

# ***Ethnicity, Political Leaders and Violence***

## *The Aftermath of the Hariri Killing\**

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### *Abstract.*

This study presents the first in a series of case studies on ethnically charged situations that could potentially give rise to violent conflict. Using process tracing, the present paper seeks to explain the non-occurrence of ethnic violence in the aftermath of the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005. Initial results indicate that political actors were keenly aware of ethnicity as a mobilizing instrument, but had neither a need nor an incentive for escalation.

### *Keywords:*

Cedar revolution; ethnic conflict; Lebanon; Syria;  
political leaders; process tracing.

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## ***Introduction***

Since the end of the Second World War, civil wars have consistently made up the largest share of conflicts around the world. With the end of the Cold War, they have captured the attention of the public by ending hopes for a more peaceful era. The most ferocious conflicts, such as the Balkan wars and the genocide in Rwanda, share ethnicity as a central theme, be it as a tool to pursue economic goals<sup>1</sup> or as a proper dimension for articulating grievances.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, numerous ethnically heterogeneous countries thrive on their diversity.

What can explain the descent of a society into ethnically structured conflict? How can ethnicity move from a non-issue to the predominant cleavage of a society? The present study is part of a two-pronged effort to understand the development of ethnic conflict in situations of regime type change. It presents an analysis of the first of a series of case studies, tracing the political interactions in Lebanon at the national and international level after the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005. The politically motivated murder had the potential to escalate tensions between different ethnic groups and, given the recent history of Lebanon, presented the possibility of violent conflict. The goal of this case study is therefore to provide a potential explanation for the non-occurrence of ethnic violence in the aftermath of the Hariri murder.

The first chapter provides a brief overview of the relevant literature and details a possible path towards ethnic violence for societies experiencing regime type change. Three hypotheses regarding the link between political leaders and the outbreak of ethnic violence will be derived to guide the qualitative analysis of political interactions conducted in the remainder of this study. The second chapter discusses the methodological approach used in the analysis of the Hariri killing. The third

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1 Collier & Hoeffler 2004.

2 Gurr 1994; Wimmer 1997.

chapter describes the major patterns in political interaction in this case, highlighting potential turning points towards and away from violence. The paper concludes with an outlook on upcoming case studies as well as the second part of the research program.

## **1 Background**

In their study on the linkages between regime types and conflict, Mansfield and Snyder have identified that regime type transitions, and particularly the shift towards a more democratic regime, leave countries vulnerable.<sup>3</sup> Based on this observation, a potential pathway towards ethnic violence can be derived.

A number of factors contribute to the vulnerability of young democracies to violence: firstly, the mechanisms of control produced by authoritarian regimes are replaced with the – initially weaker – democratic mechanism of communication.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the political arena is opened to the largest possible set of actors, leading to the foundation of many more parties and interest groups than will remain after a number of election cycles have been completed.<sup>5</sup> In essence, there are now a great many voices, often with little authority, whereas there used to be one voice with full authority.

This coincides with a crucial period of decisions during which the members of a society need to determine the shape of their future regime and the level of access to power that individual groups will enjoy.<sup>6</sup> The outcome of these decisions will have a certain degree of finality – if one's rights have not been enshrined in the constitution, if one's group is not politically represented after the first national elections, it will be much harder to be heard.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Mansfield & Snyder 1995a/b, 2001, 2002a/b and 2005.

4 Vorrath et. al. 2007.

5 Ibidem.

6 Bunce 2003.

7 Vorrath et. al. 2007.

Even without considering the possibility of individual actors turning into spoilers, it should be clear that political leaders have to fear long-term losses if they are unsuccessful during the early stages of a shift towards democracy. At the same time, competition for public attention is much harder than in more mature democracies. Following the logic of political survival, political actors will seize upon any topic or topics that will convey them to or keep them in power.<sup>8</sup>

While ethnicity will not constantly be an important subject in political debates of ethnically heterogeneous societies, it will certainly be on the agenda during a time when a new social structure is forged and the rights of individuals and groups are debated. However, ethnicity is a malleable concept. It is generally taken to be a group identity based on cultural, religious and linguistic factors. However, ethnicity is a socially constructed concept, guided and constrained by social attributes such as language and social pressures such as wealth differences.<sup>9</sup> As a result, it can be instrumentalized by political actors—indeed, this may already have occurred if the overthrow of the preceding regime had nationalist overtones.

Like nationalism and other forms of identity, ethnicity contrasts an in-group, “us”, with an out-group, “them”. At the same time, it obscures differences and promotes collaboration between members of the in-group. In an environment of heightened competition for power in a newly shaping regime, political leaders may find ethnic identity a convenient concept to attract the attention of society, or if their standing within their own group is threatened, to secure their role as group leader. If multiple actors choose to play the ethnic card, an ethnic outbidding dynamic<sup>10</sup> may arise similar to the exchanges of Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman before the outbreak of ethnic war in the Balkans in the early 1990s.<sup>11</sup>

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8 De Mesquita et. al. 2004.

9 Özkırımlı 2005.

10 Horowitz 1985.

11 Gagnon 1994.

While this process has been studied in detail for a number of prominent cases, there is no general model of the deterioration of a thriving multi-ethnic society to the point of ethnic violence. In particular, the question remains how leaders are able to reframe identity to the point where preexisting trust between ethnicities dissolves. A functioning society, especially if it is heterogeneous, needs to evolve beyond solidarity that is merely based on similarity between actors<sup>12</sup> to a level of solidarity that is constantly reaffirmed by mutually beneficial interaction.<sup>13 14</sup> These regular interactions create a bond of trust both on the personal level and in terms of expectations towards the functioning of society. This trust facilitates transactions, increases social cohesion and in doing so, reaffirms itself.<sup>15</sup>

The present study is part of a two-pronged effort to understand the mechanisms that political leaders can use to breach social and inter-ethnic trust. Belonging to the first part of the research program, this paper presents results from the first in a series of case studies on situations of ethnic tension. The case studies aim to test three basic hypotheses that underpin the hypothetical causal chain towards ethnic conflict presented above. Firstly, it is necessary to verify that leaders are indeed involved in the germination of violent conflict.

*H1. Elites play a evident role in promoting conflict.*

This implies that leaders need to stimulate conflict in cases where ethnic violence occurs and vice versa, leaders need to refrain from stimulating or actively stifle violent tendencies in cases where no conflict arises.

Secondly, the motivation of leaders needs to be verified, with the prime candidate being political survival.<sup>16</sup>

*H2. Only leaders who actively stimulate group antagonism will remain in power.*

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12 "Mechanical solidarity" in Durkheim's terms.

13 "Organic solidarity".

14 Soen 2003.

15 Cook 2001.

16 De Mesquita et. al. 2004.

This implies that leaders who are directly threatened in their political survival – whether on a personal level or together with their entire group – will be expected to stimulate conflict while leaders who are not directly threatened are free to explore other options.

Finally, it is necessary to test whether the stimulation of conflict makes active use of the identity dimension, e.g. through scape-goating or other methods.

*H3. Leaders promote conflict by antagonizing groups to which they do not belong.*

This implies that the public is not left to its own devices when it comes to choosing the dimension along which conflict groups form.

