pendence (which was postponed until 1943), while Arab nationalists who favoured the reattachment of the annexed areas to Syria simply boycotted the proceedings of the constitutional committee.\textsuperscript{46}

Myriad Syrian allegations against French rule and the perception that the French did not operate within the parameters of the terms of the mandate were augmented by regional developments such as the Anglo–Iraqi Treaty that terminated the British mandate and led to the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations in 1932. Tangible initiatives in a similar direction for Syria and Lebanon were not begun until 1936, when treaties between France and the two countries were initialled in September and November of that year.\textsuperscript{47} Both Syrian and Lebanese parliaments approved their respective treaty, which awaited ratification by the French parliament. The collapse of the Popular Front government in France (favourable to the treaties), its replacement by a right-wing government, and the impending advent of war led to the abandonment of the treaties by France. The increasing threat of war necessitated a strong French presence in the eastern Mediterranean, and in July 1939 the high commissioner Gabriel Puaux proceeded to dissolve the cabinet and parliament, to suspend the constitution, and to impose martial law in both Syria and Lebanon. General Maxime Weygand (the previous high commissioner) arrived from France to assume the command of the French forces in the Levant.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR: ANGLO–FRENCH RIVALRY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR LEBANON

The events of the Second World War and wartime Anglo–French rivalry hastened the independence of Lebanon. The Lebanese of different political and religious persuasions were politically united over the issue of freeing themselves of French mandate rule. They were encouraged in these efforts by the British who sought to diminish France’s role in the Levant. On the eve of independence, the British were instrumental in brokering the National Pact between Lebanon’s Christians and Muslims. This verbal agreement was the basis for Christian–Muslim cooperation in independent Lebanon and was also called into question in times of crisis such as the events of 1956 until 1958 when each community accused the other of violating the National Pact.

The capitulation of France in June 1940 and the emergence of both
the collaborationist Vichy regime and the Free French movement led by a relatively unknown General Charles de Gaulle had a decisive impact on the future of the mandated territories. After the fall of France, Puaux declared loyalty to the Vichy government. The pro-Axis sympathies of the French authorities in the Levant were exemplified by the announcement of General Mittelhauser (Weygand’s successor) that the French forces in the Levant would abide by the French armistice. This announcement together with the access of Syrian air bases given to German aircraft during the Rashid ‘Ali revolt in Iraq in 1941 led the British to invade Syria and Lebanon in June 1941. The strategic importance of the Levant with respect to British interests in the Middle East was clear: ‘If the Germans were to gain control of the Levant States we would have inevitably lost the Suez Canal and Egypt, which was within an hour’s flight of the Lebanese and Syrian landing grounds.’

French participation in the campaign was carried out by a contingent of de Gaulle’s Free French troops. The British launched their invasion of Syria and Lebanon on the 8 June 1941 and it took an unexpected five weeks to defeat the Vichy forces. An armistice agreement was signed at Acre on 14 July. The British now had the upper hand in the previous French mandates both militarily and financially with respect to the Free French.

To ensure indigenous support and enhance their position with the local population, the British pressured the French to issue a proclamation on the eve of the invasion, ending the mandate regime in Syria and Lebanon and proclaiming the independence and freedom of the two republics in June 1941. The British pledged to guarantee the French proclamation and would thereafter hold the French accountable and ensure that it was carried out to the letter. The implications of the British position were that they had now joined the French in the Levant; yet in the context of the wartime situation, they were the stronger partner. The British ambassador in Cairo, Sir Miles Lampson, made a statement in the name of the British government guaranteeing the proclamation and ‘associating His Majesty’s Government with the assurance of independence given by General Catroux on behalf of General de Gaulle to Syria and Lebanon’. This pledge marked the beginning of a stormy relationship between the two wartime allies, with French accusations of British ‘Fashodism’ and British denials, and local Syrian and Lebanese politicians capitalizing on the Anglo–French rivalry in order to wrest them-
selves from mandatory tutelage. That they were able to do so was largely due to British assistance personified in Churchill's personal envoy and minister to the Levant, Major General Sir Edward Spears.

Edward Spears (‘Spiers’ until 1918) was born of an English father of German-Jewish ancestry and was brought up and educated in France. Spears was a war hero and personal friend of the British prime minister Winston Churchill, who brought him out of retirement and initially appointed him as his personal representative to a mission of liaison with the leader of the Free French, Charles de Gaulle. In parliamentary circles, as a conservative MP, Spears was known to be a Francophile and a supporter of the Free French. In February 1942, the prime minister appointed Spears as the first British minister to the republics of Syria and Lebanon following their recognition by Great Britain as independent republics. He would retain this position until Churchill recalled him in 1944. Despite the criticism of Spears’s conduct as being overtly anti-French, his mission to simultaneously support the French position in the Levant and promote Syrian and Lebanese independence was irreconcilable.

The counterpart of Spears in the Levant was General Georges Catroux, whom de Gaulle had appointed as commander of the troops of the Levant, Delegate General and Plenipotentiary to Syria and Lebanon. The relationship between the two men was one of such intense rivalry that it led the French-appointed president of the Lebanese Republic, Alfred Naccache, to complain to the US consul general that ‘the situation was reaching a point where the dignity of his own position was being affected by the constant squabbles between the two allies.’ Anglo-French rivalry extended to the local scene and the presidential elections, whereby each supported a contending faction for the presidency.

The British supported the Destouri (Constitutionalist) bloc of Bechara al-Khoury and Riyad al-Sulh, which advocated closer relations with the Arab world, while the staunchly French Emile Eddé led the Watani (National) Bloc and advocated maintaining a special relationship with France even after independence, a policy that coincided with that of the French. In the 1920s, Eddé had opposed the Greater Lebanon project and favoured reconstituting a predominantly Christian-populated Mount Lebanon under French protection from its Muslim Arab surroundings. He had defeated al-Khoury in the presidential elections of 1936 when
French influence in the Levant was uncontested, but in 1943 it was the British candidate who would triumph.

The Eddé–Khoury rivalry illustrates the predominance of personalities in Lebanese politics rather than political agendas and platforms. The rivalry of these two Maronite politicians dominated the political scene throughout the 1930s and 1940s and split their community. Eventually they both became president — solely the prerogative of the Maronite community — and while they held similar views of Lebanon's political role at the outset of their careers they would change their views for the political expedience of gaining office.63

After French support went to Eddé in the 1930s and was decisive in his election to the presidency in 1936, Khoury turned to the British and was their candidate in 1943 when they had the upper hand in Lebanon after their occupation of the country in 1941 and ousting of the Vichy forces. British influence was also decisive in the presidential elections of 1952. The British position in the Middle East remained uncontested until the mid-1950s when, in the context of the cold war, the Americans took over as the foremost power in the region facing the Soviet Union.

Camille Chamoun was one of the founding members of the Destouri bloc and in his memoirs related the story of its emergence. After meeting at Bechara al-Khoury’s house, Camille Chamoun and two of his colleagues met the high commissioner and presented him with a memorandum of grievances requesting the restoration of constitutional life, termination of the mandate, the recognition of Lebanon's sovereignty, and the conclusion of a treaty of friendship with France. Chamoun viewed that initiative in September 1934 as marking the birth of the constitutional bloc.64 The small group rapidly attracted notables such as the Emir Majid Arslan, Hamid Frangieh, Sabri Hamade, Selim Tacla, and Bechara al-Khoury who, according to Chamoun, joined six weeks later.65 The relationship between Khoury and the younger Chamoun would exhibit signs of latent rivalry that came out into the open in 1952. The memoirs of both men reveal the tension in their relationship that was also based on rivalry for the presidency. Khoury’s motivation for forming the Destouri bloc was in order to resume his presidential campaign, interrupted in 1932 when the high commissioner cancelled the presidential elections and suspended the constitution.

