The security services in Lebanon and Syria: The mark of the French architect

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'The Levant is a crossroads where everything passes: religions, armies, empires, merchandise, and yet nothing changes.' Charles De Gaulle[**]

The Levant's security system is a highly sensitive subject in today's context. In Lebanon, the weight of the civil war and the persistent political activity of the militias within the country and against Israel are a strain on this evolving sector. In Syria, the political hold of the Al-'Asad family, the opaque nature of the power structure and the authoritarian character of the security apparatus stand in the way of any move towards greater state transparency. In this context, Lebanon's fragility and the Syrian orthodoxy are obstacles to democratic reform of the sector in the region.

The almost constant government instability in Lebanon and the severe protests in Syria are a cause for interrogation: what is the role of the security services? What are their prerogatives, the nature of their mission, their relations with citizens, their *modi operandi* and the potential consequences of their activity? To answer these questions, a critical analysis of the security apparatus is needed.

Lebanon and Syria inherited a security set-up from the mandatory powers in the 1920s. The security system includes the army, the police force, the border police, the *gendarmerie*, intelligence services, legal and penitentiary institutions, together with the civil courts, which oversee all these institutions. These functions, previously assigned to the State, are today increasingly delegated to military and private security companies. All of these branches are interdependent and their development is based on the political choices of the powers in place. In both countries, the formation of the security system was, first of all, the outcome of the dynamics between the

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** Charles de Gaulle, assigned commander to army staff in the Levant in 1930. See L. Nachin, Charles de Gaulle, général de France, Colbert, 1944. See also, Maurice Albord, L'Armée Française et les Etats du Levant, 1936-1946, Paris, CNRS Editions, 2000, p. 317. Translation: A. Crawley, De Gaulle: a Biography, London, Collins, 1969.

mandatory power and the local populations; after the departure of the French, the system was shaped by the interdependencies between the local communities, which were exacerbated by foreign influence.

What remains of the French presence in the Middle East, and how are the States of the Levant positioned in the face of the legacy of the mandate era in questions of security? Finally, how has the French presence influenced the role of minorities in the security services of Lebanon and Syria today?

In view of these questions, we should first take a look at the foundations of the Levantine security services established under the French mandate. That will be the object of part 1. Part 2 will analyse how the sector developed in Lebanon and Syria after independence.

Part 1. The French mandate and the foundations of today's Levantine security services

France's mandate in the Levant evolved within the scope of the country's imperial policy. This consisted first in a strategy of influence carried out during the Ottoman period, and developed with the deployment of a military presence in the region as of 1860. Although the Levantine officers had already served in the Ottoman army,[1] the outline of the current system only appeared in the interwar period.

A. The genesis of the French presence in the Levant

The policy of influence during the Ottoman Empire

Since its first bilateral relations with the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, France has never ceased trying to consolidate its position and preserve its interests in the Middle East. The economic and cultural penetration produced, among other things, thanks to a system of agreements known as 'capitulations', a guaranteed 'protection of all European citizens in the Empire' and of 'Roman religions established in the East'.[2] Though French ambitions were initially undeclared, they were formalised in 1860 by the deployment of a military mission, in response to the massacre of Christians. This marks the beginning of French security policy in the Levant. Christian minorities, particularly the Maronites, became not only France's main 'clientele', but above all the auxiliaries of the French stranglehold on the region. Thanks to France's support, the Sublime Porte gave Mount Lebanon autonomous status in 1861.[3] The Maronite domination of Mount Lebanon thus cemented the French presence in the region, which was further developed with the establishment of the educational system,[4] the organisation of Catholic missions, the training of technical executives, contributions to Catholic initiatives, and a naval presence in the region. Investments in local enterprises multiplied between 1881 and 1914, a period when

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[1] Bernard Vernier notes that two Syrian dictators, Az-Zaʿīm and Al-Hannāwī, began their military careers in the Ottoman army.

[2] Vincent Cloarec, *La France et la question de Syrie (1914-1918)*, Paris, CNRS, 2010, p. 8.

