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THE STRUGGLE FOR LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE:
ONE YEAR AFTER HARIRI'S ASSASSINATION

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: [In progress] —of Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. Thank you for joining us so early.

It's a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to introduce Mr. Walid Jumblatt from Lebanon. I have to say I'm a little nervous this morning even though I've had a lot of experience doing introductions, partly because Mr. Jumblatt is known as a rebel with a cause. He's been labeled many things, at one time a warlord. His surname in Kurdish means Iron Man. He lives in a 400-year-old house in Mukhtara surrounded by tens of thousands of books. He has a passion for riding Harley-Davidsons and caring for the environment.

His father Kamal Jumblatt was killed in 1977. A common belief is that he was killed by the Syrians because of his opposition to their military presence in Lebanon during the Civil War. It was after that untimely death that Walid Jumblatt inherited his leadership of the Druze community in Lebanon and came to play an important role in defending Druze interests in that conflict, and subsequently in representing them in the Lebanese Parliament and political system.

Recently Walid Jumblatt has been a courageous and outspoken representative of the cause of Lebanon's independence. He, in effect, initiated that effort in recent times. He was joined by the late Rafik Hariri. It's reported that he and Rafik Hariri discussed which one of them would be assassinated at the time. And it's safe to say that Walid

Jumblatt is today a man who is risking his life. That's one of the reasons why I'm feeling a little nervous this morning.

[Laughter.]

MR. INDYK: The other reason I'm feeling a little nervous is that Walid Jumblatt is also known to speak his mind. Sometimes he's been a harsh critic of the United States and personalities there, including me.

[Laughter.]

MR. INDYK: But at other times he's been a staunch friend. I think that is because he is an independent voice in Lebanon and a powerful representative of Lebanese independence and Lebanese interests. So we're very glad to have an opportunity to have a conversation with him this morning. We're on the record here. He will go from here to the State Department to meet Secretary of State Rice. I'm going to ask him to say a few words of introduction about the situation in Lebanon and what he thinks can be done about it, and then we'll move to Q and A. Mr. Jumblatt, welcome.

MR. JUMBLATT: Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. JUMBLATT: With me is the article whereby I've insulted the policy of the States on a personal level and on a political level. I know I have said that, but that's the past. I don't regret it, but I have said that. And it took me a long time, a long political trip, and span

in time to come to the States to ask for the States' help against the Syrian dictatorship. I'm speaking about myself because in 1977, as you know, I did a compromise with the Syrian regime when they killed my father. I had to do it. I was not convinced. I did not have the same courage, moral courage, and physical courage, that Kamal Jumblatt had when he refused answering to Syria and then he said to the dictator at the time Hafez al-Assad, I don't want to be prisoner in the great Syrian prison. Kamal Jumblatt was much more courageous. So it took me 28 years to achieve his courage. I hope I will be able, I hope somewhere Kamal Jumblatt is satisfied with my position nowadays for the sake of independence and democracy in Lebanon.

Also you have to understand that at one time, also according to some statements of American policy, American decision makers, they said, somebody said here, for the last 60 years we have committed mistakes in the Middle East, we have supported dictators, we have supported dictators in the name of stability, so now it's time to change, and they have enhanced change in the Middle East. Part of it is good, part of it is not good, but they need to enhance change to change the actual behavior of some Arab leaders. In Iraq it started well. Now I don't know where it's going to lead, but of course we've been able to get rid of a big dictator called Saddam Hussein. In Egypt it's starting to become acceptable with elections. Even in Palestine, of course you like it or you don't like it, you have the Hamas people who were elected

democratically speaking. So the change has started and you'll have to accept the consequences.

As for Lebanon, let's go to specifics. There is no difference between the Taif Agreement and the 1559 Resolution. The Taif Agreement just joins the 1559 by saying that the Lebanese Army should go to the South, implement the cease-fire, the truce agreement that was signed in 1949; that the sole authority of holding weapons in Lebanon is the Lebanese State, the Lebanese Army. There could be no other authorities, states within the states, militias, local militias, Lebanese militias or Palestinian militias. And that the Shebaa Farms are not Lebanese because if we say that the Shebaa Farms are Lebanese, we are just hooked, taken into hostage as in Lebanon by Syrian ambition and Iranian ambition to negotiate as for Lebanon and to take Lebanon as hostage for their policy. Shebaa Farms are not Lebanese unless the Syrian government accepts to give us the credentials of Shebaa Farms and we go together with the Syrian government to the United Nations or to somewhere else, to the International Court, and implement that they are Lebanese. But they are not Lebanese, so this is why the action dialogue now in Lebanon is in deadlock. We can trade a President in exchange of accepting the fact that Shebaa Farms are Lebanese. If we do that mistake, keep Lahoud in the same power. It's enough. It's better. If we say the name of the President in exchange of Shebaa Farms being Lebanese, in exchange of keeping the weapons of the Palestinians outside

the camps, in exchange of not sending the Lebanese Army to the South, in exchange of not having the sole authority of the State on all the Lebanese territory, will do nothing, will go nowhere.

