it's important to note that the behavior of the United States of America has had the most important influence on the foreign policy of France. Professor Alexandre Issa clarifies that, in many aspects, the French follow America (Issa, 2021). Indeed, American behavior has been a catalyst for change in the foreign policy thoughts in France (Beasley et al., 2013). Louis Dugit-Gros agrees that the main drivers of the French foreign policy in the Middle East are related to an assessment that was made by French authorities a couple of years ago, in particular since Emmanuel Macron was elected as president. According to Dugit-Gros, the authorities assessed that there is a change in the US policy by which the US is focusing on a narrower definition of its core interests. As per the interlocutor, practically speaking, that means that, in the view of French authorities, the US is less engaged in the Middle East and North Africa and thus France must provide its own security in the region, which is not a neighboring region for US but is for France and the European Union. Therefore, that has translated into the main drivers of the French foreign policy in the Middle Easter and North Africa, by which France is naturally involved in crisis management, working on how to counter terrorism, and trying to enhance the European Union's involvement in the region. The implementation of these drivers in the French foreign policy in the Middle East concretely means that France is paying attention to regional crises in the region. There are three main crises that have been really core priorities for France in the last few years since American disengagement: the Libyan crisis, Iraqi crisis, and the Lebanese crisis. (Dugit-Gros, 2021)

Alliances and Alignments

The alliances and alignments in the international system, especially in the Middle East, also explain the foreign policy of France.

French engagement in Lebanon actually reflects a new step in French policy towards the Middle East (Sadzot, 2020). The French perceive a chance to gain influence in Lebanon, as

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traditional powers like KSA and the US have stepped back from the country. While President Macron has little leverage, he has hoped to charm the Lebanese authorities into reform with his country's historic influence and the possibility of aid in case they comply. (The Economist, 2020, [a]) France is using its capacity to engage the powers contending in Lebanon by asking Iran, KSA, and the US to at least not interrupt the process supported by France (Macaron, 2020). In fact, the French are trying to play the role of negotiators between the United States, Iran, and Hezbollah (Dot-Pouillard & Alem, 2020). The Lebanese social and economic crisis has placed the country at the center of a French geopolitical game: France is trying to find a place as regional mediator by speaking with Hezbollah and the Americans – it does so with the support of Egypt – and thinks it can find a stronghold in the Mediterranean in a former mandate territory, to counter Turkish ambitions, its main opponent at the moment. (Dot-Pouillard & Alem, 2020)

Indeed, France is positioning itself on geostrategic issues in the eastern Mediterranean in the face of Turkey, which has considerably increased its influence on the Lebanese Sunni community, notably through cooperation projects (Yegavian, 2021). Professor Karim Bitar describes that France, in the last couple of years, was worried about the rise of Turkish influence because France is also involved in Libya where it's fighting a tug-of-war with the Turks (Bitar, 2021). Professor Alexandre Issa further explains that France needs Lebanon because it's the only country where France has really a presence in the Middle East, and thus the key to the region for France passes by Lebanon (Issa, 2021). Professor Michael Shurkin also agrees that the French take on Lebanon must increasingly be seen now in the context of the French maneuverings with the Greeks and France's very anti-Turkey position. France has found a new way to be very influential in the eastern Mediterranean, and there's a clear alliance now that's forging between France, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, and Israel, against Turkey, Iran, and Syria. (Shurkin, 2021)

Chapter 3: US and French Foreign Policies towards Lebanon and Their Instruments

The factors that explain the foreign policies of the United States of America and the French Republic have been translated into various instruments adopted in their practice of their foreign policies towards Lebanon. Some of these instruments reflect the differences in their foreign policies, while others portray their resemblance. These instruments can be practiced under the foreign policy of any state, with regards to politics, economy, security, and diplomacy. Hence, the study of the foreign policies of each of France and the US towards Lebanon, and their instruments, evidently contributes to understanding their convergence and divergence and how the current interaction between France and the US could unfold in the country. Many believe that, after the 2016 presidential elections, international perspectives towards Lebanon may have shifted after major significant events that occurred in the country: the 2018 parliamentary elections, the 2019 protests, and the 2020 Port of Beirut explosion. Accordingly, the study of American and French foreign policies and their instruments will be split on that basis for each of the political, economic, security, and diplomatic sectors.

Politics

Politically, the foreign policies of the United States of America and the French Republic have used various instruments to deal with the political leaders in Lebanon and the constitutional structure of the country.

USA

October 2016 – May 2018

On the 31st of October 2016, after political deadlock and presidential vacancy for more than two years, current Lebanese President Michel Aoun was elected to office. Many considered

that the election, and the consequent new government, would make a positive difference in the status-quo of the country.

Back then, the Obama administration, in its last three months in office, was quick to congratulate the election publicly and called on the Lebanese government to commit to its responsibilities, such as UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701 stressing on the disarmament of Hezbollah (Schenker, 2016), an entity listed by the US as a Specially Designated Terrorist, a Foreign Terrorist Organization, and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (Humud, 2018). The American Department of State called the election a “moment of opportunity” to rise above the years of political deadlock, reestablish a functional government, and build a prosperous and stable future for the country. Just like much of the international community, the US administration was waiting for President Aoun’s future decisions and leadership to make a concrete judgement on his support to Hezbollah. (Dorell, 2016) Nevertheless, many in the US and the region had already begun describing the results of the presidential elections as a Hezbollah-Iranian triumph (Schenker, 2016). The administration though was hoping that the deal struck between Aoun and Saad Hariri, a staunch KSA ally, to back each other for the presidency and premiership would create a balance in the country between Iran, and its proxy Hezbollah, and KSA, its allies in Lebanon and in the West. The Council of Ministers that Hariri formed in December 2016 gave Hezbollah only two ministers, a figure that reaches 17 when included with the party’s allies – more than 56% of the government. Regardless, Hariri’s position in the premiership still comforted KSA and the West.

Abou Aoun clarifies that, unlike what people think, the relationship between the US and President Michel Aoun was often constructive. At least up until 2018, the Lebanese president never refused a political request for the American embassy in Beirut, contrary to the discourse and the narrative in the media. Therefore, Michel Aoun’s arrival to the presidency was not a problem to the US because they were capable of dealing with him in a specific way.

(Abou Aoun, 2021) For instance, in July 2017, President Trump welcomed the Lebanese Prime Minister in the White House, as a show of support to the Lebanese government (Rabah, 2019). Since then, however, American policy in Lebanon has been increasingly undermined by Syria and Iran, who have considerable impact in Lebanon, most notably through supporting Hezbollah (Humud, 2018).

May 2018 – October 2019

On the 6th of May 2018, after the postponement of parliamentary elections for nine years, the current Lebanese parliament was elected to office, with Hezbollah winning more seats in parliament than it ever had, acquiring almost 10% of the parliament alone, with 12 MPs – a number that goes up to 70 when combined with the party's allies (Reuters, 2018, [a]).

As a result, the Americans were pressuring for the formation of a Lebanese Council of Ministers that would not give Hezbollah a quantitative or qualitative increase in seats (Macaron, 2018). Nevertheless, it appeared as if the United States had to acknowledge Lebanese political realities and welcomed the formation of the new government in January 2019, still calling on the new cabinet to guarantee that ministries' services and resources do not support Hezbollah (Macaron, 2019). Two months later, US State Secretary Mike Pompeo visited Lebanon and called on the government of Lebanon to stop supporting Hezbollah. He also threatened actions against those who were not willing to comply. (Moubayed, 2019) In August 2019, US Vice-President Mike Pence and other senior members of the Trump administration met with Hariri. This time around, the administration did not welcome him with the same level of openness. Rather, they sounded the alarm and expressed their frustration with the Lebanese government's failure to curb the influence of Hezbollah in the country. (Rabah, 2019)

October 2019 – August 2020

On the 17th of October 2019, after leaks about a possible increase on taxes, nation-wide protests erupted in Lebanon calling for the resignation of the government, early parliamentary elections, deep-rooted reforms, and accountability for corruption.

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker admits the US administration spent a great deal of time talking about the protests in Lebanon, following them closely, and seeing if something could develop and whether it's non-sectarian or cross sectarian (Schenker, 2021, [b]).

The United States was supportive of the peaceful demonstrations in the country and the calls for reform and fighting corruption. American officials considered that the Lebanese government should not be bailed out from the crisis without implementing reforms. (Pamuk, 2019) Although insecurity due to economic deterioration and poor governance had alarmed some American policymakers, an important focus of American attention in the country remained the mitigation of instability, which contributes to constraining the influence of the United States' adversaries in the region. After Hariri's resignation a few days into the protests, the Americans reassured the caretaker cabinet that the US will monitor the situation in the country without interfering, while remaining on the lookout for Iranian or Hezbollah actions that would capitalize on instability to threaten American interests. When Hassan Diab was appointed as Prime Minister in January 2020, Pompeo stated that the United States was ready to become involved and support the Lebanese government, but only one dedicated to reform and the people's will. (Polansky & Aviles, 2020) In reality, the US was focused on enforcing maximum pressure on Iran (Ghaddar, 2020). Nevertheless, with American fatigue of a region in which it has a long history of failed endeavors, the United States' response to the Lebanese crisis has been restricted. After Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, the US administration is tired of attempting to deal with problems in the Middle East. While it pursued actions that include

stepping up sanctions against Hezbollah affiliates and urging the Lebanese government to implement economic reforms, the United States has been increasingly perceiving Lebanon as a mess that requires an effort disproportional to American interests. (Greenland, 2020) Still, Gabriel argues that, as Hezbollah had been gaining more influence in the Lebanese government and the Lebanese began demanding an end to corruption, US policy started seeing the tackling of corruption as a major issue, especially in light of the financial crisis that began unfolding in October 2019 (Gabriel, 2021).

Abou Aoun describes the protests as allowing a change in narrative, as the Americans were now talking more about reform and civil society. But, looking deeper into how the US is dealing with Lebanon, not much has changed. For instance, the protests were condemning Riad Salame for the collapse of the banking system. Yet, the US still considers that Salame needs to be supported and did not take a stance against the Central Bank of Lebanon or private banks. (Abou Aoun, 2021)

Post August 4, 2020

On the 4th of August 2020, an explosion occurred at the Port of Beirut, killing 218 to date (Wilkins, 2021), and injuring 7,500 victims, leaving around 300,000 individuals homeless, (Stone, 2021) and causing 15 billion USD in property damages in and around the capital (Hussain & Cohn, 2020).

A few days after the explosion, the United States' Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale flew to Beirut to express his country's condolences and for talks with Lebanese officials, activists, and volunteers. In a heavily worded statement, he stated that the international community would not bail Lebanon out from the disaster without a credible plan for reform. The Trump administration believed that the port explosion could marginalize and discredit Hezbollah, hence striking a blow against Iran's regional stronghold. It consequently

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pushed for a nonsectarian, nonpartisan, and technocratic government to control the flow of aid, the reconstruction process, and launch an anticorruption program. (Dunne, 2020) Nevertheless, Hale expressed that the American administration would not reject a Lebanese cabinet only because Hezbollah is part of it (Cornish & England, 2020). The American administration encouraged courses of action that included France's initiative for the formation of a new government. In fact, after the explosion, the American administration appeared welcoming of a French initiative that necessitated mere limited reforms in exchange for financial assistance supported by France. Still, the Americans were pleading for a government from which Hezbollah would be expelled. Indeed, the Lebanese social and economic crisis placed the country at the center of a geopolitical game: the Americans and the Saudis saw it as a unique opportunity to weaken Hezbollah and Iran. (Dot-Pouillard & Alem, 2020) In September, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, David Schenker, also flew to Beirut but did not meet with any political figures (Abou Rahal, 2020).