[3] With a Catholic Ottoman governor (*mutaṣarrif),* and an administrative council of twelve representatives of Mount Lebanon's six main denominations, elected according to a proportional system. *Ibid,* p. 9.

[4] Between 65,000 and 90,000 children benefited from these programmes. *Ibid,* p. 12.

French capital helped to finance the *Chemins de fer* in Syria, the *Tramways Libanais*, the Port of Beirut, *Gaz de Beyrouth*, *Eaux de Beyrouth*[5] as well as the banks.[6]

This strategy of furthering French interests through the protection of Christians prevailed until 1913, when the newly created Commission of Syrian Affairs[7] produced a new definition of Syria. It suggested including Mount Lebanon,[8] the Beirut and Damascus *vilayets*, part of an Aleppo *vilayet*, as well as the Palestine *mutaṣarrifiyya*.[9] France's interests in the Orient progressively extended to the hitherto neglected Muslims. It set out to clientelise notables in minority communities using all available means.[10] However, the Sunni were suspicious of France's profitable relations with the Maronites and their privileges.

The mandate of the League of Nations and the classical policy of division: 'divide et impera'

Allied powers[11] entrusted the League of Nations' mandate[12] over Syria to France[13]. This ensured the legal legitimacy of the French political and military presence in the Middle East, crowning French achievements in the region under the Ottoman Empire. The region had many different communities whose political interests were often contradictory. The new French administration exploited the antagonisms and diverging ambitions of the populations of Greater Syria for its own ends.

Thus, although the choice of France as the new mandatory power had the strong support of the Maronite minority of Mount Lebanon, Syrian nationalists in opposition to all foreign presence on the territory of Bilad Cham (*Bilād aš-Šām)* proclaimed,[14] following the San Remo conference, the Constitution of an Arab Kingdom of Syria. Their dream, buried at *Maysalūn,*[15] ended when the troops of Emir Faysal laid down their arms and a mandate was imposed on Syria. This resistance led General Gouraud to implement a 'predominantly military administration'.[16]

As British networks in the region were much more developed than France's, the French

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[5] Jacques Thobie, *La France Impériale, 1880-1914*, Paris, Collection Chemin d'aujourd'hui, Editions Mégrelis, 1982, pp. 27–28.

[6] The export of French capital was considerable. At the time it represented 65.93% of foreign capital investments in Ottoman state finances (1.15 billion French Francs out of a total of 1.95 billion), which made France the primary creditor of the Ottoman Empire, Vincent Cloarec, *op. cit.,* p. 14.

[7] Created in November 1912 by Raymond Poincaré and Maurice Paléologue.

[8] *Ibid*., pp. 53–54.

[9] Some members did not support this last proposal.

[10] The target populations were as follows: the Alawites in Tripoli and Homs, the Shia in the Bekaa valley and South Beirut, the Ismaelis in Latakia, Algerians in Damascus and from Tiberia, as well as the Druze. *Ibid*., pp. 54–55.

[11] On 25 April 1920 at San Remo.

[12] The legal basis for the mandate is Art. 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. A " sacred trust of civilisation", otherwise called the tutelage of "peoples not yet able to stand by themselves" is accorded to 'advanced nations'.

[13] Mesopotamia and Palestine were under British rule.

[14] On 3 July 1920.

[15] The French forces fought the Arab armies at *Maysalūn* on July 1920. General Gouraud defeated the troops of Emir Faysal.

[16] Boutros Dib (dir.), *Histoire du Liban: des origines au XXe siècle,* Paris, 2006, p. 781.

mandate was partially dependent on British aid. To consolidate its power and its contacts with local minorities, it carried out a policy of dividing the territory into several State entities based on the religious and ethnic membership. The High Commissioner, who represents France, held power, governing the local administrations, and drawing resources from customs duties. The territory that corresponds to Syria today has undergone several stages of fragmentation. Under the French mandate the political and administrative organisation of the States of the Levant was as follows:[17]

- Greater Lebanon was proclaimed,[18] becoming the Independent Republic of Lebanon in 1943

- the autonomous *sandjak* of Alexandretta was attached to Turkey

- the government of Damascus took in the towns of Hama and Homs

- the government of Aleppo extended to the new border with Iraq, including the North-East region of Jezireh[19]