Finally, we have a big problem, how to reconcile with our movement of independence the movement that has emerged unfortunately out of the horrible murder of Rafik Hariri and the attempts on Marwan Hamadi's life and other attempts. The latest one was Jebran Tueni. This movement of independence and freedom has emerged; how can you reconcile this movement of independence with Syria's behavior? Can American policy, can the Americans with the Arabs, what is left of the Arabs, can they change the behavior of the Syrian regime? Can we coexist with this Syrian regime? Can a democracy coexist with a dictatorship just next door smuggling weapons, smuggling terrorists inside Lebanon? That's a big issue. That's a very important issue because if we don't change the Syrian policy in Lebanon, we won't have peace. I'm just telling you we won't have peace, and our movement of freedom, or democracy, myself, the forces of 14th of March, Hariri and others, all the others, even Michel Aoun, will be in danger and Lebanon is at stake. That's the basic issue.

I think I've made the principal points. I defended not only Druze interests, but also Lebanese interests, and with the Patriarch Sfeir we made the historical gesture of reconciliation in 2001, and the war is over. And the war is over, but now Lebanon is at stake, the movement of

freedom, of democracy, and this is why I'm here in Washington asking a kind of help and understanding. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, sir. Before we start, I just want to acknowledge the presence of Member of Parliament Marwan Hamadi.

[Applause.]

MR. INDYK: I guess he's known to you all, but he's representative also of the Druze community in the Lebanese Parliament and one of the first to suffer an attempted assassination.

Sir, you said that the United States has enhanced change and you said part of it was good and part of it was not good. I wonder if we can get you to elaborate on that subject. In particular, something that struck me was the fact that 1559 called for two things. One was that the Syrians withdraw their troops. The second was that militias be disarmed with particular focus on Hezbollah, of course, since it is the largest of those militias. The United States administration, I think on the urging of some Lebanese leaders, has decided not to push that issue, to leave it, and to focus on the eviction of the Syrian troops. Do you think when you look back that that was a mistake? Would it have been easier at that time to deal with Hezbollah's arms than now? You said that the dialogue was in a deadlock, but do you see a way of creating circumstances in which it will be possible to implement that second part of U.N. Resolution 1559?

MR. JUMBLATT: What I'm saying is that as for the Syrian withdrawal, of course, the States and Europe, particularly France, did play a big role in getting the Syrians out physically, the Syrian troops officially out. As for the Hezbollah, what we are saying, they did their part in liberating the South, but still they claim that they want to liberate the Shebaa Farms. Shebaa Farms as a sovereignty is not Lebanese, maybe as a property is Lebanese, but the sovereignty is not Lebanese. So we're just hooked indefinitely with the weapons with the presence of Hezbollah indefinitely in Lebanon, not for a Lebanese agenda, for a Syrian-Iranian agenda, and Lebanon will be taken as a hostage and used by the Syrian regime for their own purpose, Syrian and Iranian regime. We are now entering a kind of, should I say, new candor in the Middle East or—Persia, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. So we are saying to the Hezbollah, you did your duty, your job, now we have to send the Lebanese Army to the South. Now you have to dismantle your security and military apparatus like we did in 1992 when we had militias, myself, the Communist Party, Amal Party, et cetera. We dismantled our own security and military apparatus and we gave our weapons to the Lebanese Army and our people were incorporated into the Lebanese Army. Without that there is no solution. We are not going to launch a military offensive against Hezbollah. It's impossible. After all, they are Lebanese, but we're asking Nasrallah is he on the Lebanese agenda or someone else's agenda. That's the big issue and conflict with him.

Second, he is defending at any price Syrian leadership. On this issue we differ. We accuse morally and politically this leadership, this regime of having been, again, behind assassination attempts on Marwan Hamadi's life, Hariri's murder, George Hawi, Samir Kassir, Jebran Tueni, not to speak about other attempts. Of course, we have to wait for the result of the investigation, but after the end of the Civil War the Syrians built up a police state in Lebanon with their local counterparts, and I cannot imagine somebody else being behind the attempts or the murders.