Moreover, the US has allegedly attempted to add issues to the French initiative through pressuring for the conclusion of the demarcation of the Lebanese-Israel borders and making Hezbollah a focal point for the initiative. In fact, the US is focused solely on the deterrence of Hezbollah, border demarcation, and guaranteeing Lebanese distance and neutrality from Syria. (Macaron, 2020) As such, in October, the US began mediating UN maritime border negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, in an attempt to solve the conflict between the two states on the sea territory considered to contain natural gas that both Lebanon and Israel wish to exploit (Taleb, 2021). There were also allegations about the US administration being unhappy with the French including Hezbollah in their attempts to solve the Lebanese crisis and about threats of additional strict measures if Hezbollah becomes part of the government. For the Trump team, a tough position on Hezbollah was significant to showing that its Middle East policy, its maximum pressure campaign on Iran included, has been efficient. (Irish, 2020)

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However, Barnes-Dacey explains that there's been a clear shift in the US position following the beginning of Biden's term in January 2021. Under Trump, Lebanon was just an arena to combat the Iranians and they saw everything as being about Hezbollah. The Biden administration has a more sophisticated understanding of Lebanon and appreciates that state collapse will probably only help Hezbollah cement its position in the country. (Barnes-Dacey, 2021)

Hence, with the change of administration and the Biden team in office in 2021, Hale returned to Lebanon to meet with Lebanese government officials to pressure them to make concessions and for a government capable of implementing reforms and to return to negotiations with Israel on the demarcation of the borders (US Department of State, 2021, [a]). In July, the American Ambassador to Lebanon also held talks with her French counterpart in Saudi Arabia, portraying a united front (Cornish, 2021). This trilateral meeting focused on the US and France's shared objectives of providing humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese people and strong support for the LAF and of encouraging government reform. A week later, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian met and discussed the urgent need for reforms in Lebanon in order to manage the economic crisis. (Gabriel, 2021) However, since then, the United States has not had a foreign policy with an active plan to save Lebanon nor a clear policy towards Lebanon at the political level. All the US has done has been ad-hoc support, doing a minimal effort to keep Lebanon away from a complete collapse and has rather outsourced the matter to France. Indeed, the Biden administration has not prioritized Lebanon, but instead Israel's security and talks with Iran. The American government is committed to restricting its resources in the Middle East and withdrawing quickly from the region without any additional commitments, and instead supporting regional actors in solving regional issues. (Vohra, 2021) In October 2021, Victoria Nuland, the newly appointed US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, visited Lebanon

on an official trip to meet with Lebanese government officials and the civil society to discuss the upcoming elections of May 2022 and economic reform (US Department of State, 2021, [b]). She conveyed American congratulations for the formation of the new Council of Ministers under the premiership of Najib Mikati and her country's support to Lebanon through working with the IMF if work is done to attain reforms (National News Agency, 2021, [b]). Nonetheless, Former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker argues that, although her visit suggests high-level attention by the Biden administration to Lebanon, this is not an issue that Nuland has really worked on previously, unlike her predecessor David Hale (Schenker, 2021, [b]).

France

October 2016 – May 2018

After the election of Michel Aoun as current Lebanese President on the 31st of October 2016, the French Republic appeared to be quite engaging with the Lebanese government.

In fact, in December 2016, the French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault under the Hollande Administration visited Lebanon in a show of support to Lebanon's efforts to host refugees and fight terrorism (AP, 2016). In September 2017, new French President Emmanuel Macron also received Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri and then his Lebanese counterpart Michel Aoun on his first official chief-of-state visit, reflecting his efforts to balance French relations with Lebanese factions amid the regional push and pull (Marlowe, 2017).

Professor Alexandre Issa clarifies that, because Michel Aoun was exiled in France and thus knows quite well the French system and has a lot of contacts in the country, the French liked him when he was elected and were good with it at the beginning. Nonetheless, Michel Aoun's official alliance to Hezbollah is not always well seen in France and many think that this alliance is not doing any good for the French. (Issa, 2021)

In November of that year, Hariri resigned from his position unexpectedly during a visit to Saudi Arabia amid claims the Saudi government pressured Hariri to resign and dissolve his cabinet in order to isolate Hezbollah. President Macron intervened and mediated to allow Hariri to leave from Saudi Arabia to Paris, return to Lebanon, and take back his resignation. (Nassif, 2018) He then hailed his intervention as a foreign policy success that had saved Lebanon from a possible war and ended the crisis (Reuters, 2018, [b]).

May 2018 – October 2019

The election of the current Lebanese parliament on the 6th of May 2018, and Hezbollah's consequent additional seats in parliament, did not appear to alter French foreign policy towards the political leaders in Lebanon and the constitutional structure of the country, as the French Republic remained rather engaging with the government of Lebanon.

In reality, after the parliamentary elections, France had a major role in the formation of the January 2019 government, to push for the enactment of the CEDRE reforms, under the premiership of Hariri, a French national who enjoys the backing of the Gulf and the West (Vohra, 2019). In September 2019, President Macron once again received Hariri in Paris, stressing on French support to Lebanon and its commitment to the CEDRE reforms and the stability and security of the country (Houssari, 2019).

October 2019 – August 2020

The beginning of the nation-wide protests that began in Lebanon on the 17th of October 2019 – and the consequent calls for the resignation of the government, early parliamentary elections, deep-rooted reforms, and accountability for corruption – did not seem to influence French foreign policy towards the political leaders in Lebanon and the constitutional structure of the country, as the French Republic made no significant effort to support or oppose the protests.

Professor Alexandre Issa describes that there were no reactions from France when the protests began – no one in France was talking about what was happening in Lebanon and there was no media coverage either (Issa, 2021). Professor Karim Bitar disagrees with that and explains that it's after the protests that France started taking a harsher stance on the political and financial oligarchy in Lebanon. It should be noted that, before October 17, France was still close to Riad Salame, the governor of the Central Bank, who is a French citizen. But, when many people started warning Macron about the true nature of what was happening in the financial system, France distanced itself from Salame and is no longer offering him full protection and support. (Bitar, 2021)

Once the protests erupted, the French government merely called on its Lebanese counterpart to carry out reforms, addressing what the French considered as legitimate demands by the protesters (RFI, 2019). In February 2020, a month after the appointment of the new cabinet in Lebanon, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, received his Lebanese counterpart in Paris, stressing on the importance of the government to take economic, social, and political measures to respond to the aspirations of the protesters and insisting on the dissociation of the country from regional crises (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2020, [a]).

According to Issa, the protests also exposed that the French politicians were on the side of their Lebanese counterparts, because they had no reaction to the Lebanese authorities' oppression of protesters, as there was a complete silence on the crackdown happening against protests in Lebanon and wasn't even talked about in the media. However, Issa further clarifies that, by the end of this period, the French, who had been calling for reforms since the CEDRE conference, were already, little by little, not really accepting anymore of the fact that the Lebanese leaders were still asking for money while doing as they please. When Le Drian visited

Beirut in July 2020, he returned to Paris without any productive outcome from his meetings – and Macron had grown very unappreciative of that. (Issa, 2021)

Post August 4, 2020

After the explosion that occurred at the Port of Beirut, and the consequent humanitarian catastrophe, France sought direct political involvement in Lebanon.

Indeed, France prioritized investment, governance, and gaining influence in Lebanon (Macaron, 2020). French President Emmanuel Macron visited Beirut after the explosion, an effort perceived by Shurkin as a great example that he really cares (Shurkin, 2021), stressing on the international community's priority to provide unconditional support and assistance to the affected people (Cornish et al., 2020). He also called for an audit of the Lebanese central bank and for an international investigation for the explosion (BBC, 2020, [a]). Reiterating the 2018 CEDRE commitments, President Macron outlined the political and economic reforms needed for international assistance in a two-page concept paper delivered later by the French Ambassador to Lebanese officials. These included a central bank audit, reform of the energy sector, the appointment of an interim cabinet with the jurisdiction to implement urgent reforms, early parliamentary elections within a year, progress in IMF talks, and an impartial investigation into the explosion. The concept paper, which became dubbed “the French initiative,” also states that France will have a significant role in the reconstruction of the port. (Bassem, 2020) President Macron's visit to Lebanon after the Port of Beirut explosion built on the French dual approach to Hezbollah and is also aligned with the French tradition of maintaining bilateral relations and of mediating where feasible (Thepaut, 2020). In fact, France has listed Hezbollah's military wing only as a terrorist entity and acknowledges that Hezbollah is a main political actor in Lebanon, with a broad captive constituency among the Shiite in the country. Hence, the French have always been in direct contact with the group, as the latter is needed to help Lebanon out of its crises. (Abou Rahal, 2020)

For Barnes-Dacey, Macron coming in early and quickly after the explosion was a clear demonstration of the French trying to see the initiative and show leadership. The initial French hope was for change, and the French are not naïve to the deep systemic problems afflicting Lebanon and the need for reform, so they sensed that there could be an opportunity to get change. (Barnes-Dacey, 2021)

Macron visited again in September for hours of meetings with politicians about reforms that his country has been asking of the Lebanese government for years for stability and fighting corruption (Cornish et al., 2020). His purpose was to agree on the basis for a political pact for the reconstruction of Lebanon, binding for all parties, to restrict disputes, provide the country with immediate assistance, and open it up to a long-term viewpoint (Dettmer, 2020). Professor Alexandre Issa also describes the objective of this visit as to see what reforms were happening in Lebanon, not just because the presidential elections are upcoming in France and he hasn't been capable of achieving anything in Lebanon yet, but also because the latter was asking the French to speak in the name of Lebanon. France has a certain soft power, being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and can influence the decision-making in many institutions or other countries – and that's why France was doing the advocacy and not Lebanon. (Issa, 2021)

In typical carrot-and-stick fashion, Macron clarified that without reform and concrete efforts to fight corruption, Lebanon's administration will not receive the financial support it needs to solve its economic crisis. The French administration also attempted to persuade all sides in Lebanon to concede and form a cabinet that does not have a political profile but is still supported by everyone. (Cornish & England, 2020) Although Macron admitted to taking a personal political risk, he pushed for a government formation in Lebanon, within 15 days, of independent competent experts. If this condition was met, France would convene a second international conference for pledges to the country. (Cornish & Abboud, 2020) This French

initiative was committed to by the political elite in Lebanon (Taleb, 2020), but their actions did not reflect that. Macron has even said that the US sanctions of September 2020 against a Lebanese Former Minister and a current MP did not help in advancing the formation of a Lebanese government within 15 days as was agreed. By then, it had already appeared that the process he launched on the 1st of September was not committed to by the Lebanese political class and things did not move forward as agreed.

In an attempt to push things forward, in November 2020, Patrick Durel, Macron's advisor on Middle East and North Africa affairs, travelled to Beirut and held a series of meetings with Lebanese officials and politicians, including Hezbollah representatives. He reiterated that France will not bail Lebanon out without reforms. (Taleb, 2020) Barnes-Dacey assesses that, over the course of the year after the explosion, French expectations and ambitions that there could be an opportunity for change have been diluted quite significantly, and they moved much further towards a stability paradigm as the first necessary step (Barnes-Dacey, 2021).

Le Drian also visited Beirut in May 2021 to try and firmly pressure the political class to bring an end to the political deadlock on the formation of a new cabinet (Chehayeb, 2021). Two months later, the French Ambassador to Lebanon held talks with her American counterpart in Saudi Arabia, portraying a united front together with the Gulf (Cornish, 2021).

