

# POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LEBANON AND SYRIA IN 20TH CENTURY



Mgr. Eva Taterová, M.A., Ph.D.

*Politics and Society in the Middle East*

# CONSEQUENCES OF WW1

- After WW1 both Lebanon and Syria got under the mandate of France.
- The borders of modern states were set up → origins of the contemporary problems.
- The decision to separate Lebanon as the independent territorial unit (“stolen Syrian province”).
- Two basic options of the borders:
  - Small Lebanon – the only Christian state in the Middle East.
  - Bigger Lebanon – including the Shia Muslims.

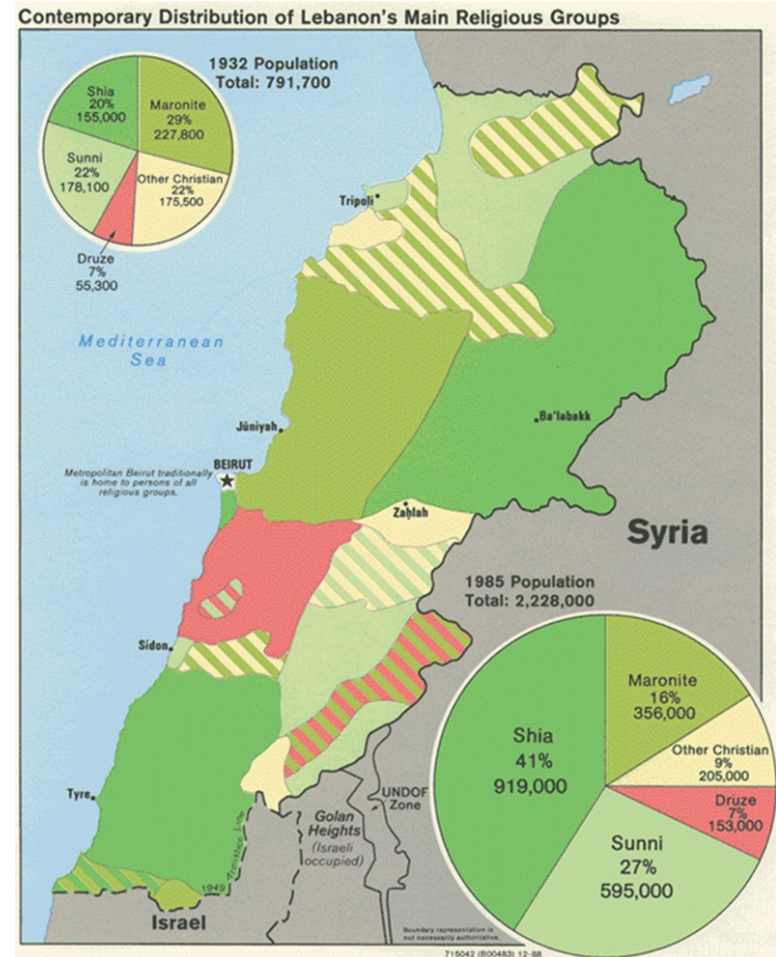


■ Formellement déconseillé  
■ Déconseillé sauf raison impérative

■ Une vigilance normale doit être observée dans la zone

# RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY OF LEBANON

- Maronites – about 900,000 people in Lebanon.
- Shia Muslims – came to Lebanon in 16th century from Persia.
- Sunni Muslims.
- Druzes.



# INDEPENDENCE

- September 1941: independence of Syria.
- Lebanon declared independence in 1943 → after the defeat of France WW2, Lebanon refused to support the collaborative Vichy regime.
- Lebanese leaders made so called *National Pact* (1943):
  - Verbal arrangement that define the representation of all religious and ethnic group in Lebanese parliament.
  - Christians vs. Muslims 6:5.
  - President shall be always Maronite, prime-minister always Sunni Muslim, Speaker of the Parliament Shia Muslim, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces always

# INDEPENDENT LEBANON

- Economically developer country: “Switzerland of the Middle East”.
- Confessional system has been very frail since the beginning.
- During the time, the attempts of the Muslims for emancipation vs. Christian rersistence to change the existing system.

# THE IMPACTS ON LEBANON AND SYRIA

- Since the beginning, Lebanon and Syria disapproved the establishment of the Jewish state → till today officially in war with Israel, just the armistice.
- Main problem the immigration of Palestine refugees after 1948 and 1967 → refugee camps in southern Lebanon and Syria.
- Syria found out very humiliating especially the loss of Golan Height in 1967.