MR. INDYK: I understand you say we'll ask them to be Lebanese and we'll ask them to do these things, but you know very well that asking isn't going to produce it.

MR. JUMBLATT: I know that.

MR. INDYK: What's the strategy for producing the pressure on Hezbollah that could actually get them to comply with the U.N. Security Council Resolution?

MR. JUMBLATT: The only pressure is political pressure on the ground. We've been able up until now to raise mass demonstrations. Their weapons are no more sacred. They are under discussion. Now there is a dialogue in Lebanon about their weapons. But they stick to and they are firm about the Shebaa Farms, and this is where now the issue is being raised. If the Shebaa Farms is to be implemented as a Lebanese territory, it needs Syrian approval. If not, let it be under the 242 and we

have implemented 425, that's it. But it's not an easy issue and the Syrian speech, Bashar's speech yesterday or 2 days before, is aggressive and is they are launching a counteroffensive.

MR. INDYK: There are some in Israel who say maybe it's good for Israel to give up the Shebaa Farms, but then they say Hezbollah will just then invent some other excuse; there were villages that were not returned. How do you answer that?

MR. JUMBLATT: Officially they say that their weapons are for the "liberation" of the Shebaa Farms, defend Lebanon against Israeli violations of sea and air, and liberate the prisoners. If you remove the Shebaa Farms pretext, you will put them on the defensive theoretically speaking unless they are following another foreign agenda, Syrian regime agenda, Iranian regime agenda, so Lebanon will be, as I told you, indefinitely hooked to something else.

MR. INDYK: Let me just move now to the issue of the presidency, something which you've expressed strong views on there.

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes.

MR. INDYK: What do you think can be done about breaking that deadlock?

MR. JUMBLATT: We have to choose a Lebanese President, we have to elect a Lebanese President, who will negotiate firmly with the Syrians about the fact that the Syrian government should recognize the fact of Lebanese independence, Lebanese sovereignty, Lebanese

democracy. And a president will not be a surrogate, a puppet of the Syrian regime like Lahoud is. But we know that we are in this actual dialogue that we are having now in Lebanon. We are directly faced with a Syrian counterpart and there is nobody in the middle as being an arbiter. All the clashes in Lebanon a long time ago were fixed up somewhere with international support and direct support. The Taif Agreement was done by the States, the Saudis, and implemented by the Syrians. Nowadays we are face to face without anybody in the middle, so this is the big issue.

They say we'll give you the name later on, we'll agree on the name, but give us Shebaa Farms, and this is a big trap. It will give them Shebaa Farms, any other name will be useless.

MR. INDYK: So it comes back to Damascus then doesn't it? How do you hope to influence Damascus in this situation? Perhaps before you answer that question, where do you see the Syrians? Now do they operate now in Lebanon? The troops are gone.

MR. JUMBLATT: The troops are gone, yes. The borders are open. They are smuggling weapons and terrorists to Lebanon, even the people of what they called them *takfeeriyoun*. The same people who they are sending to Iraq are being sent now to Lebanon. They are using Ahmed Jabril's guns, weapons, and with its weak army and at one time divided loyalty in certain security agencies, because after 30 years of Syrian occupation, it's not easy in a year's time to de-Syrianize the

security apparatus. It's not easy at all. Plus a divided government. They've left for 7 weeks, the Ministers of Amal and Hezbollah. When we have decided the same tragic day when Jebran Tueni was killed we have decided for the implementation of the International Court and they have come back. The government is paralyzed. How can you implement your own security agenda, Lebanese agenda, with the government divided, loyalty divided in the security apparatus, and even in the Army?

MR. INDYK: So they've managed to create a kind of paralysis in the political system.

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes, and then so now we are in a dialogue. I am not here to say that I would like the dialogue to get through, but how? We'll see. It depends on their goodwill. But, I mean, we are face to face with quite a formidable opponent.

MR. INDYK: You suggest that Hezbollah is really the agent of the Syrians in this situation. Is it possible that Hezbollah would act independently of the Syrians or of the Iranians, for that matter? Or is that a naive thought?

MR. JUMBLATT: I hope they are not in Lebanon to defend the Iranian nuclear strategy. I hope they are not in Lebanon, of course, to defend at any price the leadership of Syria. Of course, Syria is another case. It's up to the Syrian opposition one day to decide a change for democracy in Syria, and I don't believe that Syria will go to havoc or to chaos. I don't believe so, like Iraq, I don't believe so, but it's up to the

Syrian opposition, not me. But the problem is how to exist we'll have a free Lebanon with a dictator next door who is not behaving well and he hasn't recognized the fact that Lebanon is independent, should be independent, should be sovereign.