A series of cases providing the opportunity for political leaders to use ethnicity to their advantage and leading to both occurrences and non-occurrences of ethnic violence will be studied by tracing the chain of political interactions.

Given a clearer understanding of the role of political leaders in germinating ethnic conflict produced by the first part of the research project, the second part will attempt to create a model of inter-ethnic trust that can then be used to simulate the effects of trust manipulations on society.<sup>17</sup>

The following chapter will discuss the methodological approach in this case study.

## **2 Methodology**

In order to understand the influence of political leaders in the initiation and aversion of ethnically-structured violence, it is necessary go through the interactions of leaders with their followers and between leaders of different groups with a fine-toothed comb. Process tracing allows not only the perception of starting points and outcomes, but places the focus on the intermediary process that connects them.<sup>18</sup> The method of process tracing requires firstly a set of testable hypothesis that serve as links in the

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<sup>17</sup> At this point, the second part of the research project will not be discussed further. Cf. Krebs (2007) for the initial design of an agent-based model and a first assessment of its dynamics.

<sup>18</sup> Checkel 2005.

chain between the starting point of a situation and the observable outcome. The previous section presented three such hypotheses, arguing that a) political leaders play a clear role in the germination of conflict, b) they do so when their political survival is threatened and c) in doing so, they explicitly alienate ethnic groups to which they do not belong.

This chain of hypotheses that could explain the rise of ethnically-structured violence, should then be tested using information on small-scale interactions. This way, the behavior of political leaders can be compared with expected types of behavior, thereby allowing conclusions as to the likelihood of the proposed hypotheses.

This section discusses two questions leading up to the actual analysis: Firstly, the universe of events as well as the selection criteria for cases to be studied need to be defined. Secondly, a process of information extraction needs to be developed that enables an analysis at the scale of individual political interactions. These two questions are addressed in order by the following sections. Finally, Section 2.3 describes the process tracing techniques used to analyze the Hariri killing.

## **2.1 Case Selection**

Given the hypothetical chain of events presented in chapter 1, the universe of cases to be understood consists of all situations in which a) society is ethnically heterogeneous, affording leaders the possibility of manipulating group identities to their advantage, and b) society is in a phase of political change, implying the chance for political actors to gain or loose.

These two criteria relate to the starting point of a case. In this universe, cases are split into two groups based on the outcome of the process: in some cases, the process of political change has led to the outbreak of violent ethnic conflict, while in others, it

has not. Both groups will need to be represented in the sample of cases to be studied. This constitutes a first criterion for the formation of the actual sample.

In order to increase the comparability of cases in the sample, the selection process was restricted to one geographic region, the Middle East. This region provides a climate of political dissatisfaction and desire for political change<sup>19</sup>. At the same time, it shows a large number of politically relevant identity-based cleavages<sup>20</sup>, thereby providing a relatively large number of potential cases. Moreover, almost all cases drawn from this region would be united by a number of common characteristics, most prominently a shared historic, religious and linguistic background, serving the goal of increased comparability. Despite these uniting factors, the region shows broad variation in terms of ethnic heterogeneity, power structures, political systems and the presence of conflict<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, a sufficiently varied set of situations can be selected for the case studies. It should be noted that this geographic restriction on the selection process does affect the ability to generalize any results. It is therefore planned to study cases from other global regions in a second phase.

A further restriction on the case selection is made for the sake of information availability and to avoid the overarching influence of the Cold War conflict: only cases starting in or after 1990 will be considered.

Based on the geographic and temporal restrictions, countries and territories in the Middle East that had a relevant ethnic division<sup>22</sup> were checked for situations that provide the possibility for political change. The opportunity for political change logically presupposes an enabling change to the political status quo. Therefore, cases were selected based on the presence of an initiating event or starting point that

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19 Barth 2000.

20 Goldschmidt 2001.

21 Ibidem.

22 For the purposes of creating a relatively homogeneous set of countries, a narrow definition of the Middle East was used. Countries that lie on the fringe of the region and have partially or predominantly non-Arab populations, i.e. Iran, Somalia, Sudan and Turkey, were excluded as they impede the control for confounding factors shared by most other countries in the region. Among the remaining 14 countries and territories, only Qatar and the United Arab Emirates did not exhibit substantial ethnic heterogeneity, allowing cases to be drawn from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen.

creates such a “new” situation. So far, seven cases have been identified for further study:<sup>23</sup>

- Bahrain: Beginning of the 1990s Uprising (1994)
- Iraq: Fallujah Offensive (2004)
- Israel/Palestinian Territories: Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount (2000)
- Jordan: Amman Hotel Bombings (2005)
- Lebanon/Syria: Killing of Rafiq al-Hariri (2005)
- Lebanon: 2<sup>nd</sup> Israel-Lebanon War (2006)
- Yemen: Pledge & Accord Signing (1994)

From this list, the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri was chosen as test case for six reasons. Firstly, it clearly fulfills both necessary conditions. Lebanon is ethnically divided to the extent of partially segregated settlement. All relevant ethnic groups are politically represented and are able to mobilize their followers. Secondly, the politically-motivated murder of a prominent representative of one ethnic group certainly enables identity divisions as a political subject. Thirdly, the initiating event occurs in a situation of relative peace. In cases where violence is already endemic, a high-profile incident may very well lead to more violence independent of the influence of political actors. However in the absence of regular violent conflict, the influence of leaders can be more easily distinguished. Fourthly, political leaders do not seem to be afraid of using violence as a tool, though rather at the personal than at the group level. For example, the killing of Mr. Hariri was preceded by the attempt to bomb the car of another opposition politician, Druze MP Marwan Hamadeh in October 2004. The history of Lebanon shows that group-based violence is also not out of the question. Fifthly, the incident takes place in a situation characterized by strong demand for political change. Only half a year prior to the

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23 This list is preliminary and individual cases will be re-checked for their fulfillment of all selection criteria.

initiating event, Syrian pressure for a change to the Lebanese constitution triggered a mass resignation in the government and a UN resolution against Syria. Since then, national and international calls for change have increased in ferocity. Finally, the high level of national and international interest in the situation ensures that there is a significant amount of pressure on all relevant political actors.

While the murder of Rafiq al-Hariri did result in a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, in the framework of this research, the case is a non-event: no larger-scale ethnic violence occurred despite strong mobilization by some parties. While both events and non-events are needed in this series of case studies, non-events are unable to provide substantial support for the hypotheses. Nonetheless, the virtually ideal setting of this case predestines it for the pilot test.

In order to capture the political atmosphere at the outset of the initiating event, it was decided to start the process tracing one month before the actual murder. This allows the establishment of a base line of interactions which can then be used for comparison with the interactions that follow. Moreover, the analysis will encompass all transactions until one month after the initiating event in order to give the consequences sufficient time to play out. At the same same time, stopping after one month serves to avoid an overlap with the next major event in Lebanese history, the completion of the Syrian withdrawal.

The next section discusses the choice of sources for the pilot study.

## **2.2 Source Material**

Three basic requirements should be fulfilled by any source data to be used for the case studies: electronic availability, standardization and availability in English. As discussed in the previous section, this study aims to investigate the actions of local political figures on a day-to-day basis, requiring a large amount of data. Sources that

are too difficult to access will make the acquisition of daily event data for periods of two months or more infeasible.