Professor Karim Bitar explains that, in the early stages of his intervention in Lebanon, Macron was reluctant to use sanctions against the Lebanese ruling elite and was also cautious, because, at the time, he was still trying to get them to form a government and he was afraid that it would be counterproductive. It's only a few months later, when he realized that they duped and lied to him – and even said it openly that he was betrayed by the Lebanese politicians, that France accepted the idea of sanctions. After Macron had initially tried to

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pressure the Lebanese political establishment, use diplomacy, and get them to work together, France played an instrumental role in convincing other European countries to proceed with sanctioning the Lebanese politicians who were guilty of obstructing the formation of the Lebanese government and guilty of corruption or protecting terrorism. (Bitar, 2021)

Furthermore, in September 2021, many claim that, after having lobbied for an independent cabinet for a year, President Macron targeted Iran and directly called the new Iranian president to have him consent on a new government in Lebanon. When that happened, Hezbollah automatically followed and guaranteed the backing of its allies, including Aoun who had stalled a number of cabinet formations in the past. (Gardner, 2021) Nonetheless, Louis Dugit-Gros clarifies that there were strong French efforts to get a new government in Lebanon. Those efforts included discussing with, not just Iran, but Lebanese and foreign stakeholders, including the US and Gulf countries. (Dugit-Gros, 2021) With the appointment of Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Emmanuel Macron welcomed him in France and promised to condemn and hold accountable the individuals responsible for obstructing government formation in Lebanon. He also committed to helping Lebanon with infrastructure, energy, and humanitarian aid once the authorities begin advancing governance and the fight against corruption. (Browne, 2021) Bitar describes France's perspective on the government formation with the idea that France was desperate because, a year after Macron's visit, no government had been formed yet. The French had known Najib Mikati for a long time and could do business with him, so, when he came up with his government formula, they did not object. France supported the formation of the Mikati government, mostly for pragmatic reasons, because it realized that it would have been disastrous for Lebanon to continue without a government and that starting the negotiations with the International Monetary Fund was fundamental and needed a functional government. Another reason might be related to domestic French politics. With the presidential elections in France supposed to happen in May 2022, Macron is also trying to prevent a

complete collapse of a country in which he has invested so much time and energy before the elections. Thus, Macron might also have had an interest in maintaining a modicum of stability in Lebanon. (Bitar, 2021)

Economy

Economically, the foreign policies of the United States of America and the French Republic have employed various economic instruments in Lebanon, including carrots and sticks. These have taken shape through a range of actions, from granting foreign aid to blacklisting or freezing of assets – as economic instruments were used to attain political objectives.

USA

October 2016 – May 2018

Pursuant to the election of Aoun as President in October 2016, in 2017 alone, the United States provided Lebanon with almost 535 million US Dollars in foreign assistance, of which 78% were economic assistance. Prioritizing the humanitarian, governance, and education sectors, the top activity went to the emergency response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. (USAID & US Department of State, 2021) In April 2018, the United States also participated in the French-organized CEDRE conference for Lebanon and pledged 115 million US Dollars to Lebanon in grants, conditional on the enactment of real reforms that would find corruption and enhance transparency within the Lebanese system (The Daily Star, 2018). In fact, during the conference, the US delegation was one of the staunchest advocates for a strict monitoring system for the dispatched pledges by international donors consequently to the execution of reforms.

May 2018 – October 2019

Pursuant to the parliamentary elections in Lebanon in May 2018, the United States provided Lebanon with 118 million US Dollars in development assistance in 2018 alone, along with

hefty contributions to the UN World Food Program and other agencies operational in Lebanon (Schenker, 2021, [a]).

However, the US administration also enforced strong sanctions against Hezbollah. For instance, in July 2019, the United States sanctioned three top Lebanese officials from Hezbollah. Mohamad Raad, Amin Sherri, and Wafiq Safa have since had their travel capabilities and financial transactions restricted, with American nationals unable to communicate or do business with them. These sanctions sent a message to the international community that there is no difference between Hezbollah's political command and military wing. (Moubayed, 2019) The US justified the sanctions as a contribution to protecting Lebanese government institutions from being exploited by Iran and its proxies in the country (Ahmado, 2020). The American Treasury also designated the Jammal Trust Bank in September 2019 (Badran, 2021). Prior to the designation, Former Assistant Secretary of State David Schenker recounts that the US worked with the Jammal Trust Bank for more than a year, trying to get them to clean up a couple of accounts but the bank didn't want to do it. Still, the US waited until Lebanon's credit rating (issued by Moody's) dropped to a C, and only after that the credit rating was issued did the US designate Jammal Trust. (Schenker, 2021, [b])

October 2019 – August 2020

Even after the protests in Lebanon began, and until the end of July 2020, the American administration did not add any new Lebanese individuals or entities to its sanctions list. Additionally, it continued to provide Lebanon with the enormous amounts of economic aid it has given the country annually. Indeed, by the end of 2019, the US had funded Lebanon with around 791 million US Dollars in foreign assistance, of which 65% were economic assistance, prioritizing the humanitarian, governance, and education sectors (USAID & US Department of State, 2021).

Post August 4, 2020

Pursuant to the Port of Beirut explosion, the delivery of American relief assistance to Lebanon began to be funneled through the Lebanese military and the Red Cross – an American policy in place for years to keep its aid from getting to Hezbollah. The US committed to an initial donation of 17 million US Dollars in disaster relief. (Dunne, 2020) For instance, the US sent to Lebanon three aircraft shipments of relief assistance including food, water, and medical equipment, and coordinated with the State Department and USAID to deliver its assistance and guarantee that it goes directly to the affected populations (Babb, 2020). The US also participated in the international aid conference for Lebanon hosted by France and the UN a few days after the explosion (Cornish & Mallet, 2020), and pledged another 15 million US Dollars (BBC, 2020, [b]). Gabriel believes that humanitarian assistance has been a key area of engagement, as Lebanon has become a major recipient of USAID programming in the Middle East, not only to the large population of Syrian refugees in the country, but to the alleviation of the suffering the Lebanese people are facing today as well. The explosion was a wakeup call on the need to, not only combat corruption, but also deliver humanitarian aid to the Lebanese people. He highlights that there has thus been consistent support from the US in other policy areas, such as for American institutions like the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University. (Gabriel, 2021) A year later, the US further pledged around 100 million US Dollars to Lebanon on the first anniversary of the Port of Beirut explosion (Rose, 2021, [a]). However, the US administration asserted that any international bailout for the country would hinge on financial and political structural reforms (Badran, 2021).

The Americans also announced new sanctions against Lebanese officials after having sensed some flexibility from the French in dealing with Hezbollah (Macaron, 2020). In September 2020, the Trump administration, in its last months in office, imposed sanctions on two former Lebanese ministers, Youssef Finianos and Ali Hasan Khalil, for their links with

Hezbollah, and then did the same with current-MP Gebran Bassil in November for charges of corruption (Irish, 2020). Hanin Ghaddar explains that, although sanctions against Hezbollah have been a constant that began with Obama, the Trump administration began using the Magnitsky Act against Hezbollah allies (Ghaddar, 2021).

Ghaddar clarifies that, with the change of administration, the Biden team has been mostly focused on humanitarian assistance (Ghaddar, 2021). As such, in August 2021, the US Ambassador to Lebanon announced that Washington is working with the World Bank, Egypt, and Jordan to supply Lebanon with electricity from Jordan and gas from Egypt (Haboush, 2021). In October of this year, American diplomats informed Lebanon that it would not be subject to sanctions by the US's Caesar Act if gas and electricity are imported through Syria (Rose, 2021). But, once again, by the end of the month, the US Treasury imposed sanctions on current-MP Jamil Al-Sayyed and prominent businessmen Jihad Al-Arab and Dany Khoury for charges of corruption (US Department of the Treasury, 2021).

France

October 2016 – May 2018

After the October 2016 election of Lebanon's new President, on the 6th of April 2018, Paris hosted the CEDRE ("*Conférence Economique pour le Développement par les Réformes avec les Entreprises*") donor conference for Lebanon, in which 11 billion US Dollars were promised to the country in grants and credits (Nassif, 2018). CEDRE aimed at rallying foreign states for investment support to boost Lebanon's economy and develop its feeble infrastructure (Taleb, 2020). However, it foundered due to indecisiveness by the Lebanese government and its inability to meet the transparency requirements set by the donors (Cornish & Mallet, 2020) and its failure to implement structural reforms (Taleb, 2020).

May 2018 – October 2019

After the May 2018 elections of the Lebanese Parliament, throughout the remaining of 2018 and most of 2019, France continued to provide Lebanon with small-scale economic and humanitarian assistance. More importantly, it persisted in pressuring the Lebanese government to begin implementing the economic reforms it had requested of the country to unlock the foreign assistance pledged to it during the CEDRE conference. Nevertheless, it did not take any punitive actions, such as blacklisting or freezing of assets, nor did it threaten with such measures.

October 2019 – August 2020

Once the protests in Lebanon erupted, France again urged Lebanon to implement the CEDRE reforms to unlock billions of euros in financing (RFI, 2019). In December 2019, in response to Lebanon's appeals to friendly countries for assistance in imports, France convened a meeting for the International Support Group for Lebanon. The meeting gathered the UN Security Council's five permanent members, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other states. However, the meeting only reiterated previous calls for government formation and reform to secure financial support for Lebanon. (International Support Group for Lebanon, 2019) For months, France spearheaded an international attempt to provide Lebanon with aid to cope with its economic crisis in return for significant political reforms. However, the French had been clashing with then-Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab over the proposals, who accused them and the IMF of attempting to blackmail Lebanon. (Dettmer, 2020) It's also important to note that, throughout that period, Total, the French energy company, participated in the consortium drilling in Lebanon's fourth and ninth sea blocks for gas.

During a visit by Le Drian to Beirut in July 2020, he revealed that humanitarian aid to Lebanon would be a mere small-scaled 50 million Euros for 2020, with support for healthcare,

public service, and 1000 children who study at French schools in Lebanon, awaiting the implementation of reforms for further aid (Azhari, 2020).

Post August 4, 2020

In the wake of the Port of Beirut explosion, France assumed its historic leadership role in coordinating international assistance to Lebanon (Cornish, 2020), as a result of their mutual history (Sadzot, 2020). For instance, it sent four planes of medical kits and French rescuers to Beirut (BBC, 2020, [a]). Macron's visit to Lebanon after the explosion built on pressure for economic reforms via the 2018 CEDRE Conference, to create a renewed diplomatic effort to prevent an economic collapse in Lebanon (Thepaut, 2020). In fact, economically, the French have been focused on encouraging a Lebanese government capable of managing reconstruction and emergency assistance, reforming the public sector, and negotiating with the IMF (Macaron, 2020).

Professor Alexandre Issa adds an aspect of economic interests to Macron's visit, which, he believes, had an economic goal to secure the reconstruction in Beirut. France was already trying to have more economic presence in Lebanon – be it in the previous period through petrol, or now in the port reconstruction. (Issa, 2021) Macron, during his visit, did express French aspirations to rebuild the port by mobilizing French companies to secure reconstruction contracts. Still, France has clarified that pursuing this plan, just like the wider IMF program, would necessitate serious reforms on the part of the Lebanese government. (Schenker, 2021, [a])

However, for Paris, international aid in favor of the country certainly reflected an emotional dimension considering the common heritage between the two countries (Yegavian, 2021). As such, a few days later, France organized an international conference to raise funds for the Lebanese population (Cornish et al., 2020). Donors who participated in the conference

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agreed to fund 252.7 million Euros in emergency assistance for the country (Cornish & Mallet, 2020), and ensured that aid would be sent directly to non-governmental organizations operating on the field (BBC, 2020, [a]). Macron, in coordination with the IMF, requested political reform to address the endemic corruption in Lebanon and restore order to the Lebanese economy and banking system (Cornish & Mallet, 2020). The French have become the undoubted speaker for international donors to Lebanon (Duclos, 2020). In December 2020, France organized a second conference in support of the Lebanese population and revealed that 280 million Euros had been disbursed to Lebanon in economic aid instead of the 257 that were pledged in August of that year (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2020, [b]).