MR. INDYK: So how do you get him to recognize that? What are the levers in this Syrian business?

MR. JUMBLATT: On my own I don't have the means. I don't myself, Marwan Hamadi, Saad Hariri, the 14th of March forces are weak on our own. As you know, it's a balance of power. You know it started in 1976 the Syrian adventure and invasion of Lebanon and my father at that time did say no and this is why he was killed. So this is where you need Arab backing and international backing. This is why I'm here.

[Laughter.]

MR. INDYK: We wish you good luck. Let's go to questions from the audience, please. Will you wait for the microphone and please identify yourself before you ask the question. I think there's one at the back there.

MR. PHELPS: I'm Tim Phelps from Newsday. Can you tell us, Mr. Jumblatt, the situation in Iraq, how that situation is affecting your situation in Lebanon?

MR. JUMBLATT: If you want my own assessment about Iraq, of course it was a must to remove this dictator, by what means it's

something else. Of course, I don't like foreign invasions. Sometimes it is needed, sometimes it's not.

But at the same time, you no longer have a centralized state in Iraq and it was a big mistake to dissolve the Iraqi Army, even the Baath Party, because you had a secular party, even the Baath Party, although not all of them, but part of them committed terrible mistakes and crimes against the Iraqi people. And now you don't have a center of authority in Iraq and you have a dislocated Iraq that allowed the Syrians to play inside Iraq and allowed the Persians, sorry, the Iranians also to play inside Iraq, and we are suffering in Lebanon indirectly.

You still have time, maybe. I don't know. I don't have the secrets of American policy. Maybe to build up a centralized state within a kind of federation or democracy in Iraq. Maybe.

MR. INDYK: Shibley?

MR. TELHAMI: I know that you said you're here to ask for international support. What is it exactly you'd like the United States to do? There is a division among Lebanese about the exact role that the U.S. could play or should play. And how do you relate that the other big player in Lebanon is France? If you were to ask the two countries to play a constructive role in Lebanon, what would it be?

MR. JUMBLATT: How can you implement enough pressures, political pressures, economic pressures, what else, diplomatic pressures, diplomatic sanctions, against the Syrian regime so to be able

to hold in Lebanon and to implement our own independence. That's it. How can you enhance the Arabs, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, to play a kind of role with the Syrians to tell them, well, get out of Lebanon. Keep Lebanon out of your hands. That's it. That's a big issue. That's important. I think I suppose you can do it. You've been able as Americans here with the American policy to get the Syrians out through the 1559. Now you have to implement, you have to try to do more. Sanctions, diplomatic sanctions, economic sanctions. I'm not asking for American or French troops to come to Lebanon. No. It would be havoc. Build up a central state, help the Lebanese Army, and help the economy. We were supposed to have Beirut One. So all these elements could help.

MR. INDYK: Just in terms of strengthening the state in Lebanon and strengthening the Army, does the fact that you have this paralysis that you described before make it difficult to do that? We can't help you build an army if Hezbollah controls what the government can do about building up the army.

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes, but it's a vicious circle. I mean you can't also wait for the agenda of Hezbollah indefinitely. You've got to have a center of authority and you've got to send one day the army to the South. Our army now is too weak.

MR. INDYK: So building up the army is a priority?

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes. So to replace the authority of Hezbollah with dialogue, not with fighting.

MR. WEBE: Mazin Webe [ph]. You talked about Syria and Iran taking Lebanon hostage. Do you think Hezbollah is taking the Shia community hostage? And do you think an organization like Hezbollah should have been allowed to run for Parliament seats? Thank you.

MR. JUMBLATT: No, they are not taking the Shiites as hostages. No, not at all. You have liberal Shiites, intellectuals, politicians, that are Lebanese that are for a central authority in Lebanon, that are for stability in Lebanon. But for the time being let's say their influence is a little bit limited, even the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Nabih Berri, I think that he is not that at ease in this actual position, but, I mean, the balance of power inside the Shiite community.

MR. INDYK: Is that Nora down there?

MS. BOUSTANY: Nora Boustany, The Washington Post. Mr. Jumblatt, you've laid out a bleak picture of what's going on in Iraq, what could happen in Lebanon. I want to ask you to tell us what the U.S. would gain if it were to help Lebanon. What's in it for the United States, for stability in the region?