- on the coast, the territory of the Alawites becomes the State of the Alawites[20]

- the High-Commissioner created the autonomous State of Djebel el-Druze in 1922

This division merits particular attention since it reveals the weakness of the French mandatory system, which relied on religious minorities to ensure its position. In this case, the creation of Lebanon as a separate entity from historical Syria responded to the requests of the Maronites of Mount Lebanon, neglecting the Syrian nationalists who opposed French presence. Officially committed to defending local particularisms, the process of partition was actually part of France's imperial policy, bent on avoiding the spread of nationalist ideas to its colonies in Northern Africa. Finally, the French strategy was also aimed at weakening the Sunni and better controlling this community, judged potentially influential. The French thus subdued the Syrian populations and reduced their ability to act. Without doubt, the perpetuation of '*communautarisme*' is the most lasting outcome of French security policy in the Levant.

B. The establishment of the French imperial security system

The militarised security structure in the service of the mandatory power

The security system that France developed on the historical territory of Syria was in first place designed to meet the interests of the mandate, not those of the local populations. The multi-religious cultural context, nationalist opposition as well as a number of

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[17] Youssef Sélim Teklu, 'Droit public des pays fondateurs de la Ligue arabe', in Gérard D. Khoury and Nadine Meouchy (dirs.), *Etats et sociétés de l'Orient arabe en quête d'avenir - Fondements et sources (1945-2005). Actes de la semaine internationale d'études sur le Moyen-Orient*, MMSH, Aix en Provence, June 2005, p. 79.

[18] A solemn proclamation was made on 1 September 1920. General Gouraud reconnected Mount Lebanon, the historical stronghold of the Maronites, to the four *cazas* in the valley of al-Biqā' (Hāṣbiyyā, Rāšayā, Ba'albak and Mu'allaqa) and the coastal cities Beirut, Tripoli and Saida.

[19] The governments of Aleppo and Damascus were reunited within the Syrian State as of January 1925.

[20] As of 1922 the administrative constituencies of the Territory of the Alawites, the State of Aleppo and the region of Damascus were made part of the Federation of the Autonomous States of Syria. This last was dissolved with the detachment of the State of the Alawites and the fusion of the State of Aleppo with the State of Damascus.

budgetary problems were so many obstacles to France's regional ambitions. As a result, the mandatory power had recourse to its colonial experience and the support of the French military in Morocco.[21] To cite one example, the first High Commissioner, General Gouraud, a close collaborator of Marshall Lyautey, was successively posted to Sudan, Mauritania and Morocco before arriving in the Levant.

The French occupation forces responsible for maintaining order and monitoring the borders, were made up of troops which came from both mainland France and the colonies.[22] French officers held newly created posts in the administration and took part in the establishment of local and security policy in the regions they were assigned to.[23] In the early years of the mandate, the post of High Commissioner went to a career officer from the military. The intelligence services of the Levant played a primary role in ensuring an interface with the inhabitants of the State-provinces. They intervened in the 'existing networks of officers spread throughout the territory and whose mission it is to inform the command in a context still troubled by uprisings and banditry, while provisionally exercising a certain number of administrative responsibilities'.[24] Indeed, in Syria more than anywhere else in the Levant, the security apparatus was dependant on information, with nationalist opposition expressed against a backdrop of strong ethnic and religious diversity. Although part of the population refused to cooperate with the military, believing that a strong militarisation was incompatible with the spirit of the mandate, intelligence services were able to obtain information enabling them to anticipate uprisings locally, understand the organisation of the society and, ultimately, secure French power. In 1922, the service had seventy officers.[25] This was the sole organ covering the entire territory, and played a specific role in the French mandatory system.

Finally, local troops were organised after the model of the French army by French officers responsible for training and appointments. The same officers were also in charge of the *gendarmerie* which had been restructured since the Ottoman era. However their knowledge of the country was often minimal and, what is more, they had no plans for sharing power with the local population. The transfer of functions was thus difficult and took a long time.