Electronic availability is strongly favored, given the wish to analyze a larger number of individual cases, and given that each case requires at least two months of daily event data with the option of extending the period of analysis to study longer-term effects. Given that each case will require several hundred reports, digitization of source material before analysis would constitute an unfeasibly large effort.

Standardization of the source information is less important in terms of workload reduction but is beneficial for the purpose of quality assurance. Relatively standardized sources will facilitate a structured coding of events, i.e. decrease the variation inherent in the process of quantifying the source material.

Finally, the language requirement is also a question of quality assurance. While the most useful, local sources for cases in the Middle East will be in Arabic, source data will have to be in English. Tools for the automated morphological analysis of Arabic texts have been under development for some time. However, relatively recent surveys of their quality indicate that they are far from ready for production use<sup>24</sup>. Alternatives, such as the translation of source material or the manual coding of events by native speakers is unfeasibly expensive and has the disadvantage that the quality of the work cannot be verified by its users. Conversely, a number of verified tools are available for both automatic and manual treatment of English language sources, making English material the preferred choice.

Based on these three requirements, a list of possible sources was created. Reuters news reports were then identified as the preferable source for the pilot study due to two major advantages. Firstly, news agency reports compare favorably with newspaper articles and other processed media sources. Agency reports cover events at small time intervals, allowing a more precise tracing of events as they unfold.

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24 Al-Sughaiyer & Al-Kharashi 2004.

Also, newspaper articles as well as radio and TV reports add an additional level of processing to the information, filtering out parts of the information and distorting information through reporting bias. Therefore, agency reports are more desirable for the purposes of this study.

Secondly, Reuters emerged as the most comprehensive service in a comparison of four available news feeds. Reuters news reports for the Middle East are available on a sub-daily level stretching back to 1987. Agence France-Presse (AFP) provides a feed of similar quality starting in 1991, which would also be sufficient for the present selection of cases. However, AFP coverage was interrupted twice in the 1990s, yielding a total of 100 days of missing data. Since one of the interruptions intersects with the time-frame of one potential case study, AFP was discarded as a source. Two news-wires from the Middle East were also considered under the hope that they could provide additional detail for local events. Unfortunately, these news services either did not cover the majority of cases or could not be made available at all.

As a result, Reuters news reports were used for the initial pilot study. In preparation for the process tracing, all events related to Lebanon or Syria for the two-month period surrounding the killing of Mr. Hariri were collected, yielding 526 individual reports or roughly 9 reports per day. The following section discusses the procedure of event identification and coding.

### **2.3 Information Extraction**

Given the choice of Reuters news reports as the source for the present study, it is necessary to prepare the information for process tracing. This was done in two steps: firstly, the information was extracted from the original reports in a standardized manner, and secondly, the information was ordered according to the actual order of occurrence.

During the extraction, each news reports falling in the period starting one month before and ending one month after the killing of Mr. Hariri was treated individually. All reports were first assessed as a whole to determine whether they contained relevant information. News summaries, news packages with background information, reports later corrected for factual inaccuracies and information concerning non-local events were removed from the list.

The remaining reports were then read and individual events described in them were extracted using a method adapted from Bond et. al.<sup>25</sup> In their work, they describe a typology for the analysis of events in international relations that seems suitable for the selected cases: the Integrated Data for Events Analysis (IDEA) framework. The IDEA coding instructions were designed for the analysis of Reuters reports and specify the structured extraction of actors and their actions. In particular, the following information was captured for each event:

- Actors involved in the event:
  - Initiating actors, who cause the event.
  - Receiving actors, who are the target of the event.
- The type of action, as classified by the IDEA scale.<sup>26</sup>
- The sidedness of an action, i.e. whether it is uni-, bi- or multilateral.
- The date (and if possible, time) of the event.

For purposes of the present study, the IDEA framework was applied with three changes. Firstly, the IDEA coding instructions call for the extraction of events from the lead paragraph only, allowing for the creation of one event per report. Preliminary tests showed that this yields insufficient and to some degree distorted information for events at the national or sub-national level. In particular, the lead paragraph has a strongly international bias, pre-processing the information for easy

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<sup>25</sup> Bond et. al. 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Appendix A as well as the following discussion for additional information.

digestion by global news outlets. As a result, local and less important national actors would rarely be named, preventing the assignment of actions to actors. Moreover, the lead paragraph has the function of presenting only the most relevant information. Additional nuances and details, such as reactions by less prominent politicians will only appear in the body text. For this reason, the IDEA coding instructions were changed to allow the extraction of events from the entire report, and the creation of multiple events from each report. In order to avoid multiple registrations of the same event, two rules were implemented additionally: a) the same combination of actor and action can only be registered once per source report, and b) the complete list of events will be cleaned of double actor-action occurrences for each day.

Secondly, not all information captured by the IDEA scale is needed for this study. The IDEA scale covers human actions such as agreement, human conditions such as illness, animal incidents such as animal attack and other incidents such as natural disasters. For the present study, only human actions were registered, since the remaining categories were not expected to play a role in the stimulation of ethnic conflict. The removal of these categories implies a shorter coding scale, which can be found in Appendix A.

Thirdly, additional information was captured regarding the location of each action if such information was available in the report. Actors are likely to pick the locations for their public actions with the purpose of underlining their message, and actions will likely be perceived differently based on their context. As such, it was deemed important to record locations as precisely as possible, allowing for real-world locations such as a nation's parliament as well as virtual locations like media outlets.

The extraction yielded 252 individual actions. In order to facilitate a range of different representations of these interactions for the pilot study, the individual events were processed once more. Firstly, the list of actions was cleaned of self-referential actions and actions lacking a clear initiator or recipient. In cases where no

recipient is mentioned, but the intended recipient can clearly be inferred from the context of the action, the recipient is supplemented. Secondly, all actions with multiple initiators and/or recipients were split into individual initiator/recipient dyads, yielding a total of 254 dyadic interactions. This allows both initiator and recipient-centric representations of actions. Finally, all actions were classified as cooperative, conflictive or neutral following the IDEA categorization to simplify the understanding of actor relations.

## **2.4 Process Tracing**

The information distilled from Reuters news reports was then rearranged in a number of manners to visualize patterns. While process tracing requires a strict theoretical framework of testable hypotheses, it leaves a lot of freedom when it comes to the actual method of analyzing the source information.<sup>27</sup> For the purposes of the present study, two approaches were found highly useful.

Firstly, the development of events in the order in which they were reported. This order differs from the actual order of occurrence since some events may be announced days in advance while others unfold over time. The order of reporting therefore gives a better picture as to the information that is available to actors.

Secondly, all dyadic interactions were mapped visually using three variables. In general, all interactions were sorted by their recipient. Since the second hypothesis argues that actors follow the logic of political survival, it is more important to know who is under pressure from other actors than it is to know who is able to act freely. Moreover, to quantify the level pressure actors are under, actions were color-coded to represent their conflictive (red), cooperative (green) or neutral (gray) nature. This helps grasp the kind of audience an actor faces. Finally, all actions were oriented based on the initiating actor, so that it is possible to understand where pressure originates.