Both the constitutional bloc and Eddé’s national bloc were not poli-
tical parties in the formal sense of having a hierarchical organization and a formal political platform. They were loose formations of notables whose aims and interests coincided and whose members perceived that they had to align themselves with either presidential contender to participate in the political arena in which they took the form of parliamentary blocs. The mandate authorities encouraged this bipolar competition as it strengthened their position as ‘balancer’. Following the restoration of the constitution, presidential elections were held in 1936 and French-supported Emile Eddé defeated Bechara al-Khoury. The Eddé presidency resembled that of previous presidencies since 1926, whether appointed or elected, in that effective decision-making was in the hands of the French authorities. It was not until 1943 that a president was elected to an independent Lebanon and did not owe his position to the French. Nevertheless, foreign influence was instrumental in bringing about the 1943 parliamentary and presidential elections and in helping the Lebanese resist French attempts to reassert control that year. As already mentioned, Spears was Britain’s representative in Lebanon and a central figure in determining the country’s political future. During the Second World War, Britain’s pan-Arab policy culminated in its sponsorship of the Arab League. Within the context of their pan-Arab policy, the British in Lebanon supported the demands of Lebanese Muslims for a more equitable division of parliamentary positions. Following an unfair distribution of parliamentary seats in June 1943, Spears intervened and alleviated Muslim grievances by allocating the community a greater percentage than hitherto given. Spears established the ratio of six Christians to five Muslims in parliament, which remained in effect until 1989 when the distribution was equalized and the legislature enlarged. Consequently it would not be an exaggeration to conclude that Spears’s policy helped bring many Muslims into the folds of a political system that they had until then boycotted, particularly during the early years of the mandate period.

Amid French reluctance and British insistence, parliamentary elections were held on 5 September 1943 and al-Khoury’s faction won the day. Spears’s role was significant in ensuring that the elections were held and that the British supported al-Khoury’s nationalist bloc against that of Eddé. Although independence from French control would be declared two months later, none of the electoral platforms of either Muslim or
Christian candidates focused on that issue. Lebanon’s independence had been formally proclaimed in Catroux’s statement of June 1941, yet the French were still effectively in control despite Spears’s efforts to chip away at their position. With al-Khoury’s election to the presidency on 21 September and his appointment of the pan-Arabist Riyad al-Sulh as prime minister, it was a matter of time before there would be a showdown with the French authorities. Bechara al-Khoury had the support of Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, as well as Britain whose policy in the Middle East veered towards supporting the then current trend of pan-Arabism in the interests of maintaining British influence in the area.

As for the foreign representatives, both Spears and Catroux accused the other of interference in the parliamentary elections. While Spears maintained that his countermeasures were able effectively to block French pressure and intervention, Catroux in his memoirs acknowledged the effectiveness of the British effort: ‘The struggle for influence between the British and the French was superimposed on the antagonisms of clans, communities and individuals. The Spears mission and the French Delegation reproached the other for putting pressure on the electoral body. … The friends of France were defeated in north Lebanon, in the south, and the Békaa region.’ The election of a nationalist parliament and president and the continued insistence of the French delegate to rule by decree set the two sides on an inevitable collision course. The irreconcilability of the two positions is illustrated in a somewhat trivial incident in October 1943, just prior to the November crisis. On 13 October, the French delegate Jean Helleu, who had replaced Catroux in June, published a decree declaring the end of summer savings time and the return to winter time. The Lebanese government’s response was the immediate publication of a similar decree. The incident elicited a witty remark from the American consul general George Wadsworth, who noted in a dispatch to the State Department that the action of the Lebanese government ‘permitted the Lebanese to observe their own rather than French promulgated law and deferred showdown on the vital question of the hour’.

However, a showdown was in the making, for on 25 October the Lebanese government sent Helleu a letter demanding independence and expressing the intent to modify the constitution to reflect that status. The government also requested that the French delegation be trans-
formed into a diplomatic mission after transferring to the government all public services it retained during the mandate.

Helleu left for Algiers for consultations with the French National Liberation Committee. In his absence the Lebanese government met on 7 November and proceeded to modify the constitution and legally terminate French authority in Lebanon by abolishing the prerogatives of the mandate. The government’s decisions were ratified by parliament the following day. The act was denounced by the French Committee in Algiers and a series of events culminated in the suspension of the constitution, the arrest of the president and cabinet members (with the exception of two) and their detention in the fortress of Rashaya in the southeastern part of the country.\(^72\) The latter action was taken a few days after Helleu’s return to Beirut. Catroux has claimed that the decision was Helleu’s alone and was not coordinated with the Committee in Algiers.\(^73\)

As minister of the interior, Camille Chamoun was among those arrested in the early hours of 11 November, and his memoirs give a detailed account of his arrest and 11-day incarceration at the fortress.\(^74\) Following the arrest of the president and cabinet members, Helleu appointed Emile Eddé by decree as president of the republic. These events generated an intense political reaction both at the popular and diplomatic levels. Lebanese of all religious groups and parties united\(^75\) in denouncing French policy and held demonstrations calling for the release of the imprisoned politicians.\(^76\) Many of the protesting delegations headed towards the residence of the British minister, because they perceived Edward Spears as their liberator. The ability of the nationalists to capitalize on the difficulties of the Anglo–French relationship was central to their success in achieving independence for ultimately it was British pressure that forced the French to back down and accede to the wishes of the Lebanese government.\(^77\) The date the prisoners were released was thereafter celebrated as Lebanon’s independence day.

British pressure was presented in the form of an ultimatum from the British minister of state in Cairo, R. G. Casey to Georges Catroux on 19 November. Catroux returned from Algiers, headquarters of de Gaulle’s Comité de Libération Nationale, to Beirut on 15 November to handle the crisis while Casey arrived in Beirut on 19 November. The ultimatum referred to the two demands the British government put forward on 13 November that the French had so far ignored. These were the replace-
ment of Helleu and the release of the Lebanese politicians. The ultimatum gave the deadline of 10 a.m. on 22 November for acquiescence to these demands. Failure to do so by the French authorities would result in the British imposition of martial law and the forced release of the prisoners. To enhance the credibility of the ultimatum, two special regiments were brought in from Egypt in addition to the Ninth Army, which was ready to take control of the situation should the need arise.

In his memoirs Catroux wrote that, at the time, he remarked to Casey that the spirit of the British document reminded him of the era of Fashodism: 'Upon interpreting the spirit of this memorandum, I remarked that it took me back to the era of Fashoda.' Catroux had touched on the focal point of French accusations directed at the British in the Levant. The French accused the British of capitalizing on a situation where they had the upper hand to force concessions out of the French, undermine their position and eventually oust them from the area.

British pressure on the French to free the president and other politicians was coupled with that of the Arab states that gradually assumed a larger role in Lebanon's internal politics. The position of the United States should also be considered, together with the prevailing atmosphere engendered by the spirit of the Atlantic Charter.

Anglo–French rivalry in the Levant was not novel to the Second World War and can be traced back to the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt. In the particular case of Lebanon, the multisectarian composition of the country's population lent itself to the European powers' patronage of the different religious groups. Such historical circumstances rendered inevitable the underlying mistrust that characterized Anglo–French relations in the Levant from the outset of their joint venture in 1917.

THE NATIONAL PACT

While the First World War had established France in the Levant, the Second World War accelerated the anti-imperialist process and terminated the French presence in Syria and Lebanon. As European intervention in the mid-nineteenth century had determined the future of the Lebanese mountain, so once again European involvement would affect major political developments in Lebanon. It was the British representative Edward Spears who brokered the Christian–Muslim agreement
for the distribution of parliamentary seats, paving the way for the elections held in August 1943. In a larger sense this agreement provided the framework for the National Pact that constituted the basis for the coexistence of the two major religious groups in an independent Lebanese Republic.

The National Pact was an unwritten agreement between the Maronite and Sunni notables, represented by Bechara al-Khoury and Riyad al-Sulh both having a stake in concluding an agreement to reconcile the differing Christian and Muslim conceptions of Lebanon so as to be able to govern. How did this agreement come about? The events of the Second World War highlighted the weakness of the French and together with British encouragement for independence provided fortuitous circumstances for an agreement among the Lebanese for a *modus vivendi*.

The National Pact was a verbal agreement that aimed to establish a basis for cooperation between two communities with different political loyalties. In this sense, Riyad al-Sulh spoke of the agreement as aiming to Arabize the Christians and Lebanize the Muslims. While many Christians looked towards France as their traditional protector with whom they had religious and cultural affinity, many Muslims rejected Lebanon's 1920 borders, yearned for Lebanon to become part of a greater Arab state and for many years refused to identify with it as their homeland. By the agreement concluded between al-Khoury and al-Sulh in October–November 1943, each party undertook to modify its position whereby the Muslims would recognize the existence of an independent Lebanon, while the Christians would forego any alliance with France and would pledge Lebanon to pursue a foreign policy aligned with that of the other Arab states.

The domestic component of the agreement was an extension of the confessional arrangement defined by Article 95 of the constitution of 1926, which provided for the proportional distribution of government employment among the confessional communities. According to the National Pact, the president would be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, the speaker of parliament a Shi’ite Muslim, and parliamentary seats would be divided along the six to five ratio that had been agreed upon in August. This arrangement reinforced the sectarian principle as a pillar of the newly independent state.