Macron is said to have also warned the Americans that depending too heavily on sanctions while holding back on investment and additional aid while awaiting the outcomes of a long reform process could turn into Hezbollah's favor (Dunne, 2020). Nevertheless, in 2021, travel bans were imposed by France on a number of senior Lebanese officials, without publicizing any names, as an attempt to exert pressure on the failing political class in the country (Rose, 2021, [a]). The French administration also convinced and coordinated with the European Union to adopt a sanctions framework for Lebanese politicians (Rose, 2021, [a]). Indeed, in July, France led a European effort to intensify the pressure on the Lebanese government, by approving a legal framework for a system of sanctions within the EU that aims specifically at Lebanese leaders (Reuters, 2021, [a]). Professor Karim Bitar explains that the resolution adopted by the European parliament calls for sanctions, freezing of assets, and travel bans. Sanctions are symbolically particularly important, especially since, in the past two years, it has become obvious that the language of sanctions is the only language that the Lebanese political establishment understands. (Bitar, 2021)

On the explosion's first anniversary, France hosted a third international conference for Lebanon, in coordination with the UN, as a response to the needs of the population in Lebanon.

The conference raised 370 million US Dollars, of which France pledged 100 million Euros. (Rose, 2021, [a])

Security

When it comes to security, the foreign policies of the United States of America and the French Republic have employed various security instruments in Lebanon such as military assistance, support for UNIFIL, and interventions for the de-escalation of conflicts.

USA

October 2016 – May 2018

With the election of Michel Aoun as president to the Lebanese Republic, the US administration continued to be a major advocate for the Lebanese Armed Forces (Dorell, 2016). In a congratulatory phone call between then-State Secretary in the Obama administration John Kerry and President Aoun, Kerry assured the latter that the US is dedicated to supporting the Lebanese military in fighting terrorism and enhancing stability. In fact, when Aoun was elected and Obama was still in office, his administration's policy towards Lebanon was solely focused on the Lebanese military. (Smith, 2016)

While the Obama and Trump administrations have both contended that Hezbollah's power in Lebanon can be tackled by the enhancement of state institutions, some American government members have instead argued that Hezbollah has tightened its collaboration with the LAF. This has led to questioning of requests for continuing military assistance to Lebanon. Indeed, Hezbollah's seats in the successive Lebanese administrations have complicated American involvement with the government. The Trump administration was seriously worried about the role of Hezbollah in the administration and was becoming extremely cautious of any future government that would include what they consider a terrorist group in the political system. (Humud, 2018) Nevertheless, Lebanon received from the United States, in 2017, 80

million US Dollars dedicated to military assistance as part of the American Foreign Military Financing Program through the Department of Defense (USAID & US Department of State, 2021).

Still, that year, after over a decade of annual renewals for the UNIFIL mandate in the UN Security Council, the election of President Trump rendered the 2017 debate heated. In fact, Nikki Haley, the American UN Ambassador, described the interim force as blind and incapable of using its power to prove Hezbollah's weapon stockpiles. However, the US delegation had to agree to a compromise that included a change in tone but not actual content. These changes addressed greater visibility and efficiency, additional patrols, more aggressive posturing, and a more obvious acceleration of the Lebanese military's deployment in the south. (Makdisi, 2020)

May 2018 – October 2019

After the election of the current Lebanese parliament, Washington received Commander General of the Lebanese Armed Forces, Joseph Aoun, in June 2018 to discuss cooperation on counter-terrorism issues (Fisk, 2018). The US administration also gave the LAF six A-29 Super Tucano light-attackers (US Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2021). Along the same foreign policy approach, throughout 2018, the United States provided Lebanon with 128 million US Dollars in security aid (Schenker, 2021, [a]). This amount increased in 2019 to 199.1 million US Dollars (USAID & US Department of State, 2021).

In both 2018 and 2019, UNIFIL mandate renewals were calmer efforts compared to those of 2017, focusing more on the effectiveness of the interim force in implementing its mission rather than on the renewal itself (Makdisi, 2020).

October 2019 – August 2020

The widespread demonstrations in Lebanon that started in October 2019 challenged the American policy of supporting the Lebanese government, as the US administration avoided criticizing the LAF's behavior towards the protests (Badran, 2021). However, in a surprising move, by the end of that month, the American Department of State informed Congress that the National Security Council and White House budget office had made the decision to block 105 million US Dollars in foreign military aid to Lebanon. The amount had already previously been approved by Congress and the State Department. American diplomats and members of Congress fiercely opposed the decision, thus successfully pushing for the reversion of the hold in December. (Zengerle, 2019)

Although the insecurity in Lebanon due to economic deterioration and poor governance has alarmed some American policymakers, an important focus of American attention in the country remained the mitigation of instability, which contributes to constraining the influence of the United States' adversaries in the region. After Hariri's resignation in October 2019, the American approach to Lebanon still maintained its support to the Lebanese army. (Polansky & Aviles, 2020)

Post August 4, 2020

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker recounts that, prior to the explosion that occurred at the Port of Beirut, in the summer of 2020, the United States was prepared to veto the renewal of the UNIFIL mandate. The US did not view UNIFIL as implementing appropriately or effectively its mandate, and either the mission had to be downsized, or the mandate had to be changed, or, the US even told the French, the mandate was not going to be renewed. When the port explosion happened, the US introduced some changes to the mandate, but, at that point, the Administration did not feel comfortable in vetoing the renewal. (Schenker, 2021, [b]) In reality, the explosion had enhanced the idea of

Lebanon as the victim of disaster in need of assistance. Although it had asked for a couple of improvements similar to the 2017 controversies, the United States thus finalized the wording of UN Security Council Resolution 2539 with France, consequently renewing the mandate of the interim forces for another year. (Orion, 2020)

Nevertheless, throughout 2020, the US trained 204 members of the Lebanese military and provided Lebanon with 216 million US Dollars in military grants between the Department of Defense and the Department of State. In May 2021, the US State Department under the Biden administration held its inaugural defense resourcing conference with the Lebanese military, in which the American administration announced 120 million USD in foreign military financing to Lebanon for 2021, subject to Congress's notification procedures – a 15 million USD increase in comparison to previous years, making Lebanon one of the biggest recipients of the State Department's military aid worldwide. (US Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2021) In September of this year, a US Navy fast transport ship docked in the Port of Beirut, signaling support to the Lebanese government, most notably its military (Mezher, 2021). A couple of days later, the US delivered six helicopters to the LAF as part of its security assistance to the country (National News Agency, 2021). Furthermore, during Under Secretary of State's October visit to Lebanon, Nuland announced the American administration's intention to provide the LAF with an additional 67 million US Dollars in military support, bringing the total 2021 support to the Lebanese military to 240 million US Dollars (Reuters, 2021, [b]).

France

October 2016 – May 2018

In March 2017, a couple of months since the election of Lebanon's new president, in a display of affirmation of France's continuous engagement and active cooperation with the LAF, then-French Minister of Defense under the Hollande administration, Jean-Yves Le Drian, visited

Lebanon to remind the Lebanese government of French attachment to the existence of a structured and solid military in Lebanon and to the application of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (Embassy of France in Lebanon, 2017). A year later, during the Rome II conference for supporting Lebanon's security, the Macron administration pledged 14 million Euros in grants and offered a 400 million Euros loan to the security agencies in Lebanon (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2021).

May 2018 – October 2019

After the election of Lebanon's parliament, once again, in July 2019, the new French Minister of Armed Forces, Florence Parly, flew to Beirut to meet with Lebanese officials and discuss French cooperation with Lebanon on its defense sector. The visit signaled France's preparedness to boost the capacities of the LAF. (Merhej, 2019) A month later, an exchange of fire between Israel and Hezbollah took place at the borders, after which Macron personally intervened with the sides involved to avoid an escalation and instill calm in the region. Afterwards, When Hariri visited the President in September of that year, a letter of intent was signed between the two governments to buy French defense and security equipment that would enhance Lebanon's capacities. (Houssari, 2019)

October 2019 – August 2020

Prior to and during the eruption of the protests in Lebanon, the French government had been supplying the Lebanese government with law enforcement equipment. However, research by Amnesty International, the international non-governmental organization for human rights, revealed the role of France's equipment in the Lebanese authorities' crackdown on the protests in Lebanon since October 2019. Indeed, the equipment supplied by the French government to Lebanon was later used to violate protesters' freedom to peaceful assembly and demonstration. Nevertheless, France did not respond to request for clarifications about their sales to Lebanon,

(Amnesty International, 2021) and continued to fervently support the Lebanese security sector with funding and equipment.

Post August 4, 2020

In the wake of the Port of Beirut explosion, France sent its forensic police experts to participate in the investigations in Beirut (BBC, 2020, [a]), and its Minister of Armed Forces Florence Parly to supervise the deployment of military aid to Lebanon and talk with Lebanese security officials (RFI, 2020). By the end of August 2020, France, along with the United States, finalized the wording of the third draft of the UN Security Council Resolution 2539, as the French supported the extension of the UNIFIL mandate without any changes. With the French administration seeking to promote a wide-ranged program in Lebanon, many believed that Macron subordinated UNIFIL and security along the southern border to his political agenda. Nevertheless, the French were capable of imposing their wishes on the United States and of passing the resolution. (Orion, 2020) Since then, the French Republic has persisted in its direct financing to the Lebanese army and equipping its security institutions, ensuring that its assistance directly reaches its targeted beneficiaries.

Diplomacy

Diplomatically, the United States of America and the French Republic have used various instruments to translate their foreign policies towards Lebanon into concrete diplomatic actions. For this section, a content analysis was conducted, specifically a discourse analysis, to study the speeches, statements, press releases, and other public and diplomatic communications by the US and France on Lebanon. The aim of this exercise is to identify how frequently the two states make mention of Lebanon, and the rhetoric they use when tackling the country. For sampling purposes, the content reviewed was restricted to the public communications delivered or issued by the presidents of the US and France, the US Secretary of State, including his Under

and Assistant Secretaries, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, including its Director of North Africa and Middle East Affairs, and the US and French embassies in Lebanon, after the 31st of October 2016. More than 181 public and diplomatic communications were reviewed, of which at least 81 by the government of the United States and 100 by that of France.

USA

October 2016 – May 2018

After the election of Michel Aoun as current Lebanese President on the 31st of October 2016, at least 12 public and diplomatic communications were delivered or issued by the government of the United States of America with mention of Lebanon. These include at least 4 by the President, 4 by the Secretary of State, and 4 by the US Embassy in Beirut.

Throughout this period, during which the CEDRE Conference took place with the participation of the US and a consequent statement issued by President Trump, the general rhetoric adopted by the US government while talking about Lebanon is one that emphasizes on the United States' commitment to a strong partnership with the Lebanese government and to its support to the latter in order to enhance its ability to preserve the security and sovereignty of the country. In fact, all 4 of the communications by the President of the United States condemned Hezbollah at least once, even in a joint statement with Saudi Arabia, and emphasized on Lebanese state institutions – particularly the LAF – as the only legitimate institutions to defend the country. Additionally, the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, during his visit to Beirut, delivered a very heavy worded speech against Hezbollah and its actions in the Middle East (Tillerson, 2018). These public and diplomatic communications also frequently alluded to American prioritization of support to Lebanon in the fight against terrorism, especially in the context of the 2017 crackdown against the Islamic State in the region, and to

the Syrian refugee crisis, reiterating the US' commitment to providing basic services to refugees and host communities in Lebanon. Special attention was also given to the security of Israel and agreeing with Lebanon on their natural resources dispute.