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<sup>27</sup> Checkel 2005.

Illustrations 1–4 show the application of this approach. Actors are placed on a two-dimensional surface, with the x-axis representing their alignment in opposition to or support of Syria. The y-axis then represents each actor's “playing level”, ranging from local to global. The positioning of the actors along the y-axis is debatable and was partially tweaked to avoid collisions of actors with relatively similar positions. Three virtual actors were also included to represent groups that are often addressed collectively: the international community serves as catch-all category for statements directed at all international actors, while groups for pro- and anti-Syrian actors and masses exist at the national level.

The following section then discusses the results of the process tracing using both historical information and the actor constellation mapping discussed previously.

### ***3 Case Study: Lebanon, Spring 2005***

The present case study serves the double purpose of testing the hypotheses derived in chapter 1 and of verifying the feasibility and applicability of the chosen tool-set described in chapter 2. The killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri on February 14, 2005, was chosen as a test case both for the topical arguments discussed in section 2.2, but also for the extensive media coverage of the event and its aftermath, providing a maximum of information regarding the political interactions at the national and international level.

The following section will discuss the historical and political context of the case. It is followed by four sections that represent four phases in the coverage period between January 14 and March 13, 2005. These four time periods cover approximately the same amount of dyadic interactions, facilitating a comparison in the relative distribution of events. Section 3.2 covers the month leading up to the killing of Mr. Hariri, i.e. January 14 – February 13, 2005. Section 3.3 discusses the day of the killing and the eight days in the immediate aftermath, i.e. February 14 – 22,

2005. Section 3.4 covers the nine days between February 22 and March 3, 2005, during which the Syria was confronted with concerted pressure at the international level to withdraw from Lebanon. Finally, Section 3.5 covers the remaining days between March 4 – 13, 2005, starting with the first substantial rumors concerning an imminent Syrian withdrawal. Finally, section 3.6 discusses the implications of the processes identified in relation to the hypotheses to be tested.

### **3.1 Case Context**

During the time period addressed in this case study, Lebanon is still occupied by Syrian forces and the influence of Syrian military and intelligence is very present in Lebanese politics. Syrian troops initially entered Lebanon in 1976, roughly a year after the onset of the Lebanese civil war, with the goal of supporting the Christian side of the conflict that was close to defeat. While Syrian forces were temporarily pushed back to the east of the country by advancing Israeli forces in 1982, they returned to Beirut in 1987. The civil war ended in 1990 with the Ta'if Accord, which also contained provisions calling for the negotiation of a Syrian withdrawal. These provisions were however, unspecific and Syria saw no reason to withdraw. While the Syrian troop presence in Lebanon declined following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern areas of the country, in 2005 they still maintained roughly 14'000 troops and extensive intelligence operations. Moreover, the Syrian government regularly interfered with Lebanese affairs. One specific case was an indirect precursor of the murder of Rafiq al-Hariri: in the fall of 2004, Syria was pushing for a change to the Lebanese constitution to allow the term of the pro-Syrian Lebanese President to be extended by three more years. While Syria achieved this goal, the level of interference caused a national and international outcry embodied by the resignation of eight Lebanese cabinet members including then-Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and UN Security Council Resolution 1559 calling for a Syrian withdrawal.

Lebanon's political life is strongly organized by religious sect, with rifts between different religious groups still readily apparent. The Shi'a population is the pro-Syrian stronghold. This relatively poor segment of society has historically had little political clout, but gained a voice in Hizbollah during the civil war. Hizbollah, a regular Lebanese party that maintains terrorist operations from its bases in Lebanon, was the only group to retain its weapons after the end of the civil war. Areas in the south of Lebanon are still primarily under Hizbollah's control, with little to no influence by the Lebanese army and security forces. Syria and Iran support Shi'a in Lebanon and Hizbollah, making them accomplices to Hizbollah terror operations in the view of a number of international actors. Shi'a may fear losing their political influence if Hizbollah or Syria are weakened.

Sunni Arabs, generally more affluent and urban, have been somewhat withdrawn from the ethnic debate in politics and have been pragmatic in the choice of their allies. However, the murder victim Rafiq al-Hariri was the undisputed leader of the Sunni in Lebanon. His murder strongly offended Sunni Arabs in Lebanon and turned them stoutly anti-Syrian.

The Druze are a religious group whose faith is partially based on Islamic faith. Their relation with Syria was flexible in the past, but the unprecedented Syrian interference brought them to oppose Syrian influence in the fall of 2004.

Maronite Christians, a generally affluent group that has historically been dominant in the Lebanese political system, form the last of the four most prominent religious sects. This group is divided in its support for and opposition to Syrian influence in Lebanon. While the Lebanese President Emile Lahoud is strongly pro-Syrian, Maronite patriarch Sfeir is a long-standing opponent. This division seems to remain unchanged by the events covered in the case study.

### **3.2 Before the Killing**

In the month prior to the killing of Mr. Hariri, interaction at the national and international level seems relatively unstructured, with a relatively equal distribution of interactions.

[Illustration 1 about here.]

Illustration 1 shows that Syria is at this point to some degree under international pressure, being the most frequent recipient of interactions. Both the European Union and the United Nations are commenting on the Syrian-Lebanese situation and the United States are at the same time indicating an openness to dialog and launching accusations at Syria. Despite initial denials, Russia is preparing an arms deal with Syria, drawing sharp criticism from Israel who fears that Syrian ally Hizbollah may use them against Israel. The Syrian and Lebanese governments are also engaged in a heated discussion with anti-Syrian political actors. Syrian interference in favor of constitutional changes for their Lebanese allies has alienated a number of their partners in Lebanese politics and left the political landscape tilted, with only the Shi'a and parts of the Maronite standing by Syria. Occasional Syrian allies Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Druze, and Rafiq al-Hariri, leader of the Sunni, have allied themselves and are exceedingly critical of Syria and the pro-Syrian Lebanese government. The latter is presently engaged in revising electoral law for the upcoming elections, introducing changes that are criticized even by pro-Syrian government members. While information on the reactions by the Lebanese population is scarce in the source reports, none of the statements by any of the political actors aims at group mobilization.

It is in this situation that the motorcade of Sunni leader Rafiq al-Hariri is hit by a suicide car bomb that leaves Hariri and 17 others dead.

### **3.3 Killing and the Immediate Aftermath**

The clearly politically motivated murder has a strong focusing effect. While the attack is claimed by a previously unknown Islamist militant group and is blamed on Hariri's links to Saudi Arabia, suspicion immediately falls on Syria as the principal originator. The effect of this suspicion can readily be seen in Illustration 2: Syria is the recipient in almost half of all interactions for the period of February 14–22, simultaneously drawing the ire of the international community and the anti-Syrian share of the Lebanese population. At the local level, there is an instant mobilization on the side of anti-Syrian groups, with Hariri's own group, Sunni Arabs, turning out in force for impromptu and organized demonstrations. They are joined by Druze and Maronite Christians.

[Illustration 2 about here.]