The National Pact may not have materialized had it not been for
external involvement and encouragement for both Lebanese parties. A British-sponsored meeting held in Cairo in June 1942 was attended by Egyptian prime minister Nahhas Pasha, Syrian prime minister Jamil Mardam Bey, and Bechara al-Khoury, the leader of the pro-independence parliamentary Constitutionalist Bloc who would be elected president in September 1943. As alluded to in his memoirs, Bechara al-Khoury sought and received Syrian and Egyptian encouragement to pursue independence for a pro-Arab Lebanon. Khoury’s election to the presidency in November 1943 was supported by Nahhas Pasha and Syria’s National Bloc politicians rather than by local Muslims, and his accommodation with the latter came only after he had ensured the backing of the regional Arab states.

Riyad al-Sulh, on the other hand, was one of the few prominent Muslim politicians to advocate cooperation with Lebanon’s Christians against the French and expressed support for an independent Lebanon in late 1943, a position that gradually evolved through the 1930s and was encouraged and publicized by his cousin Kazim al-Sulh in the daily al-Nida’ and the political party Hizb al-Nida’ al-Qawmi. He was the first to use the expression ‘Lebanon’s Arab face’ in acknowledging support for independence. Moreover, Syrian leaders of the National Bloc had deserted Lebanon’s Sunnis (their coreligionists) by accepting the French–Syrian treaty of 1936 and thereby recognizing Syrian independence within its post-1920 boundaries. Consequently, pragmatists such as Riyad al-Sulh put aside any aspirations for pan-Arab unity. Regardless of the intentions of both parties, at that time of fast moving events, the National Pact was the most suitable arrangement to be made if independence was to be achieved. Notwithstanding the influence of the key players such as al-Khoury, al-Sulh, Eddé and Chiha, the pact was the final product of a long series of events that had begun in the 1930s and was shaped by regional and international political developments.

While the pact provided a formula for political cooperation among Lebanon’s different confessional leaders, it was not an instrument of integration nor was it meant to foster a sense of national identity. In fact, it constituted a recognition of Lebanon’s pluralistic society, and reflected the influence of the political thinker and architect of the Lebanese constitution, Michel Chiha, who was the brother-in-law of Bechara al-Khoury. Chiha proposed a political system that maintained the existing
differences of Lebanon’s confessional communities within a unified political framework. Chiha’s Lebanon was a country of ‘associated confessional minorities’, which had undergone an unparalleled and unique experience of pluralism.88 The ‘long experience of living communally’ engendered a sentiment of common destiny among the various groups who chose this communal destiny because it ensured tolerance and liberty and was Lebanon’s raison d’être.89 He reiterated the theme that the situation of the Lebanese compelled them to choose between cooperation or death. The uniqueness of Lebanon as a refuge for persecuted minorities throughout history is a central theme of Chiha’s thought and the basis of his argument in favour of maintaining their particularisms: ‘Lebanon is a country of associated confessional minorities. All minorities must find their place there and obtain their rights. That is the raison d’être for this country and is its uniqueness.’90 The linchpin of the political system that would maintain Lebanon’s equilibrium was an assembly or parliament where the communities could contain their debates and disputes. Chiha repeatedly warned that transferring the debate outside the parliamentary forum — as would occur in 1958 — would have disastrous consequences for Lebanon.

As if to underline its volatility, Albert Hourani wrote of the National Pact as an outcome of ‘changes of mood’ caused by events of the Second World War. In this sense the changing moods of the various communities with their differing religious loyalties and different conceptions of Lebanon would eventually (in 1958 and 1975) undermine the pact and threaten the structure of legitimate authority. Because the convergence of the Lebanese communities in 1943 was largely due to a certain regional balance of power, the country’s internal stability was closely tied to regional conditions and this rendered the National Pact a volatile agreement. As one scholar succinctly noted, the pact was based on the faulty assumption that ‘the balance of power in the region would remain unchanged in the sense that it will always reflect the value system of the first generation of conservative pro-Western Arab nationalists’.91

Riyad al-Sulh was of that generation and was Lebanon’s pre-eminent Muslim leader. He was known in the Arab world as a nationalist who had participated in the struggle against both the Ottomans and the French. His partnership with al-Khoury provided the consensus that kept sectarian animosity in Lebanon under control. As Bechara al-
Khoury’s partner in the National Pact, he became his first prime minister in September 1943 and Camille Chamoun received the portfolio of the Interior.92

It was largely due to his alliance with Riyad al-Sulh that Bechara al-Khoury was able to remain in office and renew his term, despite the regional instability caused by events such as the Palestine war of 1948, the 1949 military coup in neighbouring Syria, as well as the attempted coup by the Parti Politique Syrienne (PPS) against al-Khoury in that same year.93 Riyad al-Sulh was a well-known personality in the Arab world with many friendships among its leaders. As an Arab nationalist who had been exiled by the French, he was respected in the region. He helped the president weather several crises, with which the latter could not have coped without a powerful Muslim partner.94 However, as the president’s relationship with al-Sulh deteriorated and his regime became increasingly tainted with corruption, al-Khoury’s broad base of support began to dwindle.

Bechara al-Khoury was accused of influencing the parliamentary elections of 1947 and 1948 and, with the help of al-Sulh, he convinced the newly elected parliament to amend the constitution allowing for his re-election.95 His mandate was due to expire in 1948. This move, together with increasing rumours of corruption surrounding the president and his family, served to mobilize opposition to the president from a broad and loose coalition of notables. These sentiments were manifested in the parliamentary elections of 1951 when politicians opposing the president allied themselves into a loose grouping known as the Socialist Front. Chamoun decided to join the ranks of the opposition at the end of May 1948, in the immediate aftermath of the constitutional amendment on 22 May that allowed for the renewal of al-Khoury’s mandate. Chamoun and Kamal Jumblatt were the leaders of the coalition that had formed with the objective of forcing the president out of office. The final blow came in the summer of 1951, when Riyad al-Sulh was assassinated by a member of the PPS seeking revenge for the execution of Antun Saadeh, the founder of the party, by the Sulh government in 1949. Deprived of the support that had been assured by his alliance with al-Sulh, the president had to face even greater opposition. Bechara al-Khoury’s increased power after his re-election and that of his brother, nicknamed ‘Sultan’ Selim, alienated his former allies and threatened to
upset the traditional balance of power among Lebanon’s notables. This hastened the president’s demise. The Deir al-Qamar opposition rally held in Chamoun’s home town on 17 August, hastened Bechara al-Khoury’s demise by rallying a broad spectrum of political figures and parties opposed to the president and calling for his resignation.

On 16 September 1952, after increased attacks on his policy from all quarters, and the repeated resignations of three of his prime ministers within the month of September, the Socialist Front declared a general strike and called for the president’s resignation. Bechara al-Khoury resigned on 18 September. On 22 September, parliament met and elected Camille Nimr Chamoun as the second president of the independent Republic of Lebanon.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. For the circumstances in which modern Lebanon was formed in the years 1918–26, and in particular on how the Lebanese Christians both in France and Lebanon succeeded in persuading the French government to establish an independent Lebanese state with enlarged boundaries in 1920, see Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (London, 1985). See also Gérard D. Khoury, *La France et L’Orient Arabe: Naissance du Liban Moderne 1914–1920* (Paris, 1993). Khoury’s book is based on the papers of Robert de Caix, secretary general of Lebanon and Syria’s first high commissioner, Henri Gouraud. Khoury argues that the Sykes–Picot agreements were the work of the British and French governments and not of the negotiators as some historians have claimed.


3. In October 1919, Faisal’s British allies, who had withdrawn their forces from Syria, told him that he must reach a settlement with France. ‘To make sure he did so, the British government cut his monthly subsidies by half, leaving the other half to be paid by the French.’ Faisal was later to remark to a British officer in Beirut that ‘he had been handed over tied by feet and hands to the French.’ Quoted in Christopher M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion* (California, 1981), pp. 203–4.

4. For the origins of French involvement in Syria and Lebanon, see William I. Shorrock, *French Imperialism in the Middle East: The Failure of Policy in*
Lebanon: 1920–1952

Syria and Lebanon 1900–1914 (Madison, 1976). Shorrock approaches the subject from the three angles of religion, politics and economics and, unlike Zamir, maintains that the period from 1901 until 1914 rather than the wartime years was the crucial time during which France solidified her claim to Syria and Lebanon.

5. As a result of British wartime pledges to the Hashemites (in the Hussein–McMahon Correspondence) to reward their revolt against the Turks, an independent Arab government headed by Faisal was installed in Damascus at the end of the war. It lasted from September 1918 until July 1920 when French forces occupied Damascus and forced Faisal into exile.