MR. JUMBLATT: I think back to the U.S. statements that they have said if I am not mistaken, it was Dr. Rice or somebody else, I don't remember now, for the last 60 years have helped for the sake of stability in a way dictatorships, some dictators in the Arab world. I think the Cedar Revolution is an asset for American policy. I think even though we have chaos now in Iraq, later on Iraq will be free. It will be

an asset. I think the slow process of democracy in Egypt is an asset for American policy. I think even though I know that not everybody will agree with me, but even Hamas elections on the ballot is a long term asset, so this is my opinion.

MR. INDYK: One of the things that I think impressed Washington mightily was when a million Lebanese came out into the streets.

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes.

MR. INDYK: Why don't you use the streets again? Is there a danger in that?

MR. JUMBLATT: We are using the street. We haven't abandoned the street. We will use the street democratically and peacefully. That's it. I mean, now I hope not, but if the process of dialogue will go to a deadlock, we have to stick to the street. It's not easy. It's going to be a long, long struggle, but we have this weapon. And I know that a million Lebanese in the street, the outcome will be positive, but it's a long struggle, and I know that some Arab leaders don't like it. I mean, I don't see some Arab leaders liking their own people to go to the street, not to mention which Arab leaders.

[Laughter.]

MR. INDYK: You can mention them. You're in Washington.

MR. JUMBLATT: I'm going back, sir.

[Laughter.]

MR. INDYK: That didn't stop you from criticizing us.

MR. HAMID: I'm Amar Abdulhamid for the Syrian opposition, I guess. Are you in communication with Abdul Khalim Khaddam? Do you think that his break from the Syrian regime will actually serve to weaken the regime? Should he be able to put a government in exile? Will he actually represent a serious challenge to the Syrian regime?

MR. JUMBLATT: I met him; I met Mr. Khaddam, when I came to Washington, on my road to Washington. I met him in Paris. Of course, Mr. Khaddam's statement or testimony to the international inquiry is very important for the case of the murder of the late Prime Minister Hariri. What are his plans, I don't know. But if I have an advice to give to somebody, well, profit of Mr. Khaddam's break with the regime, and it would be one day he could play a kind of transition period or policy in Syria. I hope so.

MR. INDYK: George?

MR. CODY: George Cody, the American Task Force for Lebanon. There is a dialogue taking place right now in Lebanon among various representatives from various groups in the country. Can you give us an honest, candid assessment of what you expect the outcome to be of that dialogue, and then after that dialogue, what's next?

MR. JUMBLATT: The dialogue should focus on the Lebanese Presidency. We need a Lebanese President to be able to

formulate a Lebanese agenda, to protect the Cedar Revolution, to be able to enhance Syrian leadership to recognize the fact of the independence of Lebanon, and to be able to send the army to the South, implement the Taif Agreement, implement 1559. It's a big agenda, it's a challenge, but the Lebanese President is item number one.

The counterparts, the others, they want Shebaa Farms and they want indefinite presence of their weapons, Palestinian weapons outside the camps, their weapons in the South, for an agenda which is not at all Lebanese.

MR. INDYK: Gary Mitchell?

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Jumblatt, this question has been asked in one form or another and I'll try another take on it. It has to do with why it would be in the selfish interests, the national security interests of the United States to engage in this issue in the way that you suggest, and in particular I want to ask to what extent have you, and I don't just mean you personally, but has the country sought to engage its significant population living in the United States and in other countries in this effort to move Damascus?

MR. JUMBLATT: As for the States policy, if they fail in Lebanon, their whole credibility of enhancing so-called change for better Arab living in the Middle East and for enhancing democracy, transparency in the Middle East, it will be a very big failure, and so we'll be back to the old habit of maybe dictatorship or I don't know what.

As for the Lebanese abroad, Lebanese are not different from the Lebanese inside. They hope to have a free Lebanon, to come back to a free Lebanon, to live under the state of law with one authority, one state, one army, to profit of Lebanon. I mean, they like Lebanon, we like Lebanon, we are there, we are here, but I mean we know what's happening there, so it's a big challenge. And you've seen the Lebanese a million and more in the streets, the struggle is much stronger than Ukraine. Ukraine was a promenade, and we've been able after a year, I mean after the killing of Prime Minister Hariri, the killings did not stop. But in spite of that, we've been able with Saad Hariri and the forces of the 14th of March on the 14th of February to reassemble again and to say no, no to Syrian dictatorship, no to killing, no to assassination, yes for freedom. It's a big challenge.