In the days immediately following the attack, opponents of the Syrian influence in Lebanon start to use a new rhetoric, calling on their followers to support an “independence uprising”, a term previously not used. This seems to have translated into a number of violent incidents directed against Syrians in Lebanon despite calls by several prominent opposition leaders for peaceful demonstrations.<sup>28</sup> Based on the attacks, several Reuters reports seem doubtful on the shape of the demanded “uprising”. The reports show however that the anti-Syrian protesters seem to encounter no organized resistance from their political opponents. Pro-Syrian politicians including long-time personal opponents of Mr. Hariri are seen at the funeral or paying their respects to the family and the leader of Hizbollah publically calls for negotiations with the opposition movement to prevent a recurrence of ethnic violence. The subdued reaction of Lebanese officials is mirrored by that of Syria both in the direction of the Lebanese and in the direction of the international community.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Reuters 2005c.

<sup>29</sup> Reuters 2005b.

### **3.4 Pressuring Syria**

After the initial shock and impromptu protests of the previous period, the period between February 23 and March 3 is dominated by concerted campaigns at the national and international level to remove Syria's influence in Lebanon. Illustration 3 shows that the pressure on the Syrian and Lebanese governments has intensified, with calls for a Syrian withdrawal coming from virtually all directions, including Syria's strong international ally, Russia. At the same time, Syria is engaged in evasive actions, seeking support from regional partners that are allied or cooperating with the United States, its principal critic and the driving force behind international pressure.

[Illustration 3 about here.]

While protests continue in full force at the national level, they stay predominantly peaceful despite continued threats against Syrians in Lebanon.<sup>30</sup> Opposition leaders are repeatedly calling on their followers for calm but sustained demonstrations. The resignation of the pro-Syrian government on February 28 is interpreted as a signal that the protests are being heard. Moreover, with the exception of Syria, none of the political actors attempt to build an alliance or attract support in a way that could be interpreted as preparation for mobilization. Hizbollah stays remarkably calm during this period, with Reuters not reporting a single interaction.

### **3.5 Preparation and Implementation of the Withdrawal**

The period of March 4 – 13 starts with the official announcement of the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, at first in an uncertain time-frame. While this generates broad approval nationally and internationally, the lack of a concrete time table causes the continued focus of interactions on Syria, with Syria responding to

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30 Reuters 2005a.

the international community rather than the United States or the United Nations, as can be seen in Illustration 4.

[Illustration 4 about here.]

The situation within Lebanon remains calm, with large-scale protests fading and relatively little interaction. All Lebanese actors react positively towards Syria in reaction to the withdrawal, with some demanding more concrete information. At the national level, the only significant locus of interaction is Hizbollah, whose reaction to the departure of its ally and supporter is initially doubtful. Hizbollah does not, however, seek a confrontation.

### **3.6 Discussion**

The description of events as well as illustrations 1–4 show already that the Reuters news reports do not cover local interaction to the full extent, with 70-80% of all reported interactions taking place at the international level. While this is a caveat, sufficient information for a first comparison of the events with the dynamics predicted by the hypotheses is possible.

The first hypothesis argues that leaders will play a significant role in the outbreak of violent conflict. While Lebanon did not see larger-scale political violence in the aftermath of the Hariri murder, the patterns seem consistent with the hypothesis. Localized outbreaks of small-scale violence do follow individual leaders' calls for an "independence uprising", while leaders' calls for calm are met with predominantly peaceful protests. Both indicates that political leaders' demands are at least mirrored by actions on the ground in agreement with the first hypothesis, though of course a direct causal link cannot be established.

The second hypothesis linking direct threats to political survival with a willingness of politicians to incite ethnic conflict also implies that in the absence of such a threat, political leaders are open to explore other options. While both the

Syrian government and pro-Syrian politicians in Lebanon were facing considerable pressure both at the national and international level, their political survival was at no point at stake. While the Lebanese government resigned, the access of all ethnic groups to political is guaranteed by the constitution, which itself was not in doubt. Due to the proportional representation, none of the political leaders needed to fear strong repercussions and in many cases could hold the justified expectation of returning to power at some point in the future. For example, the resigned Lebanese Prime Minister Karami was reappointed to his old post in a matter of days. The anti-Syrian side was also never threatened. Most of the time, it would seem as though the anti-Syrian coalition was the only player on the field. Without opposition to their protests and with the realization of their demands after a relatively short period, there was no need for them to resort to stronger measures either.

The third hypothesis argues that the main mechanism to be used in discussion is the blaming of groups other than one's own, and the news reports provide plenty of evidence for this mechanism. However, in accordance with the lack of larger-scale violence, the assignments of blame are precisely targeted and moderated. None of the actors makes unqualified statements about entire groups, such as branding all Syrians for the murder of Mr. Hariri. And vice versa, even entrenched opponents highlight uniting factors when referring to each other. At the same time, the predominant mechanism of mobilization remains intra-ethnic, with each group's leaders' calling their followers to attend. It would seem that even in a relatively peaceful situation as in this case, ethnicity remains a key factor. Based on the fine-tuned usage of inter-ethnic communication, the actors seem keenly aware of the uses of this instrument. Both findings agree with the third hypothesis.

The initial assessment of this first case study has not found any indications that disagree with the hypotheses developed in chapter 1. However, this first impression

cannot provide strong evidence in either direction. The following section outlines the next steps to be taken.

## **4 Outlook**

This study has presented an outline for the targeted use of process tracing to determine the role of leaders in the initiation and evasion of ethnic conflict. Using three hypotheses on the importance of leaders in the creation of conflict, their motivation and their means, criteria for a series of case studies were derived and the first results from a test case were presented.

The case study covering the political aftermath of the murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri seems to support all three hypotheses. However, the support is weakened by the fact that this case discusses a non-occurrence of ethnic violence. This caveat will need to be remedied by the inclusion of cases that feature a violent outcome, so that occurrences and non-occurrences can be contrasted. Chapter 2 presented a list of potential cases which will still need to be tested for their suitability before they can be analyzed.

Moreover, while the Reuters data has provided sufficient information in order to sketch the role of virtually all participants, it has left some of the local political actors under-covered. While Reuters covers the interactions at the international level in great detail so that even repetitions are covered several times per day, the national level is covered in considerably reduced detail. The comparison of the upper and lower halves of Illustrations 1–4 shows the difference in reporting quite clearly. In order to boost the intake of local events, Reuters news-wires will need to be augmented with local news sources.

Finally, even with a larger array of case studies and better local reporting, the argument for causal links between statements by political leaders and violence on the ground will be difficult. In order to strengthen the understanding of the social

dynamics generated by political leaders, the results from the present series of case studies will be combined with tools for social simulation to systematically identify combinations of factors that lead to a break-down of peaceful inter-ethnic relations.

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## **Appendix A: Event Types**

For the purpose of classifying the events, the reported action was coded according to the Integrated Data for Events Analysis (IDEA) typology, which succeeds the PANDA and WEIS scales and was developed with the coding of Reuters reports in mind<sup>31</sup>. For the purposes of this study, only human actions are relevant, leading to the usage of the following subset of IDEA event types.