6. An informative political history of Lebanon and its notables in establishing the distinctive character of the Lebanese polity in the 1940s is the subject of a recent study by Eyal Zisser, Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence (London, 2000).


8. Ibid., pp. 16–17.


13. Zisser reconstructs the political events of the Khoury presidency 1943–52 with major reliance on archival sources and assesses Khoury’s achievements and failings as well as his legacy to the Lebanese polity.


15. Hourani wrote that in 1649, a Maronite bishop went to the French court and asked for the protection of the king of France. The latter ‘issued letters-patent taking the whole Maronite community into his special protection’. Hourani, Syria and Lebanon, p. 147.

16. Civil strife in the Lebanese mountain and Damascus in 1860 resulted in the massacre of a large number of Christians and prompted the French monarch, Napoleon III to send a French military expedition to Lebanon to prevent further bloodshed. In the aftermath of these events, French influence was central to effecting an agreement establishing a separate Ottoman
governorship for the mountain and which was guaranteed by the European Powers. For a revisionist account (using the Ottoman archives) of the history of the Ottoman governorship set up in Mount Lebanon in 1860, see Engin Deniz Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920* (London, 1993). Akarli argues that French intervention in Ottoman Lebanon hampered rather than promoted the development of secular democracy. For an analytical narrative of the origins and outcome of the events of 1860 and the effect of regional and international power relationships on local developments in Syria and Lebanon, see Laila Fawaz's *An Occasion For War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (London, 1994).

17. For more information on the colonial societies, see Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion*.

18. Robert de Caix who was the chief ideologist of this committee was a key figure in French Syrian policy during the peace settlement and a staunch advocate of the French acquisition of Syria. From 1919 to 1923 he held the position of secretary general to the first high commissioner in Syria and Lebanon, Henri Gouraud, and was an adviser to the Quai d’Orsay for many years and represented France on the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations.

19. This was concisely expressed in a conversation in 1918 between the two chief French and British negotiators on the partition of the Ottoman Empire. George Picot told Mark Sykes, ‘In our day to day political life the parti colonial remains in the background, but there are issues on which it truly represents the national will. When one of these issues, like that of Syria, arises, it suddenly comes to the fore, and has the whole country behind it.’ Picot to Sykes, 11 September 1918, FO 800/ 221, quoted in Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, ‘Centre and Periphery in the Making of the Second French Colonial Empire, 1815–1920’, *Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History*, No. 198.


21. It has been estimated that 40,000 students were studying in French schools prior to the war, at an annual expenditure by the French government of one million francs in support of these institutions. See the article by one of the main proponents and defenders of the French Mandate, Robert de Caix, ‘L’Action de la France en Syrie’, *La Revue Hebdomadaire*, No. 8, 36 Année, 19 Février 1927 (Paris). See also Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, pp. 38–9.

22. The growth of anti-clericalism was a significant force in France’s Third
Republic, particularly after the separation of church from state in 1906. However, this made little difference in the French government's policy towards promoting missionary work abroad, and hence the ironic situation whereby the Jesuits received funding from anti-clerical republican governments in France.


24. This figure was given in a 1918 report prepared by a commission of inquiry set up by the Turkish governor. For a contemporary description of the famine in Mount Lebanon, see Chamoun, Crise Au Moyen Orient, pp. 39–40. Chamoun gives the figure of 150,000 who died as a result of famine and typhus fever, p. 59.


27. The 1911 figures for the governorate (mutasarrifiyya) of Mount Lebanon were 329,736 Christians to 85,232 Muslims. See Edmond Rabbath, La Formation Historique du Liban Politique et Constitutionnel (Beirut, 1973), p. 4.


29. For a contemporary account of Syrian grievances against French rule, see the following article by one of the leaders of the movement for an independent Syria, Chekib Arslan, ‘Syrian Opposition to French Rule’, Current History, Vol. XX, April–September 1924 (New York).

30. The Ottoman sultan Abdul Hamid II resurrected the concept and title of the caliphate during the war in an effort to rally Sunni Muslims to defend the empire.

31. These were the ‘Alawi state based in Latakia, the Druze state in Jebel al-Druze, the sanjaq of Alexandretta and the fourth entity covered the remainder of Syria, which included the major cities of Damascus and Aleppo.


39. According to Zamir, the improvement and expansion of the road, rail and general communications network was prompted by the Syrian revolt of 1925. *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood 1926–1939*, p. 18.


42. Meir Zamir’s political history in the 1920s and the 1930s emphasizes the significance of intra-sectarian rivalries and the primacy of personal interests as a driving force that shaped political developments in those years. Zamir, *Lebanon’s Quest*.

43. For a summary of the Syrian argument against French rule, see Chekib Arslan, ‘Syrian Opposition to French Rule’, *Current History*, Vol. 20, April–September 1924.

44. The Representative Council had developed out of the Administrative Council established by the acting high commissioner Robert de Caix on 8 March 1922. With 15 members appointed by the high commissioner, its function was purely consultative. In 1926 a 30-member council, whose members were elected for a four-year term with seats allocated among the various confessional communities, replaced it. For the text of the ordinance and the election proceedings, see Walter L. Browne, ed. *The Political History of Lebanon* (North Carolina, 1976).


46. While Muslims were not unanimous in their opposition to the new state, neither were Christians in their support for it. Emile Eddé and Yusuf al-Sawda expressed the view of those supporting a smaller entity with a predominantly Christian majority.
47. For the text of the treaties of 1936, see Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon*, pp. 200–4.
49. In his memoirs Spears relates a quip made by an ex-premier regarding the lengthy duration of the Syrian campaign that ‘Hitler would be in Moscow before the British were in Beirut.’ See Spears, *Fulfilment*, p. 116.
52. The central British role in bringing about Lebanon’s independence in 1943 has been understated in Lebanese historiography.
54. Circumstances had brought it about that de Gaulle’s narrow escape from the Germans in Bordeaux was assisted by taking one of the last allied aircraft to leave the city, which happened to be that of Spears. For Spears’s account of this event, see Edward Spears, *Assignment to Catastrophe*, Vol. II (London, 1954).
56. This much was clear to the American representative to Syria and Lebanon George Wadsworth, who was critical of the British position for keeping up the pretence of supporting the French. See W. R. Louis, *The British Empire*, p. 165. For a detailed and balanced account and assessment of the Spears mission, see A. B. Gaunson, *The Anglo–French Clash in Lebanon and Syria 1940–1945* (London, 1987).
57. Catroux appointed Naccache as president of the Lebanese Republic on 26 November 1941.

58. US Consul General (Engert) to Secretary of State, Strictly Confidential, Beirut, 15 April 1942, 890E.001/101 PS/EM.

59. The two leading Maronite figures during the Mandate were Bechara al-Khoury and Emile Eddé. Both held official positions during the 1920s and 1930s. Eddé was president of the republic. However, prior to 1943, neither gained their parliamentary seat through election but was appointed by the French authorities.

60. The ideas of al-Khoury’s Constitutional Bloc were expressed in the daily *Le Jour*, founded in 1934 by his brother-in-law, the prominent banker and intellectual, Michel Chiha, who was one of the main architects of the Lebanese constitution. Chiha sought to reconcile those boycotting the Lebanese state by advocating a secular ideology that would accommodate communal pluralism. His books, some of which are collections of his editorial articles, include *Essais* (Beirut, 1950), *Visage et Présence du Liban* (Beirut, 1964), *Politique Intérieur* (Beirut, 1964) and *Propos d’Economie Libanaise* (Beirut, 1965).

61. The mouthpiece of Eddé’s Nationalist Bloc was *L’Orient*, edited by Georges Naccache.


65. Ibid.


67. According to A. B. Gaunson, Spears pursued a policy that was not always in line with official British policy, and had this leeway because Churchill was preoccupied with the European and North African fronts during the war and paid little attention to the Levant. See A. B. Gaunson, *The Anglo–French Clash in Lebanon and Syria, 1940–45*, p. 116.

68. Egyptian and Iraqi prime ministers Mustafa Nahhas and Nuri al-Sa’id also intervened on behalf of Lebanon’s Muslims to ensure them a better quota of parliamentary seats. As Najla Atiyah succinctly concludes, ‘Henceforth the
Muslims benefited from the increasing support of the Arab-Muslim world to balance the now declining “external” support the Christians received from France.’ See Najla W. Atiyah, ‘The Attitude of the Lebanese Sunnis towards the State of Lebanon’, pp. 166–70.