MR. INDYK: Why do you think it's so great to have Hamas there for the long-term?

MR. JUMBLATT: Just a personal opinion. I'm not here to defend Hamas. I will say let the Palestinians decide for their cause, and I will say also at the same time, it's time for the state policy one day to go back to what is left of the Road Map. You are an expert on that.

MR. INDYK: I think it's dead. You made the statement so I think there something behind it in your mind about why is it good to bring Hamas into the process through this democratic election?

MR. JUMBLATT: They came to power through a democratic election and it was under the banner of the Oslo Agreement isn't it? Am I right?

MR. INDYK: Right.

MR. JUMBLATT: So they voted, they came to power through the Oslo Agreement process. Considering them as terrorists won't help now. Later on you have to assess the situation.

MR. INDYK: So you expect that they will moderate their position?

MR. JUMBLATT: After the Israelis, if they want to finalize a viable Palestinian state according to the International Resolution 242, a state on the West Bank to Gaza, and it's up to Hamas to accept, also to define its agenda on the 242. If they go further than 242, it doesn't help.

MR. INDYK: I don't want to divert us to a discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but I think there's a broader issue here which I'm trying to get at, which is you have a phenomenon in the Arab world that as a result in part of the United States pushing for the opening of political space there, that that political space is being filled by Islamist parties. These are not secular parties. These are Islamist parties. Does that worry you when you look across the landscape of the Arab world?

MR. JUMBLATT: Once they are in power, they will face harsh realities of how to govern, how to rule, economic realities, how to deal with the IMF, with the World Bank, but they should be engaged to

come to power, to practice power. They are not that threat if they come through the ballots. And then later on we might find out other forces, secular forces. I don't know.

QUESTION: Welcome to Washington [Arabic] what is our strategy if the international community does not give Lebanon the support that it needs, what is our strategy in dealing with the Syrian-Iranian alliance in Lebanon?

MR. JUMBLATT: It depends on the dialogue. I hope that dialogue will deliver a Lebanese President, and I have to consult with my partners, all my partners of the 14th of March, Saad Hariri first. I have to go back to Lebanon to see what will be our new strategy. And at the same time we have to see with the Lebanese people how to go on in our peaceful fight, peaceful struggle, for the independence of Lebanon.

MR. MOORE: John Moore, Mr. Jumblatt. At what point in Lebanon's democratic development, you go from your Parliament electing a President to a popularly elected President, to any change in the confessional makeup of the government now? Is that on the agenda or is that too far into the future?

MR. JUMBLATT: It was mentioned in the Taif Agreement to deconfessionalize the actual political system, but for the time being I think in this actual dialogue it's not on the agenda. Now what is on the agenda is the Lebanese-Syrian relationship, the weapons of resistance, of the Hezbollah militia, the weapons of the Palestinians outside the camps,

the civil rights for the Palestinians, and of course enhancing Taif which means sending the Lebanese Army to the South, implementing the 425. But what you have asked, it's not for the actual time being on the agenda.

MR. INDYK: Should it be on the agenda if Lebanon is to be a democracy?

MR. JUMBLATT: One day it will be better, yes.

MR. INDYK: One day, Inshallah.

QUESTION: My question is, I agree with you that there is an American way to promote products which is high value at low price. I agree with you that Lahoud is, at best, a low value for high price, the price of 1559. If the 14th of February movement was able to score a low price from Hezbollah, how would the 14th of February resolve the Michel Aoun issue? And would someone like Nasib Lahoud still have a chance despite what happened in the elections?

I cannot but agree with you also on the Hamas thing. I think it should be probably a lesson for the American administration that from India, and its India-Pakistani riddle, to Israel, the only mostly right-wing parties were able to score deals of peace and advance peace everywhere.

One last thing. In the 1970s and the 1980s, the Druze community needed Walid Jumblatt. Today I think the Middle East needs Walid Jumblatt. So this is a serious call on you to take care of yourself.

MR. JUMBLATT: I will try. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. INDYK: Is this your son?

MR. JUMBLATT: No.

[Laughter.]

MR. JUMBLATT: No, my son, the other one is in Beirut, and my daughter is in Beirut now.

Let's leave the issue of Hamas aside. I'm not the one to decide. I'm here for the cause of Lebanon. I'm not here to promote anybody, neither Michel Aoun nor Nasib Lahoud. It's up to the ballot. It's better. Of course, the General(Aoun) was one of the main supporters of the 14th of March, still is, and we hope that we're always with him and with the others unite our front for the sake of a Lebanese President and for the sake of freedom in Lebanon. I'm not here to promote anybody, and it's up to the ballot in the Parliament, we'll see, in case we are able to go to the Parliament.