# REFUGEES NEIGHBORHOOD IN BEIRUT





# CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON 1975-1990

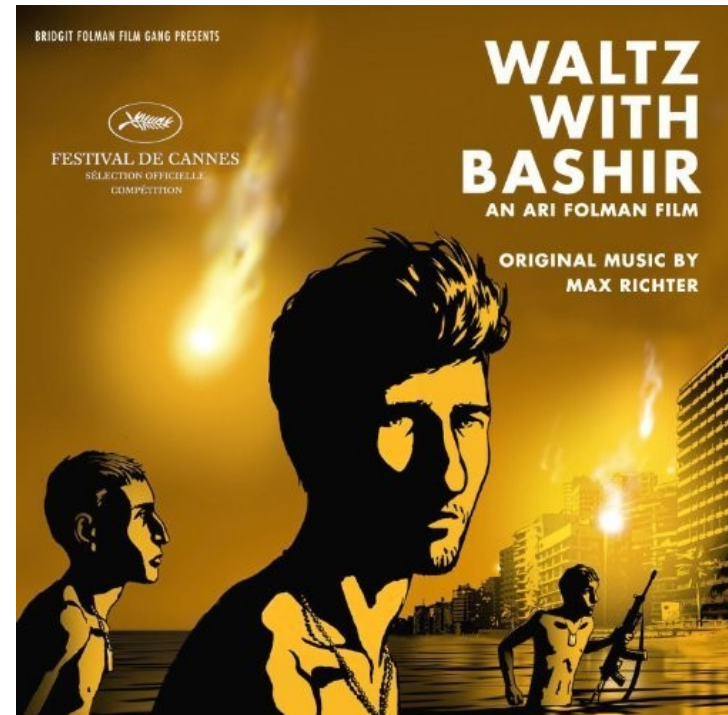
- Radicalization of the Palestinians especially after PLO leaders moved from Jordan to Lebanon (southern Lebanon = Fatah land).
- 1975 escalation of the sectarian violence.
- Breaking point: assassination of Bachir Gemayel in 1982.
- The others states such Israel and Syria intervened in the conflict as well



Bachir Gemayel

# SABRA AND SHATILA MASSACRES

- 16-18 September 1982 massacres in refugees camps Sabra and Shatila in Beirut suburbs.
- About 400 – 2000 Palestinians murdered by the members of Phalangist Party.
- Responsibility of Israeli army – Ariel Sharon.



# CIVIL WAR

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUYxKbMDUaW>

# END OF CIVIL WAR

- Taif Agreement 1989:
  - Compromise negotiated by Saudi Arabia
  - Formal ending of the civil war even though limited violent clashes still appeared time to time.
  - The attempts to reduce the inequality between Christians and Muslims → changes in National Pact – mandates in parliament between Christians and Muslims 1:1.
  - Limitation of presidential power.
- General amnesty on crimes that were committed during the civil war.

# POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN LEBANON AFTER CIVIL WAR

- Slow post-conflict reconstruction of the country (various social, economic, environmental problems).
- Religious radicals in the society – Hezbollah (founded during the civil war, nowadays the political party that is represented in the parliament).
- Refugees from Syria → risk of the civil war in Lebanon.

# ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS 2019



# INDEPENDENT SYRIA

- Internal problems:
  - Political instability → frequent political coups.
  - The issue of common identity and ideology.
- 1958 – project of United Arab Republic due to pan-Arabism (Syria + Egypt in one state) → breakup in 1961.
- March 1963: military coup lead by Ba'ath Party (The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party) → since 1970 Hafez Assad was the leader.

# PRESIDENTIAL MONARCHY IN SYRIA

- The president is almighty, supported by the army.
- Personal cult – „people, unity, revolution“.
- Three pillars of power: family, Ba‘ath Party, army.





# POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN SYRIA

- 1990s significant changes in international relations (failure of USSR → loss of the significant ally).
- Deep social changes: social mobilization – more than 50% urbanization rate, growing literacy, 28% people had university or high school education.
- Gradual change of the regime – more freedom to travel, to make business, more autonomy, release of some political prisoners.
- June 2000: death of Hafez Assad → Bashar Assad.