### **01: Yield**

- 011: Yield to order
- 012: Yield position

### **02: Comment**

- 021: Decline comment
- 022: Pessimistic comment
- 024: Optimistic comment
- 026: Acknowledge responsibility

### **03: Consult**

- 031: Discussion
  - 0311: Mediate talks
  - 0312: Engage in negotiation
- 032: Travel to meet
- 033: Host a meeting

### **04: Endorse**

- 041: Praise
- 043: Empathize
- 044: Apologize
- 045: Forgive
- 046: Ratify a decision

### **05: Promise**

- 051: Promise policy support
- 052: Promise material support
  - 0521: Promise economic support
  - 0522: Promise military support
  - 0523: Promise humanitarian support
- 054: Assure
- 055: Promise to mediate

### **06: Grant**

- 062: Extend invitation
- 063: Provide shelter
  - 0631: Grant asylum
  - 0632: Evacuate victims
- 064: Improve relations
- 065: Ease sanctions
  - 0651: Observe truce
  - 0652: Relax censorship
  - 0653: Relax administrative sanction
  - 0654: Demobilize armed forces
  - 0655: Relax curfew

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31 Bond et. al. 2003.

- 0656: De-mining
- 0657: Ease economic sanctions
- 0658: Ease military blockade
- 066: Release or return
- 0661: Return, release person(s)
- 0662: Return, release property

**07: Reward**

- 071: Extend economic aid
- 072: Extend military aid
- 073: Extend humanitarian aid
- 074: Rally support

**08: Agree**

- 082: Agree or accept
- 0821: Agree to peacekeeping
- 0822: Agree to mediation
- 0823: Agree to negotiate
- 0824: Agree to settlement
- 083: Collaborate

**09: Request**

- 091: Investigate
- 092: Solicit support
- 093: Ask for material aid
- 0931: Ask for economic aid
- 0932: Ask for armed assistance
- 0933: Ask for humanitarian aid
- 0934: Request an investigation
- 0935: Request mediation
- 0936: Request withdrawal or ceasefire

- 094: Call for action
- 095: Request protection

**10: Propose**

- 101: Offer peace proposal
- 103: Offer to Negotiate
- 104: Offer to mediate

**11: Reject**

- 111: Reject proposal
- 1111: Reject ceasefire
- 1112: Reject peacekeeping
- 1113: Reject settlement
- 1114: Reject request for material aid
- 1115: Reject proposal to meet
- 1116: Reject mediation
- 112: Refuse to allow
- 1121: Impose restrictions
- 1122: Impose censorship
- 1123: Veto
- 113: Defy norms
- 1131: Political flight
- 1132: Disclose information
- 1133: Break law

**12: Accuse**

- 121: Criticize or denounce

**13: Complain**

- 131: Informally complain
- 132: Formally complain

**14: Deny**

**15: Demand**

- 151: Demand information
  - 1511: Investigate human rights abuses
  - 1512: Investigate war crimes
- 152: Demand policy support
- 153: Demand aid
- 154: Demand protection, peacekeeping
- 155: Demand mediation
- 156: Demand withdrawal
- 157: Demand ceasefire
- 158: Demand meeting
- 159: Demand rights

**16: Warn**

- 161: Alerts
  - 1611: Armed force alert
  - 1612: Nuclear alert or test
  - 1613: Security alert
- 162: Armed force display
  - 1621: Armed force air display
  - 1622: Armed force naval display
  - 1623: Armed force troops display

**17: Threaten**

- 171: Non-specific threats
- 172: Sanctions threat
  - 1721: Threaten to halt negotiations
  - 1722: Threaten to halt mediation
  - 1723: Threaten to reduce or stop aid
  - 1724: Threaten to boycott or embargo

- 1725: Threaten to reduce or break relations

- 173: Armed force threats
  - 1731: Threaten forceful attack
  - 1732: Threaten forceful blockade
  - 1733: Threaten forceful occupation
  - 1734: Threaten war
  - 1735: Threaten nuclear attack
  - 1736: Threaten biological or chemical attack
- 174: Give ultimatum
- 175: Other physical force threats

**18: Demonstrate**

- 181: Protest demonstrations
  - 1811: Protest obstruction
  - 1812: Protest procession
  - 1813: Protest defacement
  - 1814: Protest altruism
- 182: Armed force mobilization
  - 1821: Armed force activation
  - 1822: Border fortification

**19: Sanction**

- 191: Armed force blockade
- 192: Reduce routine activity
- 193: Reduce or stop aid
  - 1931: Reduce or stop economic assistance
  - 1932: Reduce or stop humanitarian assistance
  - 1933: Reduce or stop military assistance
  - 1934: Reduce or stop peacekeeping

- 194: Halt discussions
  - 1941: Halt negotiation
  - 1942: Halt mediation
- 195: Break relations
- 196: Strikes and boycotts
- 198: Declare war

**20: Expel**

**21: Seize**

- 211: Seize possession
  - 2111: Armed force occupation
  - 2112: Armed force border violation
- 212: Arrest and detention
  - 2121: Political arrests
  - 2122: Criminal arrests
- 213: Abduction
  - 2131: Hijacking
  - 2132: Hostage taking and kidnapping
- 214: Covert monitoring

**22: Force Use**

- 222: Physical assault
  - 2221: Beatings
  - 2223: Bodily punishment
  - 2224: Sexual assault
  - 2225: Torture
- 223: Armed actions
  - 2231: Armed battle

- 2232: Assassination
- 2233: Coups and mutinies
- 2234: Small arms attack
- 2235: Artillery attack
- 2236: Suicide bombing
- 2237: Mine explosion
- 2238: Vehicle bombing
- 2239: Missile attack

- 224: Riot
- 225: Unconventional weapons attack
  - 2251: Chem-bio attack
  - 2252: Nuclear attack
- 226: Crowd control

**23: Economic activity**

- 231: Transactions
  - 2311: Government transactions
  - 2312: Private transactions
- 232: Default on payment
  - 2321: Government default on payments
  - 2322: Private default on payments