69. Perceiving the institutions of the newly established state as a French operation for the Maronites, most of the Sunni Muslim leadership boycotted participation in these institutions for a number of years, demanding union with Syria. However, the Muslim boycott of Greater Lebanon was by no means a unanimous one, and prominent Muslim notables were active participants in the political arena in the 1920s and 1930s, several being members of the Constitutional Committee which helped draft the constitution of 1926. These were ‘Umar Da’uq and Abboud ‘Abd al-Razzak (Sunnis), Yusuf al-Zein and Subhi Haidar (Shi’a) and Fuad Arslan (Druze). For an incisive account of the Sunni position, see Atiyah, ‘The Attitude of the Lebanese Sunnis Towards the State of Lebanon’.

70. Catroux, Dans La Bataille de Méditerranée, p. 402.


72. Although not a cabinet member at the time, Abdul Hamid Karami was among those sent to Rashaya. He was the uncontested leader of Tripoli and one of the more important political figures at the time. See Chamoun, Crise, p. 114.

73. In his memoirs, Catroux related his reaction of disbelief at hearing of the arrests and his assumption that the reported news was the result of an error by the Reuters news agency: ‘This time Reuters has really overstepped the mark and I am not worried about the event because it appears to me to be unimaginable!’ See Catroux, Dans La Bataille De Méditerranée, p. 410.

74. See Chamoun, Crise, pp. 111–17. For an account of the event of Rashaya and its aftermath, see also Munir Takieddin, Wiladat Istiqlal (The Birth of an Independence) (Beirut, 1953).

75. In his memoirs, Catroux commented on the irony of the situation whereby in one night the French were able to bring about a unification of the Lebanese, which they had failed to detect throughout the past 20 years of their presence in Lebanon. Catroux, Dans La Bataille de Méditerranée, p. 418. However, this unity was very temporary and has often been exaggerated in contemporary Lebanese historiography.

76. For a first-hand descriptive account of the events of November 1943, see Eugenie Abouchedid, Thirty Years of Lebanon and Syria 1917–1947 (Beirut, 1948).
77. The role of the Lebanese nationalists and their political skills in manipulating the situation to their advantage is underlined by A.B. Gaunson, *The Anglo–French Clash in Lebanon and Syria, 1940–1945*, pp. 185–9.


80. Article III of the Atlantic Charter stipulated that all peoples should have the right to choose their own form of government.


82. The French traditionally supported the Maronites while the British supported the Druzes.

83. It was not until the 1980s that the Higher Sunni Council, which is a permanent body representing both the religious and secular Sunni leadership of the country, issued a document stating that Lebanon was the final homeland for members of the Sunni Muslim community.


87. As Najla Atiyah has pointed out, it is difficult to determine whether al-Sulh’s intentions were genuinely supportive of an independent Lebanon, or whether he was being expedient in attempting to gain the Christians’ confidence and ultimately ‘win them over to the cause of Arab unity’. See Atiyah, ‘The Attitude of the Lebanese Sunnis’, pp. 180–1.


90. Ibid., p. 44, from the article ‘Continuité et Mouvement’, written on 30 November 1943, in the immediate aftermath of independence.

92. These appointments preceded the aforementioned events of November, which brought about Lebanon's effective independence.

93. The *Parti Politique Syrienne* (PPS), later known as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, was founded in 1932 and advocated a doctrine of Syrian nationalism whereby ‘natural Syria’ comprising the states of the Fertile Crescent should be reunited. On 4 July 1949, Antun Saadeh, founder of the party, declared a rebellion against the Lebanese government from Damascus. However, he was arrested by the Syrian authorities and turned over by Syrian strongman Husni al-Za'im to the Lebanese government, which executed him within 24 hours.

94. An example was the issue of the dissolution of the Syrian-Lebanese customs union established in 1944. Despite the opposition of the Syrian prime minister, al-Sulh took an unwavering position and his policy led to the economic independence of Lebanon from Syria in 1950.


96. The cabinets formed in the last days of Bechara al-Khoury’s presidency were the following: Cabinet of Sami al-Sulh, February–9 September 1952; Cabinet of Nazim ‘Accari, 9–14 September 1952; Cabinet of Saeb Salam, 14–18 September 1952. *Who’s Who in Lebanon*, eighth edition (Beirut, 1983), pp. 122–3.
An ex-prime minister used the words ‘We live in a state of enjoyable chaos’ to describe the situation in Lebanon in 1955. The conversation took place with the British chargé d'affaires Ian D. Scott who observed, ‘Fortunately there is at present such abounding prosperity on all sides (an indirect result of Middle East oil development) that the social strains of great and obvious inequality in the distribution of the resulting wealth do not at present give rise to serious political problems.’ While the development of the oil industry in the Persian Gulf undoubtedly contributed to Lebanon’s economic prosperity, the country’s political climate of freedom was a main attraction in the Middle East of the 1950s when autocrats with socialist ideologies and expressions of xenophobia were replacing the kings who had been too amenable to the Western ‘imperialists’.

The 1950s were years of growth and prosperity for the Lebanese economy, which benefited from the internal instability of other Arab countries. The events of 1948 in Palestine brought about the migration to Lebanon of professionals, unskilled labour as well as capital and the economic activity of companies such as the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), which moved its headquarters from Haifa to Tripoli. The port of
Beirut also increased its activity due to the diversion of Arab trade from the port of Haifa. Another oil-pipeline project, initially planned to have its terminus in Palestine, from the eastern Saudi oilfields to the southern Lebanese coast near Saida was completed in 1950. The Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) and the Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company (Tapline) jointly owned the 1100-mile pipeline.

In 1949 the first in a series of coup d'états occurred in Syria and inaugurated the intervention of the military in Syrian politics. That event was followed by a series of coups that would destabilize Syria over the following decade, a situation that encouraged capital flight by Syria's business community to Lebanon. Anti-British rioting in Cairo on 26 January 1952 was another event that provided the Lebanese economy with opportunity for expansion as many foreign companies moved their regional offices from Cairo to Beirut. The banking secrecy law passed in 1957 also stimulated capital flow to Lebanon's banks from abroad.

Towards the middle of the decade the effects of Middle East oil development began to be felt and Lebanon with an industrial head start benefited from an expanding export market in the neighbouring countries. As the British chargé d'affaires observed, the ensuing prosperity was so 'abounding on all sides that the social strains of great and obvious inequality in the distribution of the resulting wealth, give rise to serious political problems'.
his entourage, who directed the development of the economy towards a deregulated service oriented *laissez-faire* economy that favoured trade and finance to the detriment of industry and that ensured the maintenance of a weak bureaucracy and administration. This system best preserved the political and economic interests of the elite but did not serve the best interests of the population at large in terms of job creation priorities or development projects. The main ideologue of the mercantile-financial elite was Michel Chiha whose sister was married to the president and who in turn was married to the sister of Henri Pharaon, his partner in the influential Banque Pharaon & Chiha.

Confessionalism was a religious-based political system that provided for the proportional distribution of government employment among the different religious communities. Membership in the legislature was also allocated on the same basis. The confessional system was a means of coping with pluralism in Lebanese society by maintaining communal differences yet enabling the communities to operate within a unified political framework.

Lebanon’s commercial activity expanded in the 1950s with bilateral agreements signed with several countries in the Arab world, the Eastern bloc, as well as the West. Chamoun cultivated close ties with Arab neighbouring countries as their markets for Lebanese products increased with their growing oil revenues. In 1953, Chamoun signed a multilateral trade agreement with Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. He began his presidential tenure with visits to Egypt and other Arab countries. Tourism became a major industry and was given special attention by President Chamoun and his Anglo-Lebanese wife, Zelpha, who encouraged the establishment of the annual international music festivals. These festivals inaugurated in 1953 were held at the site of the ancient Roman city of Baalbek and featured such celebrated attractions as the Bolshoi ballet, the Old Vic as well as Lebanon’s popular singer Feirouz.

However despite the prevalent economic prosperity, the endemic problems that had plagued Lebanese history would remain and resurface when given the necessary impetus. Among these problems were sectarianism, parochialism, corruption, and disrespect for law and order. The impetus was provided by regional and international politics, which exerted a very heavy load on a fragile Lebanese system. External encouragement directed an amorphous opposition to conduct a full-scale
insurrection against President Chamoun whose policies had alienated a number of traditional and influential leaders.