# BASHAR ASSAD AND HIS WIFE

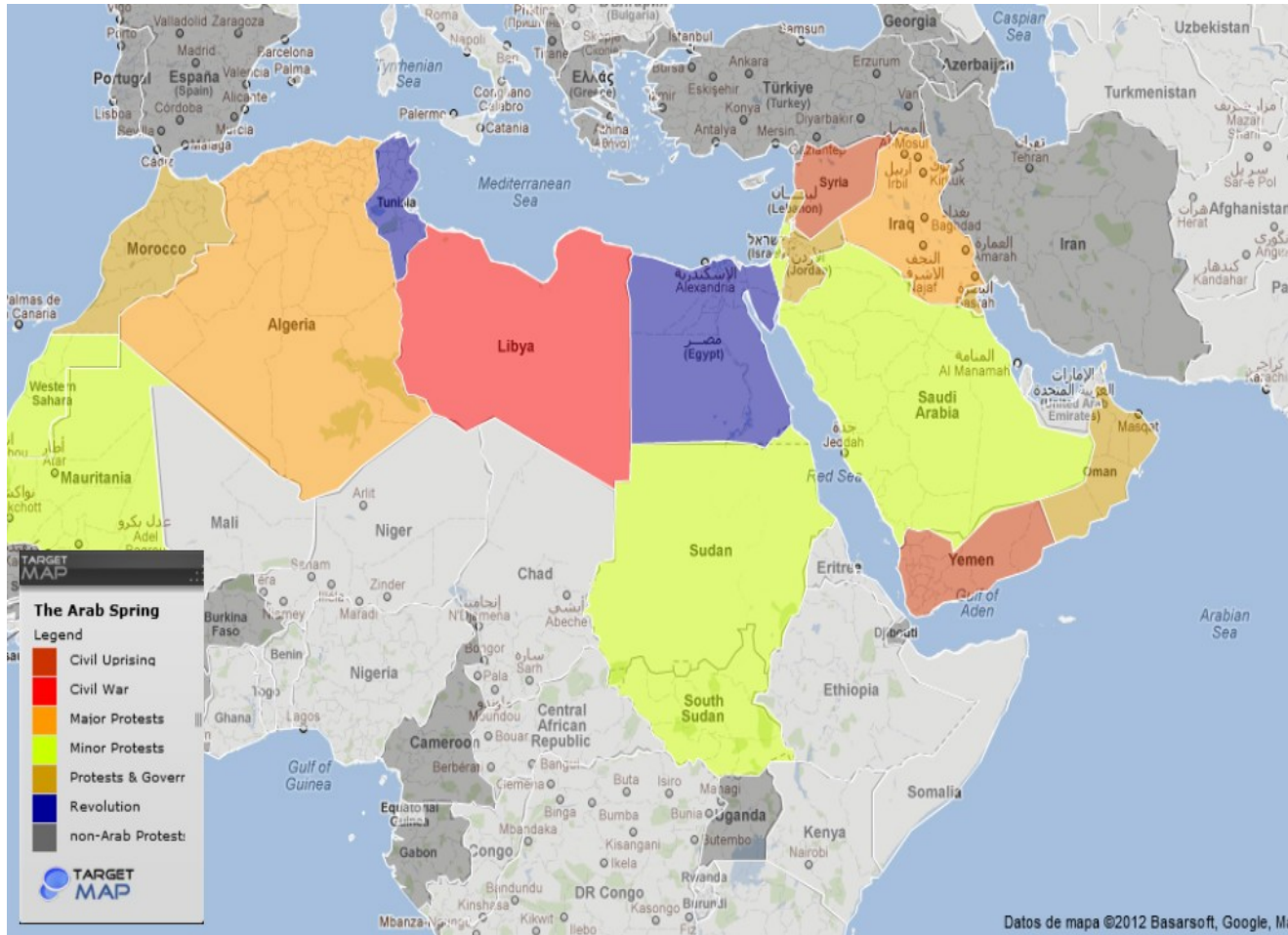


# ARAB SPRING

- December 2010: Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia → protest against president Bin Ali's government → spread to almost all other Arab countries (a significant surprise for the whole world).
- Various reasons for the protests: economic troubles, difficult social situation, corruption, limited human and political right.
- Role of the new media and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.



# MAP OF ARAB SPRING



# WAR IN SYRIA

- March 2011 demonstrations against Bashar Assad's regime.
- Bashar Assad decide to suppress the uprisings with the help of the army → the conflict escalated in regular civil war.
- Massive damages: more than 470,000 death, more 3 millions of refugees – huge violation of the human rights (torture, political prisoners, weapons of massive destruction).
- Syria has become the battlefield of the great powers such as Iran. Saudi Arabia. Russia.

# WAR IN SYRIA

- **Assad's supporters:**
  - Syrian government forces.
  - Hizballah.
  - Russia, Iraq, Iran.
- **Opposition:**
  - National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces
  - Islamic state.
  - An-Nusra Fronte (close connections to al-Kaida).
  - Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia.