May 2018 – October 2019

Pursuant to the election of the current Lebanese parliament on the 6th of May 2018, at least 22 public and diplomatic communications were delivered or issued by the US government mentioning Lebanon. These include at least 2 by the President, 18 by the Secretary of State, and 2 by the American Embassy in Lebanon.

While the numbers indicate a considerable increase in communications on Lebanon by the US throughout this period, this is actually due to the fact that the Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, travelled to Lebanon on a high-level visit, participating in several press interviews and issuing a number of statements on his meetings with Lebanese leaders. Indeed, during his meetings, the US Secretary of State, not only addressed American support to the Lebanese institutions, but, more importantly, emphasized on American push-back against the threat of Hezbollah in Lebanon as part of the administration's efforts against Iran. Actually, Pompeo delivered the American administration's most pointed speech against Hezbollah at the Lebanese Foreign Ministry, emphasizing on its sanctions against the group, and even vaguely alluding to possible sanctions against Lebanese leaders who support the group (Pompeo, 2019).

In reality, the United States' rhetoric during this period had become increasingly aggressive towards Hezbollah's influence in the country. For instance, the US President's communications mentioning Lebanon were strictly related to Hezbollah and Iran, including in one statement on standing with KSA. Additionally, while the US Embassy had previously shied away from publicly addressing Hezbollah's presence in government, the Ambassador had now publicly expressed her concern over Hezbollah's role in the government and its operations in

the country. Evidently, 3 different statements were released towards the end of this period, announcing the designation of Lebanese entities and individuals on the American sanctions list.

It's also important to note that, during this time, some small mention of economic reforms began surfacing in the rhetoric adopted by the American government towards Lebanon.

October 2019 – August 2020

After the nation-wide protests began in Lebanon on the 17th of October 2019, at least 17 public and diplomatic communications were delivered or issued by the American government making mention of Lebanon. These include at least 1 by the President, 10 by the Secretary of State and 4 by his Assistant and Under Secretaries, and 2 by the US Embassy.

Throughout this period, the American rhetoric towards Lebanon drastically shifted in focus and language. In fact, most of these communications centered around the protests happening in Lebanon and calls for reform. 3 statements were related to the release of controversial Lebanese American figure, Amer Fakhoury, and his return to the US – one of which was announced by the President himself. Indeed, the President of the United States gave no other public statement related to Lebanon during this time. However, although there evidently was some mention of Hezbollah and Iranian influence in US communications back then – accompanied by 2 statements announcing the designation of Lebanese entities and individuals on the American sanctions list – both, the Secretary of State, even his Assistant and Under Secretaries, and the Embassy in Beirut repeatedly addressed the protests, emphasized the US' support to protests calls for reform, transparency, and accountability, and urged the government's security institutions to protect peaceful protesters.

While the American government also sometimes reiterated its enduring support to the Lebanese people, these public communications still implied that the international community

will not provide Lebanon with assistance without the implementation of real and tangible reforms. Nevertheless, although one speech mentioned British-French-American discussions on the situation in Lebanon (Schenker, 2019), these statements also alluded that it is up to the Lebanese people to demand a proper government formation. One noticeable insisted-upon message is the US' commitment to the "stability, sovereignty, and security" of Lebanon – words that were repeated in almost most of the United States' communications, during all periods.

Post August 4, 2020

After the explosion that occurred at the Port of Beirut on the 4th of August 2020, at least 30 public and diplomatic communications were delivered or issued by the government of the US with mention of Lebanon. These include at least 5 by the President, 18 by the Secretary of State and 3 by his Assistant and Under Secretaries, and 4 by the American Embassy in Beirut.

Since the explosion, after which the conferences for the support of the Lebanese population were organized by France in 2020 and 2021 with the participation of the US and consequent statements issued by the Presidents, the American administration built on its previous rhetoric while addressing Lebanon, to further stress on the importance of reforms. While it continued its reiteration of its commitment to support the Lebanese people, these public communications were now focused on the formation of a government and the implementation of reforms for better governance, economic opportunity, and an end to corruption. The United States also repeatedly referred to the ongoing cooperation with other international partners, most notably France, especially in joint statements, on the situation in Lebanon, while also mentioning a few times that Lebanon's issues cannot be fixed by the outside and that long-term structural assistance will not be provided by international partners before concrete actions. Some importance was also given by the American government to calls for thorough and transparent investigations into, not only the Port of Beirut explosion, but the

assassination of prominent Lebanese activist Lokman Slim in 2021. It's quite significant to note that, throughout this period, the Americans repeatedly addressed the maritime boundary negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, mediated by the US, portraying it as a vital step forward to serve the interests of both countries, the US, and the region. Nevertheless, while the change in rhetoric was persistent during this time, the American approach remained consistent with the welcoming of the EU's adoption of its sanction regime for Lebanon and the issuance of 5 statements announcing the designation of Lebanese entities and individuals on the American sanctions list. Evidently, regardless of the change in rhetoric, the US administration did not shy away from condemning Hezbollah when special occasions presented themselves as opportunities.

France

October 2016 – May 2018

Pursuant to the election of Aoun as President in October 2016, at least 36 public and diplomatic communications were delivered or issued by the government of the French Republic mentioning Lebanon. These include at least 19 by the President and 17 by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

In fact, the volume of communications by the French government on Lebanon, especially by the President of the Republic, is reflective of its high-level engagement in Lebanese affairs, especially throughout this time period. Indeed, in a testament to the two country's deep ties, President Macron received Lebanese PM Hariri and then President Aoun in Paris on Macron's first chief-of-state visit. Macron also frequently addressed Lebanese affairs in statements or briefings on talks with other regional actors, including Israel, KSA, Iran, even the US, and other international partners. Moreover, during the 2017 crisis on Hariri's resignation and his alleged detention in Saudi Arabia, French involvement, with Macron and

Le Drian's visits to KSA, played a major role in the de-escalation of tensions and the resolution of the crisis – as alleged in the French government's communications. Pursuant to that, France also called for a meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon, participated in the Rome II Conference for the Support of the Lebanese Army, and organized and hosted the CEDRE conference – all events in which it delivered a number of statements.

The most obvious feature of the public and diplomatic communications issued and delivered by France during this time was a repetitive emphasis on the strong linkages between France and Lebanon and the special relationship between the two countries, and even sometimes on Lebanon's pluralist model to the region. However, an even more insisted-upon message is France's attachment to the "stability, security, territorial integrity, and sovereignty" of the Lebanese state – words that appeared in almost most of France's communications. Due to the contextual circumstances throughout this period, France also gave special attention to the regional crises, especially the Syrian war and its consequent refugee crisis, and stressed on the need for strong Lebanese state institutions that commit to the principle of dissociation from regional issues, pursuant to the Hariri crisis. Nevertheless, it's important to keep in mind that, by then, France had already begun asking for reforms, even before the CEDRE conference was organized.

May 2018 – October 2019

After the May 2018 elections of the Lebanese Parliament, at least 6 public and diplomatic communications were delivered or issued by the French government making mention of Lebanon. These include at least 3 by the President, 1 by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and 2 by the Embassy of France in Beirut.

Although this period is characterized by a sharp drop in French communications on Lebanon, this does not imply a decrease in French engagement in the country. In fact, France's

statements point to a continuation of French attempts to coordinate with other regional actors on Lebanese affairs – for instance, Iran – and to a repeated involvement by Macron to help foster the necessary conditions for government formation and to de-escalate tensions between Hezbollah and Israel along the Lebanese border.

During this time, while France maintained its reiteration of its commitment to its relationship with Lebanon and of the regional context, a growing emphasis was also given to the need for reforms, especially the Lebanese government's CEDRE commitments. Furthermore, occasionally, the French administration reminded Lebanon, and even regional actors, of its engagement to a policy of disassociation. It's also only throughout this period that the French Ambassador to Lebanon issued statements on Lebanese affairs.

October 2019 – August 2020

Once the protests in Lebanon erupted, 14 public and diplomatic communications were delivered or issued with mention of Lebanon, by the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and 1 by its Director of North Africa and Middle East Affairs.

One highly noticeable feature during this time is the lack of any communications by the French President with mention of Lebanon in comparison to other times. However, French engagement in the country remained persistent throughout this period – an element reflected by France's reunion of the International Support Group for Lebanon in Paris and several statements that detail France's efforts to urge the Lebanese government to alleviate the situation. Nevertheless, French authorities repeatedly reminded Lebanon that France and the international community cannot solve its problems, as the solution should be Lebanese.

Moreover, France's communications about Lebanon became less emotional in comparison to previous times, as they increasingly adopted a strict language on the urgent need for reforms and for a government capable of implementing the latter. Indeed, the only point

reiterated in every single statement by the French during this period is the insistence on the implementation of strong reforms by the Lebanese state – with a number of communications outlining France’s priorities for reform and reminding Lebanon of its CEDRE commitments. The French government also gave attention to the protests and depicted them as legitimate demands that the government of Lebanon should respond to. However, France stressed on concrete actions as a basis for international support to Lebanon. In fact, it’s throughout this time that French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, repeatedly pronounced his famous “*aidez-nous à vous aider*” (help us to help you). The French further reiterated their attachment to Lebanon’s dissociation from the crises in the Middle East and an interest in preserving Lebanon’s stability in the region.

Post August 4, 2020

Pursuant to the Port of Beirut explosion, at least 43 public and diplomatic communications were delivered or issued by the government of France mentioning Lebanon. These include at least 17 by the President and 26 by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

It definitely goes without saying that this unparalleled volume of high-level communications by the French government, especially by the President, during this period is due to France’s direct involvement in Lebanon after the explosion at the port – especially through the political initiative that became known as the “French initiative” born after Macron’s two visits to Lebanon. Since then, France has also attempted to rally wide support for its efforts in Lebanon – something than can be seen in its joint statements with the Biden administration and briefings on talks with Russia, Iran, Germany, Egypt, Jordan, even countries like Malta and Hungary, among others.

In reality, France’s public and diplomatic communications throughout this time can be split into two different phases. The first phase encompasses all statements that were delivered

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and issued in the immediate aftermath of the explosion. These show a return to the French emotional language, in the wake of such a tragic disaster, when talking about the relations between the two countries and its support to the Lebanese population. Such communications reiterated France's commitment to providing humanitarian assistance to the affected communities – efforts visible in the August and December 2020, as well as August 2021, conferences for the support of the Lebanese population co-hosted by France and the UN at the initiative of the French administration. However, these initiatives, and the consequent statements around them, reminded Lebanon that the international community cannot be a substitute to its government and will not provide long-term structural assistance without the implementation of concrete changes, repeating stern calls for urgent and deep-rooted reforms, especially the 2018 CEDRE commitments and the priorities outlined well before the explosion. It also indicated a lack of trust in Lebanese state institutions, as the decision to mobilize the international community has been conditional to the direct provision of aid via the civil society on the ground and not any government body – an element that was there even before the explosion.

Nevertheless, once it realized that it had been let down by Lebanese political leaders, although it still emphasized on its commitment to directly helping the Lebanese people, France reverted to an unparalleled aggressive tone in its public and diplomatic communications towards the Lebanese political class. Indeed, these statements delivered or issued since the end of September 2020 constitute the second of the two phases mentioned previously. Since then, France has not shied away from expressing its massive disappointment with the failure of the political leaders in Lebanon to uphold the commitments they agreed on with President Macron and instead their attachment to personal and partisan interests that continuously and deliberately obstructed government formation. This was particularly evident in President Macron's press conference on the 27th of September 2020, in which he declared: "The Lebanese

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political forces, their leaders, the leaders of the Lebanese institutions, did not wish clearly, resolutely, explicitly, to respect the commitment made before France and the international community. They decided, and I am forced to make the cruel observation for all of us, a month later, to betray this commitment made” (Macron, 2020). Soon after, French rhetoric became even more aggressive and began threatening with restrictive measures, both nationally and within the European Union, against those responsible for the political deadlock and those engaged in corruption.