MR. INDYK: Can I just clarify that? Because here in Washington we don't always under the intricacies of this process. It takes how many votes to remove the President? And is that an impeachment process?

MR. JUMBLATT: You need the quorum. Isn't that you need a quorum of 86, two-thirds?

MR. INDYK: Two-thirds. Eighty-six votes.

MR. JUMBLATT: And we don't have the two-thirds. We have a 71 majority.

MR. INDYK: You have 71. So how do you get 86? What are the potential ways of getting 86?

MR. JUMBLATT: You've got to engage with the other partners. The other partners, they know that. They know that we can't vote a new President without them, so this is why we are having a dialogue. They say Shebaa Farms, we say no. We say a new president. This is the dilemma. They say a Syrian-Lebanese relationship, we say the president because we do need somebody, an arbiter. We are two teams facing each other. You need one in the middle, the president. We don't have it. The president is on the Syrian side.

MR. INDYK: But any one of those parties, Aoun, Hezbollah, would give you enough votes, right?

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes.

MR. INDYK: You don't need all of them.

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes.

MR. INDYK: Is there some lock they have because they're in alliance it makes it impossible?

MR. JUMBLATT: We'll see. I'm not going to comment more because they might say in Lebanon that I'm here to sabotage dialogue. I don't want to figure that I'm against the dialogue.

MR. INDYK: We don't want to do that.

MR. JUMBLATT: But we need a dialogue with a clear-cut result, a new president, a Lebanese president.

MR. INDYK: So then just in terms of the procedure, 86 votes enables you to do what?

MR. JUMBLATT: To do what? To shorten the actual presidency term.

MR. INDYK: Term of the presidency.

MR. JUMBLATT: Impeach him.

MR. INDYK: Impeach him.

MR. JUMBLATT: And vote another President.

MR. INDYK: And then vote in another President.

MR. JUMBLATT: Another President needs because once you have the quorum, you can vote for the President with a simple majority, yes. And we have it, and they know that we have it.

MR. INDYK: I see. So the critical number is 86.

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes, 86 for the Parliament to meet.

MR. INDYK: Right.

MR. JUMBLATT: But then big decisions can be taken by the majority, and we have it. That is why they are terribly annoyed and this is why they went on killing. I mean, the Jebran Tueni assassination, he was an MP, Member of Parliament. They can go back to these dirty methods to kill the part of the majority, to reduce it.

MR. INDYK: Is Tueni replaced?

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes, by his father, Ghassan Tueni.

MR. INDYK: So it's intimidation.

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes, a bloody intimidation.

MR. INDYK: Barry Schweid? Wait for the microphone, please, and introduce yourself.

MR. SCHWEID: Barry Schweid, AP. I wondered why you think Secretary Rice is giving you so much prominence here and there; face time as we call it? Does that encourage you to believe that the U.S. has more cards to play for Lebanon, or is it all rhetoric at this point, daily denunciations of Syria? I just wondered is the meeting something you asked for or the U.S. asked for? Does this give you hope that something new may come of all this besides words?

MR. JUMBLATT: In politics you need always a kind of support. It depends on what kind of support, but you need always a kind of support when you are engaged into a process to liberate your country peacefully or militarily. Now we want to liberate our country in a peaceful way. You need the international support, all kinds of movements that were before us we are having a kind of international support everywhere. It's the classical case of history. So if, I said if, the U.S. can do something, as I said, to change the behavior of the Syrian regime, I wouldn't mind. I am saying change. It's up to the Syrian opposition to decide for the future of Syria, but our basic obstacle is that this in Damascus hasn't been able to change his behavior, and as I'm telling you, sending more weapons, more mercenaries, and more terrorists to Lebanese and is destabilizing Lebanon.

So I'm entitled as a free citizen of Lebanon. Two weeks ago Mr. Saad Hariri was here and he met with President Bush. We are just asking for a kind of moral political support. That's it.

MR. INDYK: You were invited by the Secretary of State, yes?

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes.

MR. INDYK: That's the answer to that question. They invited you?

MR. JUMBLATT: Yes, I think so. I hope so.

[Laughter.]