Camille Nimr Chamoun was born in April 1900 in the town of Deir al-Qamar. Located in southern Mount Lebanon in an area known as the Shuf, it had been an important town in the past, for it was the capital of the Mountain in Ottoman times. Nimr Chamoun was a respected civil servant who was exiled from Lebanon by the Ottomans in 1916 for expressing pro-French sympathies. The Chamoun family, together with a dozen other exiled Lebanese families, spent two and a half years in an Anatolian village outside Ankara and was allowed to return home only at the end of the war.

In 1923, Chamoun graduated with a law degree from the Jesuit university in Beirut. He trained at the law firm of Emile Eddé before opening his own practice. During this time, Chamoun responded to the encouragement of Philippe Naccache, editor of the daily Le Reveil, to contribute to the paper. While this activity augmented his limited income at the time, Chamoun later attributed a much greater significance to it: ‘It was at that moment that I entered the political arena, never to leave it.’ Both journalism and the practice of law were avenues for Chamoun’s rapid involvement in politics. He cultivated important clients and used the contacts of his father and maternal uncle Auguste Adib Pasha to advance his career in politics. Auguste Pasha was an influential figure in the early years of the republic and held the position of Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, the highest executive position for a Lebanese during the early years of the French mandate. He had also been a member of the constitutional commission and was appointed by the French as premier in 1926.

Chamoun first sought public office in 1929 and from then on would represent the Shuf in parliament for most of his life with one interruption from 1964 to 1968. He held that seat from 1929 until his election as president in 1952, and then from 1968 until his death in 1987. His first political victory at the age of 29 in a country where most politicians came from old-established ruling families encouraged Chamoun to seek to realize his ambitions: ‘This success put me in direct contact with influential personalities, and the prestige it gave me, opened before me larger horizons. At that moment, I glimpsed greater possibilities for myself, and I began to prepare my electoral campaign for
the next legislature.' As a Maronite the presidency was the greatest prize and the temptation of retaining that office would afflict Chamoun as it did his predecessor. Chamoun’s popularity in the electoral district of Mount Lebanon was demonstrated in the parliamentary elections of 1943 when he was the only prominent Maronite to win in the first round. The two pre-eminent Maronite politicians Emile Eddé and Bechara al-Khoury both won their seats in 1943 in runoff elections.

In 1930, Chamoun married Zelpha Tabet, a beautiful and gracious woman whose family was wealthy and socially prominent. Zelpha’s mother was English, a fact that was frequently mentioned in the diplomatic documents and undoubtedly endeared the Chamouns to Spears. In his memoirs, Spears recalled the day that Zelpha Chamoun came to see him following the arrest of her husband with the other members of the government by the French authorities in November 1943: ‘Then tripped in the lovely Madame Chamoun, fair as a ripe wheat field in sunshine, her immense light blue eyes ablaze.’ Spears strongly recommended the appointment of Chamoun as minister to London in 1944. The recommendation was made after an incident in Beirut that prompted Chamoun to accuse the French authorities of conspiracy and led to Premier Sulh’s decision (under French pressure) to remove Chamoun from the political scene in Lebanon. Spears described the Chamouns in glowing terms and Zelpha as a diplomat’s wife to be an asset to her husband’s career. According to Spears’s account at the time, the ‘Chamouns returned from America on Boxing Day. They are installed in Norman’s House next door to 8 Little College Street. They are both very sweet; she is extremely good with the Foreign Office.’

Chamoun’s first cabinet post was in 1938 and he held the portfolio of finance. He then became minister of the interior in 1943 before being appointed the following year as minister plenipotentiary in London. Chamoun whet his presidential ambitions in the campaign of 1943 when, as he later wrote, ‘for 48 hours, I remained the sole candidate to the presidency.’ How did this come about? Chamoun’s name was put forward as a compromise by one of the two main contenders, Emile Eddé. Eddé realized that he would lose the elections and in an attempt to prevent his rival’s success, he contacted Spears and suggested Chamoun’s name. Eddé’s rival Bechara al-Khoury accepted the offer and briefly withdrew his candidacy. In effect, al-Khoury used the threat of ‘Britain’s
man’ as president to goad French support for himself. The manoeuvre worked and the French who feared the election of Chamoun, and who erroneously begun to suspect Eddé of collusion with Spears, shifted their support to Bechara al-Khoury.

As a member of the newly elected president’s parliamentary bloc, Chamoun was appointed minister of interior in Riyad al-Sulh’s first cabinet. As mentioned in Chapter 1, as a cabinet member, Chamoun was at the centre of the events that occurred in November 1943 and led to Lebanon’s independence. That crisis dealt a final blow to French political control in Lebanon.

It was this post of minister of the interior that Chamoun left in 1944 in order to become Lebanon’s first ambassador to the Court of St James with the rank of minister plenipotentiary. On his way to London, Chamoun stopped in Cairo and met with the British minister Lord Moyne. The need to reinforce Lebanon’s recently acquired independence was the topic of their discussion. Chamoun’s political career accompanied Lebanon’s transition from mandate status to independence and in London he undertook the important assignment of preserving his country’s newly won independence against French attempts — by de Gaulle who exerted pressure on the British government — to reassert French control. He spent three very active years in London and made the Lebanese Legation’s headquarters the centre where Arab delegates congregated to discuss the then unfolding events in Palestine. Chamoun’s prominence in Arab affairs led him to speak in the name of the Arabs at the United Nations sessions held in 1947 and 1948 to discuss the situation in Palestine. Chamoun’s diplomatic efforts during his three-year absence from Lebanon enhanced his reputation among nationalists at large and his presence abroad enabled him to distance himself from the corruption that became increasingly associated with the Khoury regime and the president’s entourage.

Chamoun returned to Lebanon in late 1946 and resumed his political activity at the local level. He was elected deputy for the Shuf in both the 1947 and 1951 elections despite the opposition he faced from the political machine of the president’s, brother Selim al-Khoury. Upon his return to Lebanon, Chamoun held the ministerial portfolios of finance and of the interior and health, respectively, in the two successive cabinets of Riyad al-Sulh from December 1946 through July 1948. He
soon joined the growing opposition to the Khoury regime, which crystal-

tized into a loose coalition of parliamentarians known as the National

Socialist Front. The opposition to al-Khoury gained momentum after the

president managed to influence parliament to amend the constitution

to to have himself re-elected for a second term in 1949.

The major blow that undermined al-Khoury’s position further was the

assassination of his long-time Muslim partner Riyad al-Sulh who was

shot on 16 July 1951 while visiting Amman. His assassin was a member

of the PPS who sought to avenge the death of the founder of the PPS,

Antun Saadeh, who was executed in 1949 by a decision of President

Bechara al-Khoury and Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh for conspiring to

overthrow the Lebanese government.29 The hasty execution of Saadeh

and his denial of a fair trial was a shortsighted move by the Lebanese

government.30 With increasing scandals of corruption surrounding the

president and his family, the assassination of al-Khoury’s reliable Muslim

partner Riyad al-Sulh and deadlock in government, Bechara al-Khoury

resigned in September 1952. Four days later Chamoun became

president.

With the fall of Bechara al-Khoury the obvious contenders for the

presidency were Camille Chamoun and Hamid Frangieh, deputy from

northern Lebanon and former Minister for Foreign Affairs. Chamoun

had the support of the British and of the majority of the Muslim deputies

while the French and many Christian deputies supported Frangieh.

Personal considerations weighed heavily in these alliances; for example,

the Beiruti Muslim leader Saeb Salam supported Chamoun because, as he

put it, ‘Hamid Frangieh insisted on sticking to the al-Sulh family,

Takyeddine and Kazim — cousins of Riyad al-Sulh — and we had grown

tired of seeing Riyad al-Sulh as prime minister during Bechara al-

Khoury’s tenure.’31 The Sulhs were the main competitors of Saeb Salam in

Beirut for Sunni leadership and the premiership. Another prominent

Muslim and former prime minister Abdallah al-Yafi, shared Salam’s

views and they both supported Chamoun in order to end the predomini-

ance of the al-Sulh family as the representatives of the Sunni Muslims

particularly in the post of prime minister. While both Salam and al-Yafi

were former prime ministers, their tenures during the previous regime

were short-lived compared with those they would hold during the

Chamoun presidency. Prior to their joining the ranks of the opposition
during the insurrection of 1958, Salam had been prime minister once while al-Yafi held the position four times. This was out of a total of 13 cabinets that were formed during the six years of Chamoun’s presidency, with an average life span of six to eight months per cabinet.