While, after the formation of the new Lebanese government in September 2021, a more pacific language compared to the year before could be becoming the trend for this phase, France has still been reminding the Lebanese state that no foreign actor will provide long-term structural assistance before it sees the implementation of concrete and valid reforms. France has, even before the government formation, also been stressing on the need for a truthful and transparent investigation into the causes of the explosion – even addressing the assassination of prominent Lebanese activist Lokman Slim in 2021 – and for democratic and independent parliamentary elections in 2022.

To conclude, as studied throughout this chapter, some of the various instruments adopted by the United States of America and the French Republic in their practice of their foreign policies towards Lebanon, be it in politics, economy, security, or diplomacy, reflect the divergences in their foreign policies, while others portray their convergences. It’s important to note that although many believe that international attitudes towards Lebanon may have shifted after major internal events that occurred in the country, this chapter shows that these events did not have significant impact on the historical track of neither the US nor France in Lebanon. While they may have affected small tactical moves, the Americans and French still maintained consistency in their larger strategic policies.

Chapter 4: Findings and Policy Implications

The convergence and divergence of the US and French foreign policies towards Lebanon and the Middle East are apparent in the factors that explain each of them, the foreign policies themselves, and their instruments. These areas where the US and France have been converging or diverging set the stage to understanding whether the current interaction in Lebanon between France and the US is unfolding into competition or cooperation and the long-term implications of such an interaction. The findings of this thesis are based on analyzing the outcomes of the set of tools used to answer its research question – the desk research, the set of interviews, and the discourse analysis conducted – in terms of convergences and divergences and looking forward to cooperation or competition. Due to their invariable nature, many of these findings enjoy long-term validity and importance.

Convergences and Divergences

First and foremost, a major finding is the fact that there is a very large grey area in which the US and French foreign policies towards Lebanon and the Middle East strictly converge or strictly diverge. In fact, when it comes to most issue areas, the Americans and the French converge in strategy, but diverge in tactics. Although these areas do include the factors that explain each of the US and French foreign policies, their instruments; they also go beyond these to include deeper strategic and geopolitical areas.

To begin with, although the United States and France diverge, rather than converge, on the extent of the influence of the societal environment and the public opinion on their foreign policies, it remains apparent that they share many other domestic factors that explain their foreign policies. These factors have been invariable for quite some time which means that this finding will most probably remain valid on the long-term. Indeed, while the system of government and the institutional set-up in the US and France are different, the foreign policies

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of both states are highly influenced by the role of the presidency, which gives presidents of the US and France a vital ability to manage the broad lines of foreign policy. Moreover, the role of groups such as the foreign policy establishment, elites, corporates, and non-state actors is influential on the foreign policies of both countries, although to different levels. Certainly, in the US and France, foreign policymaking is the realm of elites who adjudicate on foreign issues of domestic interests. The opinion of the private sector also weighs, while in different ways, on the development of foreign policy in the two states.

With regard to the external factors, which have been invariable for quite some time and render this finding most probably valid on the long-term, even as France and the US diverge, rather than converge, on the extent of the influence of the globalization, the distribution of power, and multilateralism on their foreign policies, it is still clear that they share many other factors that explain their foreign policies. In fact, although both countries have different priorities in the Middle East, both are driven by their alliances and alignments in the region, as they are both aligning with regional powers to counter their opponents. France does so with Egypt to counter Turkish ambitions, and the US with Saudi Arabia to counter Iranian influence. More importantly, the United States' behavior is highly influential on the foreign policy of France, as the latter, to a great extent, adjusts its foreign policy based on what the Americans do in the region.

Concerning the foreign policies of the US and France towards Lebanon and the Middle East, and their instruments, there are several areas of convergence and divergence – be it on the political, economic, security, or diplomatic level – and these are also dependent on the ongoing events in Lebanon. Politically, when Michel Aoun became president, both governments did not have a major problem with, and even welcomed, his election and tried to work with him regardless of his official alliance to Hezbollah. Hezbollah, however, is a major point of contest between the Americans and the French.

What's important to keep in mind is that there is a grey area when it comes to convergence or divergence between France and the US when it comes to Hezbollah.

Former Assistant Secretary of State David Schenker has explained that there is a tolerance in Washington, but, at the same time, a weariness, of the French perception of a particular role for France in Lebanon. This is due to the fact that the French have met with Hezbollah's political wing and engaged with them – and, for the United States, that's not really appreciated. (Schenker, 2021, [b]) Louis Dugit-Gros clarifies that Hezbollah is one of the few issues on which the US and France have a different approach (Dugit-Gros, 2021).

According to Gabriel, in general, the US is more selective with who it engages with in Lebanon, as it has sanctioned several prominent Lebanese politicians and is determined to not support corrupt government politicians. The US also has Hezbollah designated as a terrorist organization, whereas France, while certainly not supportive of the group, is more willing to engage with Hezbollah as a political entity in Lebanon. (Gabriel, 2021) Still, Professor Michael Shurkin has argued that the French and the Americans are both anti-Hezbollah, (Shurkin, 2021) even if Hezbollah, as a whole, is on the terrorist list in the US, whereas, in France, only the armed wing of Hezbollah is (Dugit-Gros, 2021).

Hanin Ghaddar clarifies that the French do know that there is no difference between the two wings (Ghaddar, 2021). Professor Karim Bitar agrees that the French do not particularly like Hezbollah and have a long contentious history with them and Iran that goes back to the 1980s hostage crisis (Bitar, 2021). Julien Barnes-Dacey further explains that the French government would say that Hezbollah is a problematic actor, that they need to change its behavior, and that there's a lot that they disagree on (Barnes-Dacey, 2021). The French administration is actually not any less hateful towards the group. In reality, they care more about Lebanon than Americans do, so they are more sensitive and bothered than Americans are to the damage that Hezbollah does to Lebanon. In contrast, the US is more bothered by the

missiles that Hezbollah has aiming at Israel or the very fact that Lebanon has become an Iranian proxy. (Shurkin, 2021)

On one hand, Americans are very pious, refuse to negotiate with terrorists, and are very Manichean. The US is into the Manichean image of “good guys and bad guys,” (Shurkin, 2021) and doesn’t think that Hezbollah is part of the solution (Schenker, 2021, [b]). The United States has a complete veto on everything related to Hezbollah (Bitar, 2021). Even in the political context, it would be impossible for the Biden administration to start negotiating with Hezbollah, because the American right wing would go crazy (Shurkin, 2021).

On the other hand, the French are not like that at all and are a lot less Manichean. They are far more willing and capable to sit down and have a negotiation with sides they hate out of a sense of reality and pragmatism. France has a different way of approaching the issue as they just don’t fundamentally think a terrorist designation against Hezbollah’s political wing is useful. For them, it’s more useful to be willing to talk to everybody. (Shurkin, 2021) There is a genuine understanding in France that Hezbollah is part of Lebanon’s security, political, and social landscape, and thus they can't exclude them from engagement if they want to chart a constructive path forward (Barnes-Dacey, 2021). France acknowledges that Hezbollah is a military actor but also considers it as a force representative of a large segment of Lebanon’s Shiite community and represented in parliament and in most Lebanese governments. Therefore, the French administration thinks that it is acceptable to talk to Hezbollah. (Bitar, 2021) This is consistent with what France is trying to achieve in Lebanon, because Hezbollah is a political actor in the country and nothing can be achieved without having them either on board or not strongly opposing. Right now, if France wants to get things done on all scope of issues in Lebanon, it needs to have Hezbollah at least allowing the French to do it. (Dugit-Gros, 2021) The fundamental point is that France knows that Hezbollah is a critical stakeholder, and they can't therefore exclude them from the conversation if they want to take things forward. The

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French know that, if they were to designate Hezbollah, they would risk marginalizing their own influence in the country because they would be excluded and cutting off relations won't help anyone. (Barnes-Dacey, 2021) The French need interlocutors because, for them, pressure backfires – when they sanction people, they lose them (Ghaddar, 2021).

Nonetheless, this divergence hasn't been a truly strategic one as, according to Schenker, the United States didn't say that Hezbollah couldn't be in the new government (Schenker, 2021, [b]). The approach of the US and France towards Hezbollah are actually complementary – US officials don't want or wish to talk to Hezbollah officials for a various array of reasons, but they find useful, to some extent, that some other countries can do it. (Dugit-Gros, 2021)

After the beginning of the 2019 protests in Lebanon, both the United States and France stepped up their calls for the implementation of reforms by the Lebanese government. The frustration with Lebanon was growing bigger in the two countries.

Ghaddar has said that the Americans are not completely convinced with the French initiative and their approach but they're giving them a chance to see if they can do something, because the Americans don't have the bandwidth, focus, and resources to deal with Lebanon up close and personal. Hence, they're delegating to the French to see what they can do. (Ghaddar, 2021) But, Elie Abou Aoun instead argues that both the Trump and Biden administrations, didn't mind the French playing a bigger role in Lebanon and didn't consider it as a loss for the US (Abou Aoun, 2021). Schenker recalls that the United States was perfectly willing to let the French try their approach in Lebanon, especially with a number of issues about which they were on the same page. These include that, primarily, there isn't going to be an IMF program for Lebanon unless the international community sees that there are real reforms that are implemented. France and the US coordinated and agreed that there should be a consensus that Lebanese political leaders are actually doing something before the international community gives yet another bailout for Lebanon. That was the fundamental agreement that

the US and the French had, as the latter went into their initiative, with both on the same page on reforms. (Schenker, 2021, [b]) Dugit-Gros also believes that the Americans were in support of the French initiative (Dugit-Gros, 2021).

Although the Americans encouraged and wanted the French to play a bigger role, they were not always in agreement with the French agenda, especially during the Trump administration. After discovering that Hezbollah was bluffing during Macron's meeting with the Lebanese political leaders, there was a big disagreement because the Americans considered that what Macron was doing will give agency to Hezbollah and sell big concessions to Iran. Nonetheless, the Americans objected and amended some specifics of his initiative. Accordingly, the Americans encouraged a French role, even if they disagreed with Macron on some issues, but would still encourage that role as long as this doesn't oppose any of the issues the Americans are trying to push. (Abou Aoun, 2021) Bitar agrees and recounts that many influential diplomats at the French Foreign Affairs Ministry think that the Trump administration's decision to sanction two politicians affiliated with one specific Lebanese camp, at the time when government formation in Lebanon was on the verge of succeeding, led to the collapse of the process and torpedoed the French initiative. Some French diplomats argue that Mike Pompeo did not coordinate his sanctions with the French and derailed the French initiative, because, when they found out that two Lebanese politicians perceived as close to Hezbollah were sanctioned and no one from the other side of the political spectrum was, some political parties were radicalized in the negotiation process and the government supported by the French did not end up getting formed. (Bitar, 2021)

Economically, France and the US have both provided Lebanon with significant amounts of economic and humanitarian assistance throughout the past five years but have also shared a refusal to bail out the latter from the pursuant economic crisis without seeing concrete changes happening. Indeed, even the humanitarian assistance that they provided Lebanon with

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was directly funneled to beneficiaries, as both France and the US ensured that it does not go to any governmental organization. Nevertheless, the two countries have the same policy on humanitarian assistance and agree that, notwithstanding the dereliction of duty of their Government in Beirut, Lebanese should not starve. The US and France provide significant humanitarian aid to Lebanon and even help underwrite the World Bank Social Safety Net program. (Schenker, 2021, [b]) Still, the Americans and the French had diverged on the issue of sanctions. Although the Trump and Biden administrations did not hesitate to sanction, not just Hezbollah, but its allies and political figures they accuse of corruption and obstructing rule of law, Macron was initially much more hesitant. While there were calls for him to sanction Lebanese political leaders since his first visit to Lebanon, it's not until after several months, when Macron realized he had been betrayed and was not achieving his goals in Lebanon, that his administration began working with the Europeans on a European sanctions' regime targeted for Lebanon. This has been widely welcomed by the Biden administration.