The extension of the security system to respond to immediate needs

The security system put in place under the mandate nonetheless had to adapt to conditions of the Levant at some point. A certain number of changes thus took place within the services in the wake of the incursions of armed 'guerilla' bands from Turkish territory.

These different-sized groups constituted a real threat to the mandatory government. To

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[21] 55.6% of intelligence officers had previous experience in the colonies before coming to the Levant. Jean-David Mizrahi, *Genèse de l'Etat mandataire, Service des Renseignements et bandes armées en Syrie et au Liban dans les années 1920*, Paris, Publications Sorbonne, 2003, p. 195.

[22] For more information on the composition and development of metropolitan and colonial troops see Maurice Albord, *L'Armée Française et les Etats du Levant, 1936-1946*, Paris, CNRS Editions.

[23] The military divided Syria into several administrative zones (North Syria, South Syria, Jézireh, Druze areas and Alawite territory), which existed alongside the official map of the country. See Maurice Albord, *L'Armée Française et les Etats du Levant, 1936-1946*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 2000, p. 26.

[24] Jean-David Mizrahi, *op. cit.,* p. 86.

[25] *Idem*, p.88.

combat them, France deployed mobile *gendarmerie* units,[26] under the command of Lieutenant Collet. As under the Ottoman Empire, the local Circassian population was mobilised. The Circassians constituted 'the nucleus' of this formation, even after recruitment was subsequently extended to other groups. Raids by armed groups are the origin of how the Northern border was finally secured.

The Druze revolt was the next step in the growth of the Syrian security sector. In order to combat the insurgents of the Druze *Djebel*, military mechanisms were reinforced: 30,500 soldiers from mainland France and the colonies, 5,000 auxiliary troups (*Légion syrienne*) and 4,500 supplementary soldiers.[27] The latter belonged to a new formation of riot police squadrons, created after the model of the Northern border's mobile *gendarmerie* units. This development in the authorities' military and police arm was accompanied by the rise in power and the increase in numbers of the Levantine intelligence services, in the region of Djebel el-Druze as well as in the region of Damascus and Mount Lebanon. The service enrolled Kurds, Circassians, Bedouins, Alawites and later Druzes. It was renamed "Special Services of the Levant" in 1931. This rechristening of the intelligence services impacted the structural reforms of the security system, which local populations inherited of after the departure of the French.

Finally, the creation of the "Special Troops of the Levant" was the last step in restructuring the Levantine security system. Created in 1916 to fight the Ottomans, the *Légion d'Orient* was made up of 4,500 recruits (Lebanese, Syrian and Armenian). It was renamed "Auxiliary Troops of the Levant"[28] in July 1920, then "Special Troops of the Levant" ten years later, in March 1930 [29]. Recruits were trained at the military school in Homs[30], and until 1943, Syrian and Lebanese troops served under the same banner. The two armies only separated in 1945, when they were removed from French rule[31], emerging as the two future armies of Lebanon and Syria.

As Jean-David Mizrahi points out, 'the minority element remains an unavoidable component of the Special Troops of the Levant'.[32] The religious and ethnic communities accounted for 28.7% of the Syrian population and 51.3% of the Special Troops of the Levant's personnel.[33] On the other hand, the majority Sunni community (57.2% of the population) provided only 35.7%[34] of recruits.[35] Minorities were not only deployed in their respective territories, where their proportion could reach 80%, or even 90%, of the military workforce (e.g. Alawites in the coastal areas, Druze on the Djebel el-Druze, Christians and Kurds in

[26] In addition to permanent *gendarmerie* units deployed in rural areas. See Jean-David Mizrahi, *op. cit.*

[27] I*bid.*, p. 375.

[28] The troops numbered 7,000 in 1924. See Adel A. Freiha, *L'Armée et l'Etat au Liban (1945-1980)*, Paris, Librairie Générale du Droit et de la Jurisprudence, 1980, p. 164.

[29] A total of 22,000 men in 1942, *idem.*

[30] Transferred to Damascus in 1934, *idem.*

[31] On 15 June 1944 an agreement was signed stipulating the transfer of command to the Lebanese. This was effective as of 1 August 1945.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 436.