The other vital pillar of support for Chamoun was that of the British.\textsuperscript{32} In 1952, their position in Lebanon was still predominant and had not yet been undermined by the Americans. Suez was four years away and the consequent tenuousness of the British position in the Middle East from 1956 onwards could not be foreseen in 1952. The British ambassador Sir Edwin Chapman-Andrews personally intervened with the deputies and influential persons such as Michel Chiha to induce them to shift their support from Frangieh to Chamoun. According to deputy Pierre Eddé:\textsuperscript{33}

‘The British were always present in the person of Maroun ‘Arab—Oriental Secretary at the British embassy — both at the Parliament, and at every meeting held among the deputies.’\textsuperscript{34} The leadership in neighbouring states such as Syria also supported Chamoun. Syria’s strongman and president Adib al-Shishakli put pressure on the deputies of Tripoli and Beirut to vote for Chamoun. One week before the elections, Chamoun went to Syria ostensibly on a hunting trip but in actuality to meet al-Shishakli.\textsuperscript{35} Iraq’s Nuri al-Sa‘id also backed Britain’s candidate and during his presidency Chamoun cultivated close relations with the Iraqi leadership and the Hashemite family in Jordan as well.\textsuperscript{36}

In addition to Muslim and British support, a third asset that helped Chamoun win the election was his charismatic personality and perseverance. Former prime minister Takyeddine al-Sulh, who supported Chamoun’s opponent Hamid Frangieh, acknowledged the importance of these personal characteristics in the presidential campaign of 1952: ‘Camille Chamoun did not sleep nor did he slow down.’\textsuperscript{37} The British chargé d’affaires described Chamoun on the eve of his election as a candidate with much promise: ‘A former Minister in London, a lawyer of some distinction, a man of attractive presence, and the most consistent spokesman of the opposition over the past few years, and into the bargain universally acknowledged to be an honest man, he came to the purple with a deep fund of goodwill on which to draw.’\textsuperscript{38} These characteristics combined with his unbounded ambition and relentless activity throughout the campaign to enhance Chamoun’s chance of success.
President Chamoun was elected with a mandate for reform. In his inaugural speech following his election on 22 September 1952, he made clear his determination to introduce reforms and rehabilitate a presidency that had been riddled with corruption by the former president and his entourage. As a member of the opposition National Socialist Front Chamoun came to power indebted to the reformists and opposed by the traditionalist politicians, who were supporters of the former president and opposed any reforms that would erode their power.

Pierre Eddé related an incident that occurred on the eve of Chamoun’s election, which indicated that troubles lay ahead for the president who was determined to maintain his independence in decision making regardless of any previous commitments. Together with the other members of the National Socialist Front — the parliamentary bloc of which Chamoun had been a member — Eddé met the president to discuss the implementation of the Front’s reform programme. Chamoun’s response to Kamal Jumblatt’s assumption that his first cabinet would be drawn from the members of the Front — in order to implement a programme of social reform — was lukewarm. As they walked away from the meeting, in the courtyard of the historical palace of Beiteddin, Jumblatt confided in Eddé saying ominously, ‘People believe that we have just accomplished a revolution, while in fact the revolution is truly a white revolution. And I think that we will find ourselves obliged to repeat this once again.’

The honeymoon between Chamoun and the scion of one of the oldest Lebanese ruling families was over. Moreover, Jumblatt later declined to participate in the government except on his own terms and in a meeting with the British ambassador he made it clear ‘that he feels that he, and those who think like him, should either have complete control of the Government or should stay outside and exert pressure upon the Government in favour of the programme which they favour.’ As a deputy, Kamal Jumblatt would remain a critic of the Chamoun presidency in parliament until 1957 when his loss in the parliamentary elections drove him to open revolt.

The ancestral home of the Jumblatts was the village of al-Mukhtara also in the Shuf and close to Chamoun’s home of Deir al-Qamar. Hence the rivalry between the two men began at a regional level. While
Chamoun’s origins were middle class, Kamal Jumblatt’s family had in his own words

played an active role in Lebanese politics during the reign of the Shehab princes 300 years ago. … During the Shehab era, our ancestors played an important role. In a way it was they who governed, through the Shehab Emirs, rather like Richelieu in France. That was enough for them; the title of Emir could only be borne by descendants of the line of Emirs who reigned in Lebanon.44

Did Kamal Jumblatt aspire to govern in the manner of his ancestors? After all, he did believe that ‘the political system adopted for the Grand Liban opened the way for the unjustified dominance of the Maronites, and it was a disaster.’45 After the 1975–76 civil strife, he would conclude, ‘The French mandate handed the Maronites complete political power on a plate, a free gift that they did not deserve, as they themselves have demonstrated.’46 His opponents have often accused Jumblatt of presidential ambitions. As a Druze he could never become president of the republic unless he could effect a radical change in the accepted tradition of the sectarian allocation of the three highest offices (of president, prime minister and speaker of parliament). Jumblatt sought to do away with the political system that limited his political ambition at the national level. In his own words:

Community sectarianism was a poison transfused by the Maronites into the body of the Grand-Liban from the moment it was born. This sickness may have been tolerable in the homogeneous Petit-Liban of 1864, but it became a festering sore in 1922. A State cannot be organized on the basis of such an inequitable division into castes, or around a religious spirit which is not shared by the other communities involved. A minority caste enjoyed the privileges of a majority.47

While the extent of Jumblatt’s personal political ambition remains a matter for speculation, his opposition to the sectarian allocation of political office was a central tenet of his agenda for political reform.

The following incident related by Pierre Eddé may be indicative of
Jumblatt’s presidential ambitions. Two days prior to al-Khoury’s resignation, members of his Destouri party attempted to discredit the opposition National Socialist Front by circulating rumours that the Muslim members of the opposition wanted to revise the convention established by the National Pact — allocating the office of president of the republic to the Maronite community — and elect a Muslim as president. In order to quell these rumours Eddé drafted a statement of denial and had the former prime ministers al-Sulh, Salam, Yafi, and Karami sign it. Jumblatt who was present at the meeting of the opposition National Socialist Front approved of the statement but suggested adding the following qualification to the text: ‘The presidency is for the Maronite community this time.’ Those present rejected Jumblatt’s suggestion and the statement was announced in its original form.

Throughout his political career Kamal Jumblatt sought to rid Lebanon of what he perceived was the ‘unjustified dominance’ of the Maronites. He advocated a secular political system for Lebanon, where political confessionalism — that is, religious based politics — and consequently the privileged position of the Maronites be abolished. A new constitution would replace the existing one that he believed was imposed on the Lebanese, and a programme of radical social and political reform would be introduced and implemented. However, despite these recurring themes the extent of his presidential ambition remains a matter of speculation.

In the context of Chamoun’s election to the presidency, Kamal Jumblatt may have belatedly realized that because Chamoun was also from the Shuf, Chamoun’s becoming president shifted the leadership of the Shuf from its traditional base — al-Mukhtara — to Deir al-Qamar. Some observers have concluded that, as he watched from the roof of al-Mukhtara palace the fireworks in the sky of Deir al-Qamar, Jumblatt may actually have had regrets when he realized that Chamoun was to be the president of the republic for the coming six years. Kamal Jumblatt would be one of the main leaders of the insurrection in 1958.

Chamoun, on the other hand, immediately began consultations with Muslim leaders in order to select the first cabinet of his presidency. He was unable to form a government of national union because of the polarization of positions of the progressive and traditional politicians, which included the insistence of Jumblatt on an immediate radical
reform programme and the legal prosecution of the former president. With deadlock in place, Chamoun and Prime Minister Khaled Chehab formed a four-man cabinet of non-parliamentarians, which on the 9 October was voted decree-powers for six months by the Chamber of Deputies. Chehab was a respected veteran politician who had held ministerial portfolios and the position of speaker of parliament during the mandate period.

The president and government then initiated a series of reforms in various institutions of the state as well as those of the private sector. In the area of administrative reform, the government issued approximately ninety decrees to streamline an administration burdened with inefficiency and still operating according to the 1922 decrees of the French high commissioner. The reforms eliminated some deadwood with the firing of 600 bureaucrats. Civil service examinations were introduced in an attempt to reduce politically influenced appointments that permeated the administrative structure. The judicial system was reorganized, and a Higher Judicial Council was set up, which, according to Chamoun, gave Lebanon a truly independent judiciary for the first time. The government introduced a liberal press law eliminating restrictions that had muzzled the press in the past. Suffrage was extended to women. With the aim of reducing the influence of feudal type landlords, the electoral law was modified reducing both the size of the electoral districts to single member constituencies and the number of deputies in parliament from 77 to 44.