When it comes to security issues, the United States and France share a high degree of convergence on their policy towards Lebanon. In fact, the two states are strong supporters to the Lebanese Armed Forces and have rallied to mobilize all sorts of capacity-building services to the institution, whether through security assistance, military equipment, or trainings. Both believe that strengthening the state's legitimate defense institutions to control the entirety of the Lebanese territory will decrease Hezbollah's relative power in the country and shrink the need for its defense capabilities. The two states also participated in the Rome II conference of support to the Lebanese Army. Furthermore, although they have divergent views of the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon, once again, in the end, as clarified by Schenker, they came to a compromise and neither the United States nor France got what they wanted, but the UNIFIL is still there (Schenker, 2021, [b]).

Diplomatically, the United States of America has also participated in all initiatives that the French took for Lebanon. These include the 2018 CEDRE Conference, the meetings of the International Support Group for Lebanon, and the three different conferences for the support of the Lebanese population. There was even very high-level American presence in each of these conferences and the two states shared an important visit for the French ambassador and the US ambassador to Saudi Arabia in July 2021 (Dugit-Gros, 2021).

The discourse analysis of the public and diplomatic communications by American and French government officials shows a considerable degree of convergence in the way they address Lebanon. Indeed, both countries use a language that implies a strong partnership with Lebanese state institutions, although the French have a more emotional wording that emphasizes on the historical links they have with Lebanon. This is especially evident in their reiteration of their support to the LAF and the overall repetition of words such as “stability,” “security,” and “sovereignty” throughout their communications.

Between 2016 and 2018, the US and France both reaffirmed their support to Lebanon amid regional crises, most notably the Syrian war and consequent refugee crisis and the threat of terrorism and stand-offs with ISIS. After the eruption of the protests in 2019, both governments supported the protests and considered their demands as legitimate and adopted a strict language, emphasizing that there will be no bailout without reforms and that the international community cannot interfere. Pursuant to the port of Beirut explosion, the US and France also both supported an impartial investigation into the causes of the explosion and into the death of Lokman Slim. More importantly, all these convergences were most apparent in the joint-statements by the two administrations on the situation in Lebanon – and an indicator of their cooperation, as will be discussed later.

Nevertheless, the discourse analysis also points to divergences between the US and France in their mention of Lebanon. These issues, though, are related to a mere application of

their foreign policies and their instruments. Overall, French discourse analysis shows a high-level engagement of the French in Lebanese domestic and regional affairs, a behavior that the United States is not even interested in pursuing – an element also evident in the difference in the volume of communications delivered by the US and those by France. For instance, the American administration repeatedly gives attention to the security of Israel and the latter's maritime border demarcation dispute with Lebanon, whereas France very rarely brings up Israel – a factor that influences American foreign policy and not the French. Moreover, between 2016 and 2019, the US did not shy away from any opportunity to condemn Hezbollah, whereas this cannot be expected by the French as they do not deal with the group the same way and merely reiterate calls for Lebanon's dissociation from regional crises. Even before the 2018 CEDRE conference, France had already been calling for reforms in its official communications, whereas it's only till after CEDRE that these began to repeatedly surface by the US administration.

There still remains deeper strategic and geopolitical areas of convergence and divergence between the United States of America and the French Republic.

France has a particular interest in the Levant that the United States doesn't have. The US is more focused on the Gulf, which means that its interest in Lebanon only relates to Israel and the Gulf, but beyond that, they don't care much about who's actually in control in Lebanon the way the French still do. As such, the internal makeup of Lebanon is something that Americans don't care about, whereas France does. Americans are much more agnostic about what Lebanon looks like and who's in charge, but, of course, don't want Hezbollah to be in charge. Any other combination though would be acceptable for them, as the US doesn't aspire to influence Lebanese politics to the same extent that the French do. Moreover, there's also a direct personal relationship between the French establishment and Lebanon that the Americans don't have. Even French people in think tanks or policy work are much more well-versed in

Lebanese history and politics and are paying much more attention to what's going on now, whereas, in the United States of America, it's only the specialists who are. (Shurkin, 2021) For instance, as reiterated by Professor Alexandre Issa, the Lebanese lobby in France is stronger than the Lebanese lobby in Washington (Issa, 2021).

Moreover, the United States tends to focus primarily on Israel's security, on its economic relationship with Saudi Arabia, and exclusively, regarding Lebanon, on Hezbollah weapons, whereas France considers that the utmost priority should be given to Lebanon's stability. On one hand, in the case of French foreign policy towards Lebanon, there is truly a bilateral relationship between French interests and Lebanese interests upon which decisions are made. On the other hand, when it comes to US foreign policy towards Lebanon, many other actors must be taken into account, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia, rendering Lebanon always secondary to other more important issues. (Bitar, 2021) In fact, for the Americans, Lebanon is only seen through the prism of Iranian regional influence, and everything that happens in Lebanon is calculated in terms of its impact on that influence. It's very much just a pawn in a greater regional battle. For France, Lebanese political stability is a primary issue of importance above and beyond the position of Iran. Lebanon has importance in and of itself. This is most acutely seen in the French willingness to engage with Hezbollah and to see them as a necessary channel of engagement – something that the US is not willing to do because it's a quite different lens of understanding on what it wants from Lebanon. (Barnes-Dacey, 2021)

The Americans and the French also diverge in approach. While the French are more involved in Lebanon, they are very vague and have a big rhetoric, whereas the Americans are more lucid. France doesn't want to go full blast on Lebanon, gives chances, is afraid of losing interlocutors, and talks to Hezbollah – conversely to the Americans who are more direct. Although the French are more moderate and cautious in their approach, this has rendered them very compromising as well, much more than the Americans will ever be. Nevertheless, this is

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understood within the divergence of French and American interests in the country, including the upcoming presidential elections. For example, the US doesn't have troops on the ground in Lebanon contributing to UNIFIL whereas France does and seeks their safety and protection. Due to geographic proximity, France and Europe are also affected by the issue of refugees in Lebanon, whereas the US isn't. (Ghaddar, 2021) However, this compromising approach cost France the leverage that it used to have. The French President came to Lebanon, jeopardized his political capital, made commitments, talked about promises, and everyone failed and embarrassed him – and the French still haven't learned from that. (Abou Aoun, 2021) Even if the French believe that the threat of sanctions is more efficient than sanctions themselves (Ghaddar, 2021), when Macron threatens, no one has been complying, because he has been threatening for over a year in vain. The French thus lost most of the leverage they had on the Lebanese political parties. On the other hand, Americans still have leverage – when they threaten, their words have some impact – and have more weight compared to those of the French. Consequently, in terms of effectiveness, the Americans are slightly more effective than the French in terms of how they deal with Lebanon. (Abou Aoun, 2021)

Although most western countries, particularly the United States, but France included, tend to give prevalence to and focus on short-term stability at the expense of freedom and long-term democracy and good governance, (Bitar, 2021) Schenker disagrees and admits that there's American suspicion that the French are more interested not in radical change in Lebanon but in stability as being the leading priority and value it over all else, so the US and France also diverge on that. To the US, stability is important, but it's not any longer going to pay for it and thus pursued a policy of reform, but Lebanon must change things to reform. Nevertheless, the American government wasn't going for all-encompassing political reforms and was instead going for very narrow economic reforms – and anti-corruption measures – to do what's necessary to get Lebanon out of its disastrous financial situation. (Schenker, 2021, [b]) For

perspective, stability in this context is understood in terms of continuity in the political system and a secure and effective economy within a state (Zukrowska, 2000). While at one point the priority of stability over change did exist in the US, it later became clear that stability in Lebanon is an illusion and that what's happening in Lebanon is not a stable environment. The French don't want a drastic change in Lebanon, in a sense that they are worried about refugee flows to Europe if Lebanon collapses. Ghaddar even says that Lebanese authorities always warn their French counterparts that if they change their policy of compromise in Lebanon, they will open the borders for refugees to leave towards Europe. Therefore, stability for France isn't really about stability in Lebanon, it's more about stability for the French and the Europeans and the refugee flow. (Ghaddar, 2021) However, Barnes-Dacey contends that, in a sense, stability and change go hand in hand, because if Lebanon falls in conflict, or the state collapses, or polarization increases, then that will only shut down the pathways to change. He believes that the French would say that there is a need for a certain degree of stability to create the avenue to change. (Barnes-Dacey, 2021)

Their lack of bandwidth to be involved in Lebanon is also a point of convergence for the United States of America and France. In fact, Shurkin thinks that there will not be much action in Lebanon by either of them. The Americans have an antipathy towards being heavily involved after Iraq and Afghanistan and the French don't really have that much power. (Shurkin, 2021)

Looking Forward: Cooperation or Competition

The ongoing and current interaction in Lebanon between France and the US contributes to concluding whether, in the long-term, this interaction will be unfolding into competition or cooperation and what are its implications.

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A finding in this thesis of utmost importance is the fact that there cannot be an overall strict competition or cooperation between the US and France in the general sense of the term. Indeed, even if there could be small tactical competitions, the Americans and French will still largely cooperate strategically.

In the past period, although the divergences between the foreign policies of the US and France sometimes indicated poor communication between the Trump administration and the French government, the French and the Americans were still cooperating in some respects, working hand in hand, and did collaborate. For instance, Professor Alexandre Issa has explained that the pressure on Lebanese authorities to form a government came from both Paris and Washington (Issa, 2021). Former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker has given insight about the cooperation between France and the Trump administration. He admits that the two sides worked hard to get on the same page regarding Lebanon. Schenker was talking to his French counterpart, Christophe Farnaud, the Director of North Africa and Middle East Affairs at the Quai D’Orsay, with great regularity to try and ensure that they had the same approach to economic assistance to Lebanon. The two countries also had what is called “the P3” with the British and they would meet periodically. Schenker talked with his French and British counterparts every two to three weeks or so. Although it wasn’t just Lebanon that they had to discuss, Lebanon certainly was nearing the top of the list. Schenker believes that it was particularly useful to coordinate so there were no surprises. Therefore, France and the US got along well on Lebanon, and he himself also got along well with the French, as he talked frequently with Farnaud. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, David Hale, got along with his counterpart and discussed Lebanese issues together, as well. However, he does clarify that while French efforts in Lebanon were happening in coordination with the US, it wasn’t a complete coordination. They didn’t always agree, but

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they tried to coordinate and there was good coordination and communication. (Schenker, 2021, [b])