[33] Alawites: 15.7% of the population, 24.4% of total military workforce; Kurds: 6.9% of the population, 4.0% of military workforce; Circassians: 1.7% and 5.5% ; Druze: 3.3% and 6.5%; Ismaelis: 1.0% and 1.9%; Assyro-Chaldéens: 0.1% and 9.0%. See Jean-David Mizrahi, *op. cit.,* p. 436.

[34] Of which 29.8% were part of the sedentary population and 5.9% Bedouins.

[35] Jean-David Mizrahi, *op.cit.,* p. 436.

upper Jezireh, or Assyro-Chaldeans in Jezireh). They were also deployed in political centres, such as Circassians in the region of Damascus. The Sunnis were thus not only underrepresented,[36] but also surrounded by units with a strong minority component. In other words, the recruitment of locals through cooptation is at the origin of a long process of redistribution of power, whose results are visible today.

Part 2. Security services in the redistribution of power following independence

The twentieth century brought a series of political and cultural changes in the Middle East, including first and foremost changes in alliances. Following independence in Syria and Lebanon, the army's role and the security system's configuration evolved in new directions. Successive *coups d'Etat* provoked institutional crises. Armed bands and militias, often backed by foreign forces, made the geopolitical situation in the Levant much more complex. The harmful effects of the Israeli–Arab conflict were felt throughout the region. The Middle East thus became increasingly militarised, a tendency felt in both Lebanon and Syria, where the presence of efficient security services became crucial.

What role did security services play in Lebanese and Syrian politics? After the departure of the French, both countries reorganised their security services; power was redistributed in two different manners, demonstrating the specificity of relations between civilians, the military and security in the Middle East. France meanwhile lost her influence to the benefit of other actors.

A. A fragile Lebanese construction

The inertia of State security services

The friendship between France and the Maronite Lebanese minority guaranteed the latter a special place in a new and innovative political system, defined in a national Pact. This detailed the power-sharing arrangement between the different religious communities in Lebanon and supplied the basis for a community-based power configuration in security issues. Yet in terms of setting up a new structure for the security services[37], this alliance did not meet the country's nor the region's long-term security needs.

In both Lebanon and Syria, France had left a legacy of units formed on a denominational basis. The new Lebanese government wanted the army to be neutral, in line with Article 95 of the Constitution. In reality, this claim of neutrality is evidence not only of the army's powerlessness, but also of the sector's lack of credibility *vis-à-vis* its citizens. The army is hesitant when it comes to conducting internal security operations, as during the 1958 civil war, or defending the territory and its population, as during the Israeli attacks of 1968.

Despite changing demographics, the army thus remains factionalised and based on denomination. "In the last place, there is the implicit tradition of making each function, of each authority created within the institution, the stronghold of a community or region'.[38]

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[36] Apart from the 3rd battalion, stationed between Homs and Hama where it accounted for 72% and was.

[37] The consequences of the French-Maronite relationship are described in the following section.

[38] Hubert Dupont, 'La nouvelle armée libanaise, Instrument du pouvoir ou acteur politique?', *CONFLUENCES Méditerranée* - n° 29, printemps 1999, p. 64.

The emergence of external and non-State actors

The geopolitical situation in Lebanon is conducive to the emergence of internal and external crises, as a result of which non-State actors emerge and external forces become involved. The lasting impact of *communautarisme,* amplified by socio-economic issues, contributed to turning Lebanon's diversity into a source of discord. Finally, clientelism helped exacerbate clan identification, thus furthering the divisions within the nation. Since the 1920s, minorities had been having regular recourse to military means, relying on armed bands and militias to express political or social needs[39]. Following the Ṭā'if Agreement, the Lebanese State tried to disarm these political militias and reinstate their members as officers in the national army. Though the process has been met with some success, it has yet to be completed.[40]

With independence, new possibilities were created for foreign interference in Lebanese affairs. Syria, in particular, attempted to control Lebanon and its security system. Not only did it end up deploying its army on Lebanese territory during the civil war, it also became a strategic base for the Iranians: via Damascus, Iran was able to support the creation of the Hezbollah in 1982. A year later, Syria became a bridge between Beirut and Teheran after the rupture of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Both Iran and Syria were to benefit from this alliance with regards their ambitions in Lebanon.