# GROWTH OF ISLAMIC STATE

- ISIS founders were inspired by al-Kaida (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi) and other radical movements that became active due to war in Iraq (2003-2011).
- 2010-2019 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was the leader of ISIS (2014 declared himself as Caliph).
- Increase of ISIS activities especially since 2011 when US army left Iraq.
- Due to the civil war in Syria, increase of activities in Syrian territory –heavy fightings with Kurdish Peshmerga.
- Sophisticated propaganda and media campaign.



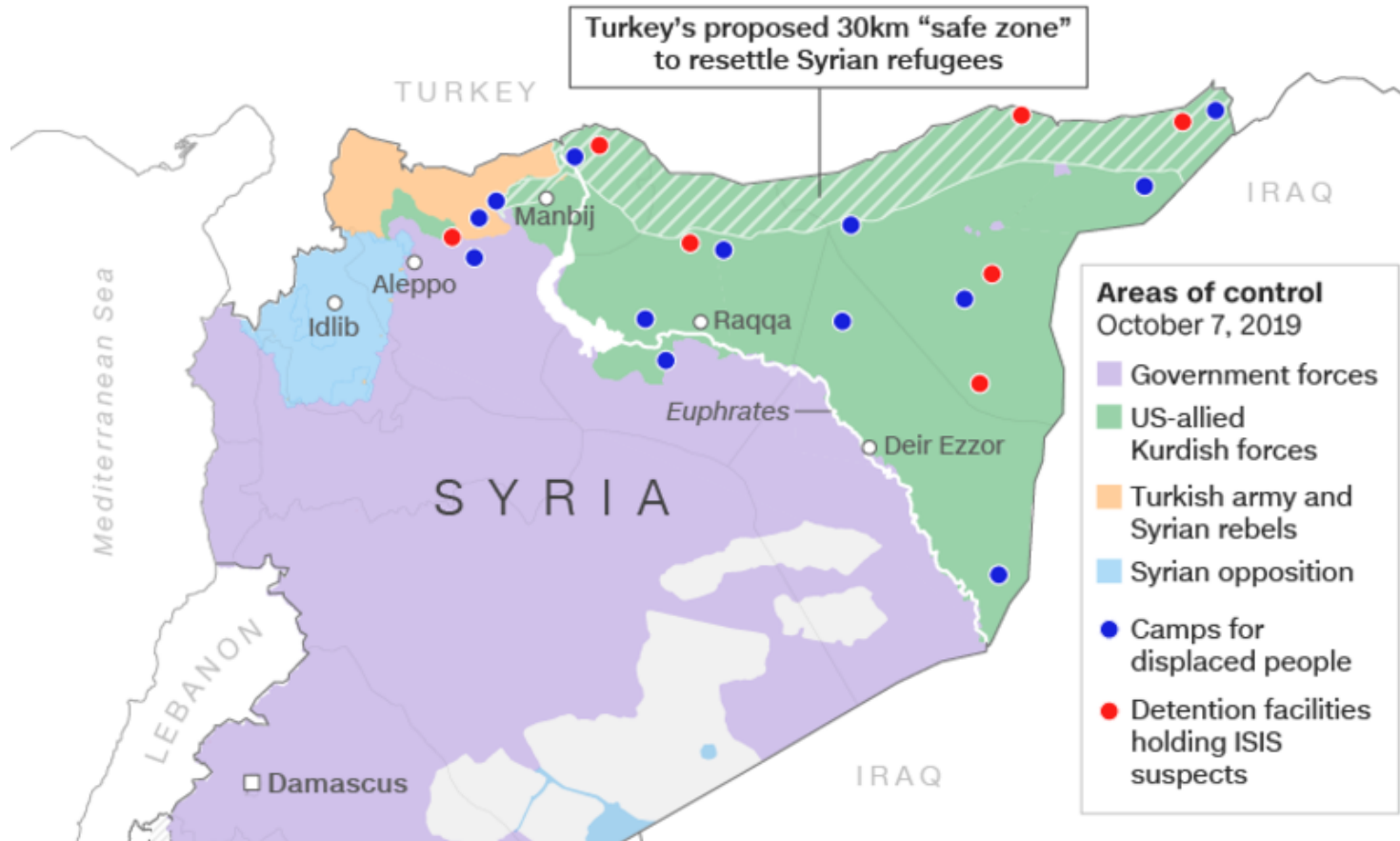
# TERRITORIAL CLAIMS OF ISLAMIC STATE



ThirdPosition @Third\_Position - Jun 16  
#ISIS Roadmap: The goal of a unified #Islamic #Caliphate. pic.twitter.com/21rEJM6xpV



# CURRENT SITUATION IN SYRIA



Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit, Institute for the Study of War  
Graphic: Tamara Qiblawi and Henrik Pettersson, CNN

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**