Today, however, ever since Antony Blinken took over the State Department, the two countries are coordinating their efforts even more on the Lebanese dossier. Gabriel believes that Lebanon has proven to be an area of cooperation between the US and France (Gabriel, 2021). Bitar has clarified that a coordination between France, several other European countries, and the United States is also happening to issue sanctions that would target politicians on both sides of the political spectrum in Lebanon (Bitar, 2021). In fact, the Biden administration has been willing to work with the French leadership to try and take some steps forward and there's been a greater degree of coordination and common American and French purpose over the last year. For Barnes-Dacey, the testament to that can be perceived in the Americans' willingness to provide the LAF with support and their gas deal for Lebanon via Syria to compete with Iranian energy supplies to Lebanon (Barnes-Dacey, 2021). In reality, Gabriel explains that both nations share key objectives and both Presidents, Biden and Macron, are advocates of multilateral cooperation on foreign policy for both of their countries and within international institutions, such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank, which all play key roles in helping stabilize the situation in Lebanon (Gabriel, 2021). As such, the French and the Americans are working in much more coordination over the last year, within a general context of avoiding state collapse and an exacerbation of the situation that would help Hezbollah tighten its grip on power in Lebanon. Both the US and France are advocating for democratic reform and renewal in Lebanon and want to stabilize the country, as the Biden administration now sees trying to fight Iran in Lebanon as not a constructive pathway – a much greater convergence with France than when Trump was president. The same channel of coordination that existed during the Trump administration between the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the US State Department exists nowadays with Biden. Yet,

there's been an added channel of coordination in Lebanon between the French and American ambassadors in the country. For Abou Aoun, evidence of that can be seen in the trip of the two ambassadors to KSA to make the case for the Saudi leadership to help Lebanon and to play a bigger political role (Abou Aoun, 2021). Gabriel even contends that a stronger bond between the two countries has been developed due to their convergence on the Lebanon file. While there are some divergences between the two, their shared values and interests transcend those differences, as cooperation with regard to Lebanon is an example of the US leading with their allies – a foreign policy hallmark of the Biden administration. (Gabriel, 2021)

In the near future, cooperation between the US and France on Lebanon is definitely possible, but that certainly depends on a number of factors – mostly related to the US, because it's the Biden administration that's new and whose direction is still not quite clear. To begin with, it depends on the level of communication between France and the US. Cooperation is also dependent on how involved the Biden administration is going to be in Lebanon. It depends on how much high-level attention there's going to be for the country. This goes back to the fact that there's always an issue of bandwidth, as there's only so many issues that can be a priority for US policymakers depending on what's going on in the region and the world, because there's only so many meetings that can happen about one topic. Thus, a related factor is whether the Biden administration is going to delegate and leave this up to the French or whether they're going to continue to adhere to certain principles in their foreign policy, even if the French are playing a lead role. Cooperation also depends on how tough and confrontational the administration in Washington will be with Hezbollah, although the United States does have some fundamental principles in general about the group. It depends as well on what happens between the US and Iran on the future of the nuclear deal. Cooperation is also dependent on whether France will be able to keep stability in Lebanon.

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In reality, the French have a comparative advantage in Lebanon over the US. Although the United States gives more money than France to Lebanon and may have more of an outsized presence in the country, the French are able to engage at times in a way that is less prone to spark ubiquitous conspiracy theories. In Lebanon, there's always suspicion about the United States because they've designated Lebanese political figures, they designate Hezbollah very often, and the latter's allies don't like the US because it has a problem with Syria. In comparison, France gets along with everybody because they haven't sanctioned anybody yet, so they have more room to maneuver. They also can talk to some actors that the United States does not want to talk to. Hence, in the end, the US is still going to have a major role at the table that will come through American diplomatic engagements with the French. Still, the US maintains its threat leverage compared to France. As such, and since the French and the Americans have tactical differences more than strategic ones and different sensibilities but complementary approaches on Lebanon, a combination of these two approaches could get results.

However, there isn't an American interest in specially cooperating with France in the Middle East. If there are negotiations with Iran or any military action in the region, they will of course coordinate. But Bacharan has explained that Washington doesn't see Paris as an important actor within the Middle East (Bacharan, 2021). Regardless, there isn't any room for competition, as France and the United States of America see eye to eye on what's going on, share the same objectives, and are more interested in cooperating facing a situation. Thus, there is no need for a real competition on who has more influence. Lebanon will not be a serious issue of dispute because it is not a national security interest enough for France or the US to compete against each other. The American interests with the French are more important than their interests in Lebanon and they wouldn't jeopardize that. Evidently, neither France nor the US considers the other a source of competition. This issue has long been invariable and thus

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renders this finding valid on the long-term. France is, not only a vital American partner for constructively working with Lebanon to promote reforms, but also one of the US's closest allies, as they have been strong partners since 1776 and have had robust historical ties, in spite of some short-term disagreements from time to time. It's important to note that France is the only major power with which the US has never gone to war. Thus, there isn't any file outside their bilateral relationship capable of disrupting the way they behave. Moreover, France and the US share many values and interests in Lebanon, so cooperation is not just a byproduct of their long-standing alliance, but a geostrategic necessity as well. Both countries know that competition between them would only empower other actors in the region with possible detrimental interests in Lebanon.

Consequently, the two countries would continue cooperating very well on many aspects and working together constructively towards their shared objectives for Lebanon. There are going to be differences for sure, for instance on how they perceive Hezbollah and the Iranian role, but it's never going to become a big conflict issue between the two. By and large, they will cooperate and try to share a common pathway, because, fundamentally, even the French will tell Washington that there is a need for a stable Lebanon, less Iranian influence, and a weaker Hezbollah – and that's a question of tactics rather than strategic differences. Actually, the US is comfortable with France playing a bigger role in Lebanon, as long as it fits with the American agenda. If anything, American disengagement makes certainly more room for cooperation. The US doesn't want to be too involved in the Middle East, so it would much rather withdraw, have friends involved in Lebanon, and leave it up to the French. At least so long as the Biden administration is in power, particularly when the Democrats are in office, there will probably be more cooperation than disagreement. With Joe Biden and Emmanuel Macron, it is possible to reach a modus-vivendi in Lebanon.

Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis has studied the convergence and divergence of American and French foreign policy, taking Lebanon as a case study and specifically after the 31st of October 2016. It provided an up-to-date reading of the current foreign policy of the US and France towards the situation in Lebanon and of where these policies could be heading in the future. Many of this thesis's findings enjoy long-term validity and importance, as they are invariable.

As discussed in this thesis, there are various domestic and external factors that explain the foreign policy of each of France and the US towards Lebanon, and hence their convergence or divergence. Such factors have been invariable for quite some time which means that this finding will most probably remain valid on the long-term. While the system of government and the institutional set-up in both countries are different, the foreign policies of the United States and France are highly influenced by the role of the presidency. The role of groups such as the foreign policy establishment, elites, corporates, and non-state actors is also influential on the foreign policies of both countries, although to different levels. Other domestic factors that explain the foreign policy of the United States of America include the societal environment and public opinion, whereas the foreign policy of France can also be explained by its national identity. With regard to the external factors, although both countries have different priorities and friends in the Middle East, both are driven by their alliances and alignments in the region, as they are both aligning with regional powers to counter their opponents. More importantly, the United States' behavior is highly influential on the foreign policy of France, as the latter, to a great extent, adjusts its foreign policy based on what the Americans do in the region. Other external factors that explain the foreign policy of the US include globalization and the distribution of power, whereas French foreign policy can also be explained by la Francophonie and multilateralism.

Moreover, the factors that explain the foreign policies of the United States of America and the French Republic have been translating into various instruments adopted in their practice of their foreign policies towards Lebanon. Some of these instruments – with regards to politics, diplomacy, economy, and security – reflect the convergences in their foreign policies, while others portray their divergences.

One of the most important findings in this thesis is the fact that there is a large grey area in which the US and French foreign policies towards Lebanon and the Middle East strictly converge or strictly diverge. In fact, when it comes to most issue areas, the Americans and the French converge in strategy, but diverge in tactics. These areas also include deeper strategic and geopolitical issues.

In the past period, although the divergences between the foreign policies of the US and France sometimes indicated poor communication between the Trump administration and the French government, the French and the Americans were still cooperating in some respects, working hand in hand, and did collaborate. Today, ever since Antony Blinken took over the State Department, the two countries are coordinating their efforts even more on the Lebanese dossier. In fact, there's been a greater degree of coordination and common American and French purpose over the last year.

In the long-term, even if there could be small tactical competitions, the Americans and French will still largely cooperate strategically. Indeed, a finding in this thesis of utmost importance is the fact that there cannot be an overall strict competition or cooperation between the US and France in the general sense of the term. Whether the current interaction between France and the US in Lebanon unfolds into competition or cooperation depends on several factors: the level of communication between France and the US, how involved the Biden administration is going to be in Lebanon, how much high-level attention there's going to be

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for the country, whether the Biden administration is going to delegate and leave this up to the French, how tough and confrontational the administration in Washington will be with Hezbollah, what happens between the US and Iran on the future of the nuclear deal, and on whether France will be able to keep stability in Lebanon. Nevertheless, Lebanon is not a national security interest enough for France or the US to compete against each other. This issue is invariable and thus renders this finding valid on the long-term, as the American interests with the French are more important than their interests in Lebanon, so there isn't any file outside their bilateral relationship that will be capable of disrupting the way they behave. As long as the Biden administration is in power, or more generally when the Democrats are in office at least, there will probably be more cooperation than disagreement.

While President Emmanuel Macron genuinely wanted to be involved, be useful, and be part of the solution, and had good intentions, nobody has been capable of influencing what is still going on in Lebanon. Nonetheless, with France capable of talking to some actors that the United States does not want to talk to and capable of engaging in Lebanon without sparking certain sensitivities, the US maintains its threat leverage compared to France. As such, the French and the Americans have complementary approaches on Lebanon, and a combination of these two approaches could get results.

The recent AUKUS submarine deal crisis between France and the US, and the consequent rift between the two countries, has enhanced the concept of the strategic autonomy of Europe, and especially in France. Nevertheless, this could be an occasion to find a terrain where the US and France could come together to work together. Just like in 2004-2005 after the consequences of the Iraqi crisis on American-French relations, Lebanon could once again be a country, paradoxically, where a French American reconciliation could happen.

Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Questions on the US

1. Is there a Lebanon policy in the US or is it just a byproduct of regional policies towards Israel, Iran, Syria, etc.?
2. Did the US policy towards Lebanon change due to internal events like the election of Michel Aoun, the 2018 parliamentary elections, the 2019 protests, or the August 4 explosion? Have you noticed a deviation from the US's historical track with regards to its Lebanon policy due to any of these events?
3. How similar, and how different, do you believe the American and French foreign policies towards Lebanon are?
4. Based on your understanding, what does the American administration really think of the French initiative and France's current role in Lebanon?
5. Has the Lebanese file been influencing American French relations? If so, in what ways?
6. Do you believe that French efforts in Lebanon have been happening in coordination with the US? What kind of interaction is currently happening?
7. The US and France have diverged on several issues in Lebanon: Hezbollah, sanctions, role of UNIFIL, political or economic conditions for funding, dealing with Michel Aoun's presidency, etc. Did Lebanon pay the price of the disaccord?
8. How could the interaction between the US and France in Lebanon unfold in the near future? Do you think it could unfold into a competition or a cooperation, and how would that affect the relations and interaction between France and the US on the long-term?

Appendix B – Interview Questions on France

1. Is the saying "France is the tender mother of Lebanon" just a myth or does it carry some validity? Was it for Christians or for Lebanon?
2. Did the French policy towards Lebanon change due to internal events like the election of Michel Aoun, the 2018 parliamentary elections, the 2019 protests, or the August 4 explosion? Have you noticed a deviation from France's historical track with regards to its Lebanon policy due to any of these events?
3. Did France give up on Lebanon in favor of a larger Middle East role, notably with Syria and Iran?
4. Did France switch internal allies from Christians to the Shiites and is now in favor of a constitutional amendment that reflects this?
5. How similar, and how different, do you believe the American and French foreign policies towards Lebanon are?
6. Based on your understanding, what was the real US reaction and attitude towards the renewed French initiative and France's role in Lebanon?
7. Has the Lebanese file been influencing American French relations? If so, in what ways?
8. Have the French been coordinating with the US on the efforts France has been doing in Lebanon? What kind of interaction is currently happening?
9. How could the interaction between the US and France in Lebanon unfold in the near future? Do you think it could unfold into a competition or a cooperation, and how would that affect the relations and interaction between France and the US on the long-term?

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