Iran's goal was to create an Islamic Republic of Lebanon. Though this figures among Iran's foreign policy objectives since the Revolution, it only took shape as of 1982, when Khomeiny changed strategy following the failure to instrumentalise pre-existing Shia groups, who wanted to be independent, and created a new movement with the help of Syria, Hezbollah (Party of God)[41] in the Bekka valley. This creation was possible thanks to the political vacuum caused by the disappearance of the Lebanese Shia leader Imam Mūsà Ṣadr in 1978 in Libya. By investing in the long marginalised South of the country, the party took charge of hospitals, schools and other public services. Popular support translated into the party's rise in opinion polls, its entry into Parliament, and *in fine*, its participation in government. Thanks to its militias, it became one of Lebanon's most active and most disruptive political forces. Hezbollah refused to demilitarise its militias, one of the conditions required by the Ṭā'if agreement, and retained its military forces in the fight the Israeli army. Apart from the stabilising the Southern border, its action contributed relatively little to the political stability of the country. On the contrary, the 2006 war was sparked by the kidnapping and killing of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah, leading to a series of political crises.[42] Protests regularly take place throughout the country it has been known to take control over entire neighbourhoods. In the last political crisis to date, Hezbollah ministers quit the government. Despite being in the opposition, the party has been able to dictate its conditions to other Lebanese political and security actors.

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[39] The armed Shia groups, for example, fought against the French presence and for unification with the Kingdom of Emir Faysal. Sabrina Mervin, 'Le Liban Sud, des bandes armées à la guérilla (1920-2006)', in Franck Mermier and Elizabeth Picard, *Liban, une guerre de 33 jours* La Découverte « Cahiers libres », 2007, pp. 104-105.

[40] For more information see Hubert Dupont, *op.cit.*

[41] Before backing the creation of Hezbollah, Iran supported the Lebanese Shia party, Amal. It then helped the creation of the Islamic party Amal, and finally of the Islamic Jihad.

[42] Including the the creation of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, in light of the fact that Hezbollah was suspected of having organised and taken part in the assassination of the Prime Minister, Rafīq al-Harīrī.

B. The security system at the centre of Syrian politics

The lack of unity in Syrian political life and the army's entry into in politics

When the last French soldiers left the Levant in 1946, Syria's security landscape was redrawn. The period 1945–1949 was initially characterised by a crisis in the parliamentary government, as various parties were unable to reach an agreement on a certain number of internal and external policy issues, particularly the alignment on the Hashemite (or Egypto-Saudi) axis. This lack of unity led to a series of *coups d'Etat,* which asserted the army's role in the country's political life. A string of military dictatorships followed, as the army constantly expanded. The number of military personnel kept multiplying: around 60,000 in service in 1966, 137,000 in 1975 and 362,000 in 1984.[43] By comparison, during the same period, the number of military personnel in Lebanon evolved as follows: 10,800 in 1966, 15,200 in 1975 and 20,300 in 1984. Syrian paramilitary groups developed in a similar manner: 8,000 in 1966, 9,500 in 1975 and 38,500 in 1984.[44]

The expansion of the security sector coincided with the development of new alliances, with the USSR asserting itself as a regional actor in the 1940s. Syria came into the Soviet sphere of influence in the early 1950s, and bilateral relations were reinforced in the 1960s and 1970s. The cooperation between the two countries was consolidated by the dispatch of officers and Russian experts to Syria, as well as by the sale of arms. Russia not only maintained a naval base in Ṭarṭūs, but also became the first supplier of arms to Syria: in 2003–2006, Russia sold Syria 400 million US dollars' worth of arms; the amount then tripled between 2007 and 2010.[45]

Syria also developed an alliance with Iran at the time of the Iran–Iraq war. Syria was then the only Arab country to openly support Iran. The strong ties between Damascus and Teheran were a striking exception as, apart from Oman, Algeria and Libya, who remained neutral, all other regional actors aligned with Iraq. The economic, and above all, political *rapprochement* between the two countries was, in part, a result of the Iranian Revolution. Syria's support was rewarded by the supply of arms, petrol and other economic benefits. Without doubt, the opposition to Israel also played a unifying role, as well as common interests with regards to Lebanon. Iranian trade and investments also touched upon other more sensitive areas: Syrian nuclear reactors, bombed by Israel, were built with the help of Iran.