**29: Other human action**

- 291: Elect representative
- 292: Executive adjustment
- 294: Judicial actions

**98: A&E Performance**

**99: Sports contest**

## Illustrations

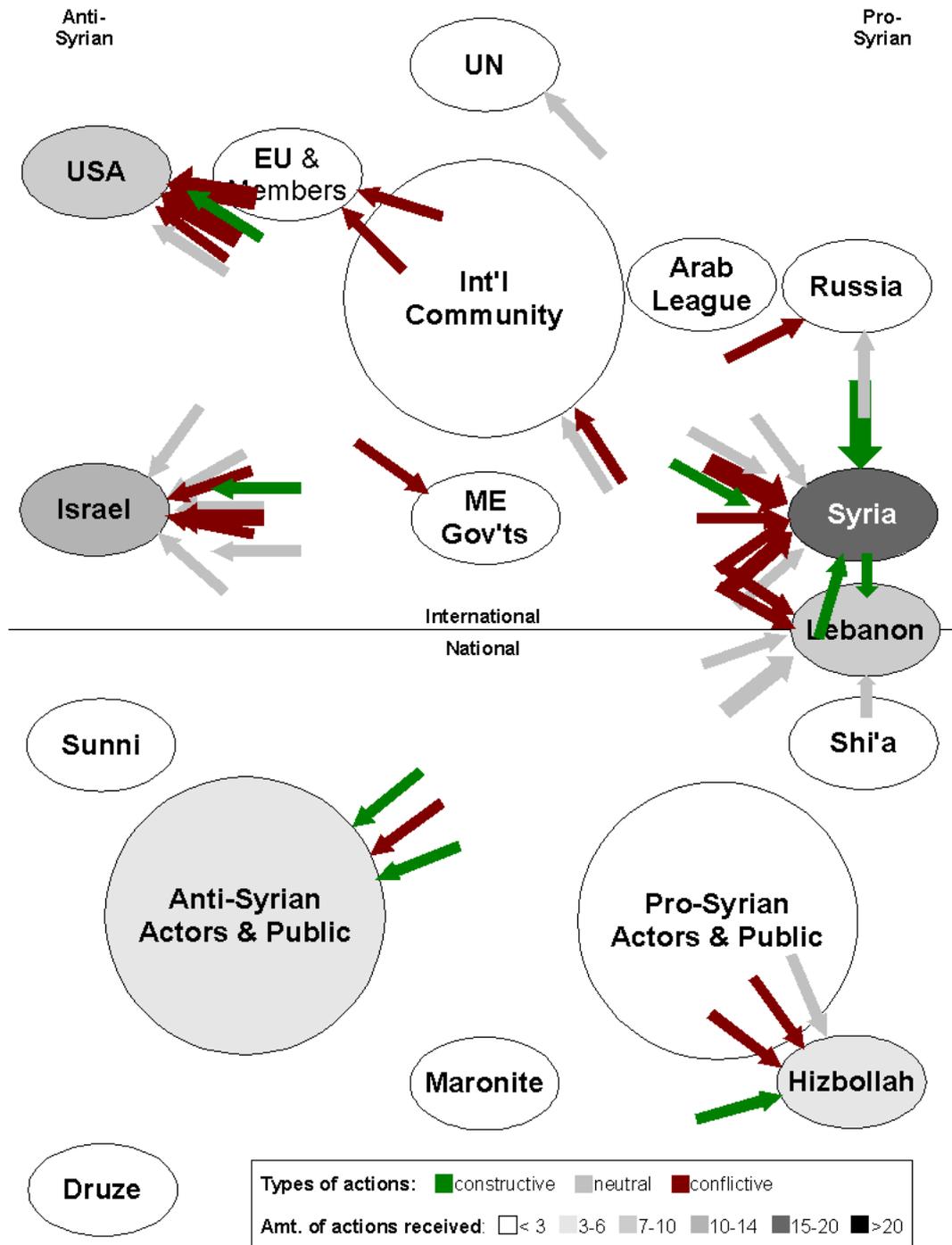


Illustration 1: Interactions between January 14 - February 13, 2005