MR. HAROLD: Scott Harold, Brookings. I wonder if you could speak also to any outreach efforts you may have made to the other neighbors of Lebanon particularly those that border on Syria. Since the Syrians are infiltrating you, is there any chance you can reach around and use Turkish influence; that you may reach out to the Turks, to the new Iraqi government, to the other Arab governments, Saudi Arabia, Egypt?

MR. INDYK: These are Brookings questions.

[Laughter.]

MR. JUMBLATT: We rely mostly on the Arabs, Saudi Arabia, which did a good job, excellent job at one time in Lebanon implementing the Taif Agreement; Egypt. Turkey, they might be helpful, but I know nobody up until now in Turkey. I might go to Turkey if I can smuggle out of Lebanon. It's not that easy to smuggle out of Lebanon

with the airports or coming from Mukbara. It's not easy for me and it's not easy for my partners, Saad and others. I will see. I will see. I know that the Turks do play a very important role as for the relationship with Syria, but at the same time, as you do know, they are also concerned about the stability of Iraq.

MR. INDYK: One can't help but notice that the Saudis seem to have changed their approach lately. They were very upset with Bashar al-Assad, they exercised strong pressure on him to remove the troops, but they seem to have shifted now and they seem to be selling—he's trying to sell his plan to Lebanon. What do you think is going on there?

MR. JUMBLATT: Because he is saying that it's either me in power or instability in Syria. I don't believe in that. I don't believe in that. I think the Syrians can slowly but surely enhance democracy in their own country. The Syrians have a strong civil society, intellectuals, bourgeoisie, and I'm not afraid of a bloody strife in Syria. Not at all. It's a country being hijacked by a small group of a family of mafia style leadership. Even inside the Alawi community you have an important number of people who just don't want this adventure. Look what happened to one of their main officers, Ghazi Kanan, they've killed him. So I think Syria can have stability with democracy. I think so. This is my opinion. But I mean, again ask the credible Syrian opposition. That's not up to me to answer.

MR. INDYK: We have credible Syrian opposition. What do you say? It could be done? We're going to have to move to the last question here. You've been very generous with your time and your answers.

QUESTION: I have a question regarding, now that you've taken a step back maybe one year after the 14th of March, what would you think were in your view the mistakes that your movement has done and that cost us a lot as a nation? At least seen from afar and particularly from the young generation perspective, I think even in Lebanon this is the thinking, is the failure of the March 14th movement to put forward a nonsectarian agenda, a secular agenda, and agenda that mobilizes people beyond their confessional party, the combination of which at least is seen in the fact that only those community leaders were taking part in what was called the national dialogue today in Parliament.

Clovis Maksoud yesterday wrote about it in An Nahar. Where are the nonsectarians? Where are the secular people? Where is their voice in the national dialogue? Do you think this is a failure of the March 14th movement, and if yes, how do you think we can build a future, we can build a state that is not mobilizing people and their allegiance according to party communal lines? At least this is what we wish for. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. JUMBLATT: We were hesitant, not all of us, part of us, last year that famous day the 14th of March not to go to Baabda and remove Lahoud, and it was a missed historical opportunity, but at that time I was not responsible. I did ask for the removal of Lahoud. Somebody else, I'm not going to name who is this somebody else, said no, and this was a big missed opportunity, historical one. I don't think it will repeat. I hope. I don't know. This was a big missed opportunity.

As for the secular establishment, I think Saad Hariri and I and others now are no more being seen as representative of our own communities. I think we have been able to cross the boundaries of the actual communities. I think so. I think so. I mean, even Samir Geagea, others. Later on when we'll have a Lebanese President, we have to engage it to what we are saying, establishing a modern state, but now the issue is how to get a Lebanese President.

MR. INDYK: I just want to follow-up on this missed historic opportunity, because, I too am preoccupied by missed historic opportunities having been involved in one. Without identifying who this person was, what was his argument?

MR. JUMBLATT: Some people inside, should I say, I'm sorry to say the Christian camp, the Maronite camp, told us the President should not be removed by popular upheaval, you should respect the Constitution, you should have the classical way out of elections, et cetera. Lahoud is a Syrian puppet. We should have done it last year.

We were much more stronger last year. We are still strong, but last year it was the moment to seize it. I mean, going back to the classical approach was a mistake.

MR. INDYK: Walid, thank you. It's been a real pleasure to have you here. I think we've all benefited from your analysis and from your candor and from your courage, and I can only endorse what your friend said here, we hope you will have a long life and enjoy it so that we will see together the liberation of your country. Thank you very much.

MR. JUMBLATT: Thank you.

[Applause.]

[END OF TAPED RECORDING.]

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