These developments show firstly that the army reacted to defeats in the wars against Israel; secondly, they indicate a change of rhetoric, from 'socialistic and triumphant nationalism'[46] towards a pragmatism based on Alawite interests inside the government.

Reinforcing the minority element in the command structure

The Alawite community's efforts have been crowned with success: those who previously were amongst the country's poorest are now in control of the State's security apparatus. This process began slowly under the French mandate, and accelerated after the *coup d'etat*

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[43] See Elizabeth Picard, 'Arab Military in Politics: From Revolutionary Plot to Authoritarian State', p. 192, in Giacomo Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State*, London, Routledge, 1990.

[44] In Lebanon the development is less striking: 2,500 in 1966, 5,000 in 1975 and 1984. *Ibid.*

[45] The Military Balance, 2012, Table 41, Arms Deliveries to Middle East and North Africa by supplier, 2003-2010, p. 475.

[46] *Ibid.*

carried out by Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAsad, which secured his position within the community by consolidating the armed branch of the government and its security services.

Alain Chouet sums up of the reason for the Alawite grip on power as follows: "The State's security apparatus - the armed forces, police, tax and customs administration, etc. - had always been in foreign hands, and this had not caused any particular inconvenient. On the contrary, participation in this instrument of power was not perceived as positive, as a factor of promotion or of serious control of civil society."[47] Sunni notables did not like the security services; on the other hand, the army provided minority youths with opportunities for social mobility. Moreover, the passage through military school, opened up by the French, enabled them access to an education they would never had had in their home villages. The Ba'th party offered an egalitarian ideology as an alternative to Sunni supremacy.

The government endeavoured to protect itself by setting up elite units, as well as an entire security system consisting of special and paramilitary forces, and intelligence services. As the French did in the mandate era, the government developed means to control its population and territory. Command structures were modified to accommodate the various Alawite tribes. Alawites also infiltrated the public administration and the State apparatus.

Conclusion

France used its historical influence to establish a mandate in the Levant. To control the territory and its populations, it adopted the political maxim of 'divide and rule'. It also set up security services structured along the lines of French and colonial units, to then use them to deal with the incursions of armed bands and uprisings of local peoples. To offset the opposition of the Sunni majority, it favoured minorities and the lower social classes. The mandatory power thus laid the foundations for today's services. After the departure of the French troops, the States of the Levant, Lebanon and Syria, redistributed power within the institutions established by the mandates. In Lebanon, where the security system's inertia was strong, the stability and security of the country depended on foreign and non-State actors. Syria instead preferred to bring the army into the political sphere: both spheres are now governed by a sole minority, the Alawites.

Finally, France's role in structuring security services in the Levant has mainly been perpetuated by the system of 'communautarisme', with some minorities being favoured both in the public administration and in the security services. However, both the Lebanese and the Syrian models kept their specificity. In Lebanon, state security services do not take part in political life due to their weakness and the legacy of civil war. Despite this, the disadvantaged Shia community managed to take control of political institutions and intimidate Lebanese and Israeli security services. By contrast, Syrian security services are dominated by a minority which controls the State and its institutions. The emancipation of the Alawites began under the French mandate. Today, the community is more united than ever before. It has entered the command structure of the security services to guarantee the survival of the government and its interests. It has also co-opted merchant families and other minorities, while remaining ever careful and vigilant. Finally, it has created clientelistic relations and built networks among the country's elites. In other words, it has taken on France's own mandate-era security policy. However this model has become morally unacceptable, in light of the events taking place in Syria. It remains to be seen how the government will adjust its security apparatus in the face of this instability.

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[47] Alain Chouet, 'L'espace tribal des Alaouites à l'épreuve du pouvoir, La désintégration par le politique', p. 1.