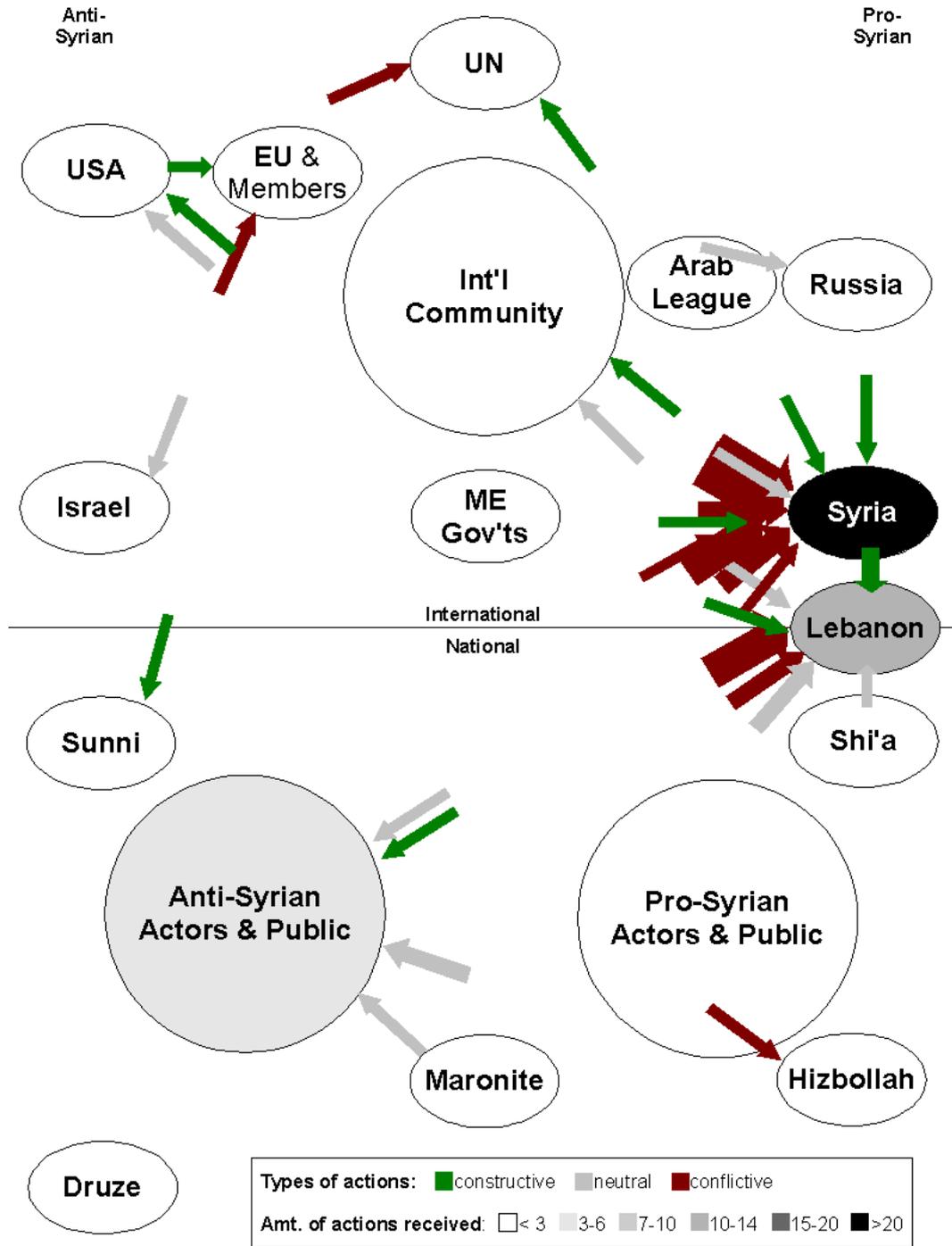


Illustration 2: Interactions between February 14 - 22, 2005

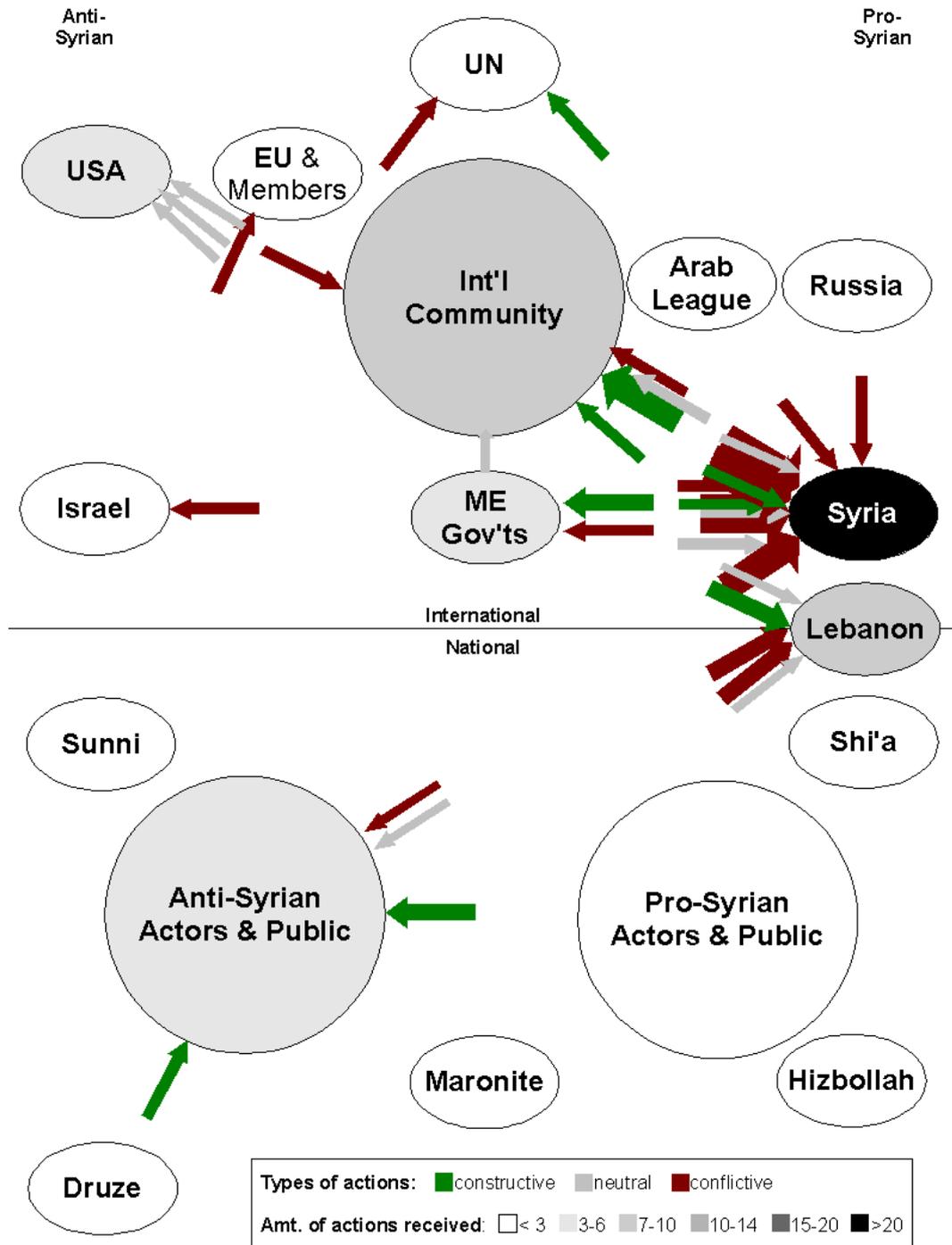


Illustration 3: Interactions between February 23 - March 3, 2005

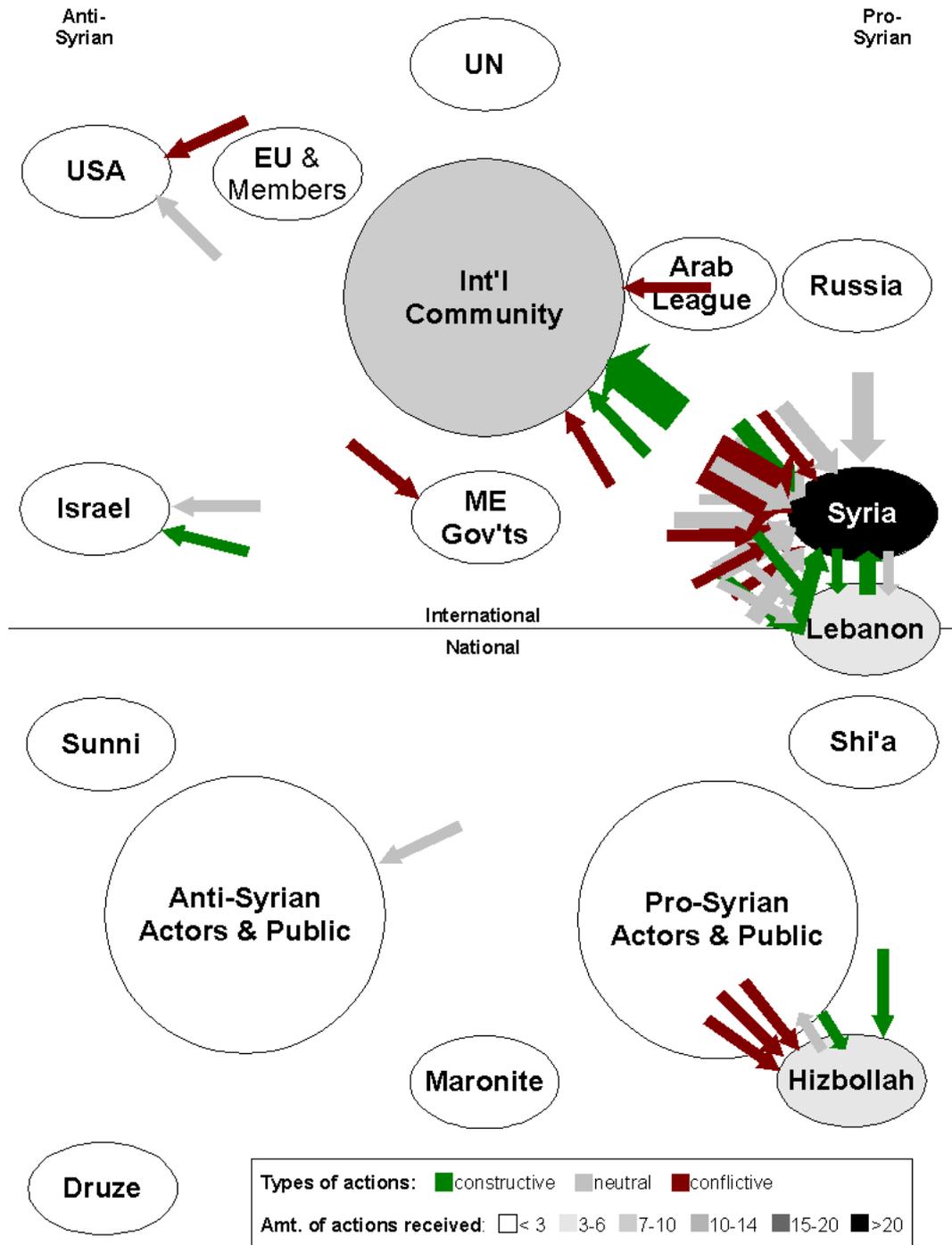


Illustration 4: Interactions between March 4 - 13, 2005