Chamoun later wrote that such reforms replaced quantity by quality. Yet with hindsight it is clear that the same notables continued to dominate the political scene during Chamoun’s tenure for several decades to come. Many of the attempts to reform the administration could not withstand sectarian political pressure and were consequently abandoned or simply ignored. A case in point is the above-mentioned competitive examinations for civil service appointments. Introduced by legislative decree in 1952, the exams were superseded by a January 1955 decree that stipulated that although applicants must still pass an examination, the final selection would be subject to administrative choice.

In addition to sectarian political pressure, such ineffectiveness of the reform efforts was due to the polarization of traditional and progressive politicians, many of whom, on both sides, had allowed their personal
interests to take precedence over those of the public.\textsuperscript{55} Traditional politicians, whose interests were undermined by the proposed reforms, criticized such efforts while progressive politicians declared them inadequate. While government criticism was not confined to the halls of parliament, it was there that a lively debate took place. During several sessions in February 1953, deputies repeatedly criticized the government for failing to achieve the goals that it set. Ghassan Tueini and Emile Bustani rebuked the government for not fulfilling its mandate to clean up the corruption that caused the 1952 revolution. While they recognized the government’s accomplishments in the areas of administrative reform as well as the reorganization of the foreign service, they nevertheless outlined the government’s failures in judicial reform, and the law of accountability especially as it applied to high-ranking government employees.\textsuperscript{56} The government’s record was again scrutinized and attacked two weeks later by deputies Bahige Takieddine and Kamal Jumblatt. Takieddine accused the four-month-old government of ‘passing decrees but not governing’.\textsuperscript{57} However, despite these opinions the government won the vote of confidence taken at the end of that session.\textsuperscript{58}

As for economic reform, Chamoun’s record of economic reform did not fulfil the objectives he had outlined. In his memoirs, Chamoun discussed the two schools of thought that dominated the economic scene. One upheld the supremacy of commerce and banking as the natural direction for Lebanon’s economy in view of the country’s assets. The other promoted capital investment in industry, and the use of locally available raw materials. Merchants opposed the imposition of protective tariffs. While recognizing the importance of commerce in the Lebanese economy, Chamoun maintained that he was convinced of the need to develop industry and that he held this conviction until the end of his tenure: ‘I put a high priority on the development of industry, a source of revenue and above all a factor of energy and vitality. A country that does not produce is a country that is incapable of survival. That was my thesis from the start and would remain so until the end of my mandate.’\textsuperscript{59} While Chamoun outlined his concern for industrial development (and established the Institute of Industry in Beirut in 1954; the first of its kind in the Arab world), the record shows that little government support materialized\textsuperscript{60} and the merchants and bankers continued to dominate the
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Industry in Lebanon had suffered the loss of the Syrian market with the dissolution of the Syrian–Lebanese customs union in 1950. With the predominance of the laissez-faire philosophy, and increasing prosperity throughout the 1950s, planned government expenditure was only 11.4 per cent of the Gross National Product in 1956 and 13.7 per cent in 1958. Government expenditure concentrated on development of the physical infrastructure with projects such as the expansion of the airport facilities, new roads and communications mainly in Beirut and close by rather than the periphery. Less priority was given to public development projects of immediate benefit to people such as healthcare, education and job creation.

Lebanon's economy in the mid-1950s was expanding and economic reports judged it to be sound. In the financial domain, the gold coverage of the Lebanese pound was expanded in 1954 from 61 per cent to 90 per cent. In 1952, it was 54 per cent. Commercial activity expanded significantly and port traffic at Beirut increased by 20 per cent (from the previous year) in 1954. This included the expansion of transit traffic through the free zone, which accounted for 27 per cent of the total volume of tonnage that was handled at the port of Beirut. The airport after the inauguration of the new complex witnessed an increase in activity with a total of 324,000 passengers using the Beirut International Airport that year. One-third of these were transit passengers. An economic report issued in 1954 by the Beirut Chamber of Commerce and Industry outlined three major areas of expanding economic activity in the country: the tourist industry, the initiation of large projects such as the construction of the Trans-Arabian (Tapline) refinery and the Litani water works project, and the expansion of commerce (especially the export of Lebanese agricultural goods) with Arab and foreign countries, which was enhanced by the many new commercial agreements concluded with their governments. Tourism was assisted by government policies and the number of tourists visiting Lebanon grew from 216,000 in 1952 to 901,464 in 1955, with an increase of L.L.80 million pounds in revenue. The fact that the Lebanese economy was dominated by sectors related to foreign clients such as financial services, tourism, transit and trade, rather than local industry and agriculture for import substitution purposes rendered it vulnerable to regional and international political pressure. The export market in the 1950s (especially
the regional Middle East markets) far outweighed the domestic Lebanese market for agricultural and industrial products.\textsuperscript{66}

Assessments of Chamoun’s reforms have been unfavourable and the general consensus among experts in the field has been that ‘they produced more change than progress’.\textsuperscript{67} These assessments concur with observations made by British officials in Lebanon at the time. The annual political reports for 1954 and 1955 describe the governments as lacking a sense of direction, and public perception of Chamoun as a president who was inclined ‘to let things drift’.\textsuperscript{68} The British ambassador Sir Edwin Chapman-Andrews wrote of Chamoun after two years in office:

He has completely failed to impose himself. Not that he is a bad influence — on the contrary, his path is paved with good intentions but he is vain and ineffectual. He was brought to power with popular acclaim only two years ago to effect reforms which are now a dead letter. All his interventions are half-hearted; none are pressed home. He has failed to complete his scheme of electoral reform; his laudable schemes for industrial and agricultural development are progressing all too slowly; during the year he has antagonised every member of the small Parliamentary Opposition group that organised his predecessor’s downfall.\textsuperscript{69}

While the reforms initiated by the president fell short of public expectations, it must be emphasized that, from 1953 onwards, Lebanese politicians were preoccupied with international issues starting with the Western-sponsored defence plans and culminating in the Suez debacle and its ensuing impact on Lebanon.

Upon leaving his post in September 1955, the 52-year-old Arabic-speaking Chapman-Andrews re-evaluated the past four years and concluded that despite the ‘revolution in a teacup’ — namely the movement that forced Bechara al-Khoury out of office and that is known in Lebanon as the ‘rosewater revolution’ because of its non-violent nature — ‘the life of Lebanon has remained curiously unaffected … the structure of parliament, the courts and the civil administration are not recognizably different now from when I came in 1951.’\textsuperscript{70} More importantly, Chapman-Andrews grasped that the very ethos of Lebanon was based on the predominance of commerce: ‘Almost everything in this
country of merchants, bankers, middlemen, interpreters, brokers, tradesmen and commercial adventurers, boils down in the end to economics. It permeates the life of the Lebanon as it must have done that of Phoenicia, whose cities lay along these same coasts.\textsuperscript{71}

INTERNAL OPPOSITION AND SECTARIAN TENSION

Another parting observation and one that had surprised Chapman-Andrews was 'how deeply rooted religious communal differences and distinctions were in this country, which, in this respect, constantly reminds one of a miniature Byzantine mosaic'.\textsuperscript{72} This observation was perhaps reinforced by the rising level of sectarian tension in the first years of the decade, and was marked by several overtly sectarian incidents. The most outstanding was the publication of a pamphlet by \textit{Mu'tamar al-Hay'at al-Islamiyya al-Da'im} (The Permanent Conference of the Muslim Commissions) in November 1953.\textsuperscript{73} This organization had only been established in January and brought together various Muslim popular associations and societies ranging from philanthropic societies to the alumni association of the Makassed College.\textsuperscript{74}

Reflecting the general mood of the community, the pamphlet entitled \textit{Moslem Lebanon Today} was basically a list of Muslim grievances addressed to 'the Christian dominated government'. It requested that its demands be met in the interest of establishing equality among the confessional groups in Lebanon. Based on a 13-point manifesto of the Islamic conference which was read by Sheikh Shafik Yamut, chief \textit{shari'a} judge of Lebanon, from the pulpit of the Grand Mosque of ‘Omar in Beirut on 13 March 1953, the document was put forward as 'the immediate goal of the conference' and in order to combat 'the efforts of the Maronite sect to impose its own characteristics on the entire country'. Of the 13 points, numbers four and thirteen address economic issues in very general terms, namely, the complete separation of state and religion with equal justice to all citizens, and a complete economic unity between Lebanon and Syria. The remainder of the manifesto deals with grievances such as the nationality law, inaccurate population census, distorted history textbooks, the Department of Tourism’s presentation of Lebanon to tourists as a Christian country, and the National Museum’s restriction of its exhibits to pre-Islamic, pagan and Christian objects and the exclusion of Moslem antiquities. The authorship of the
pamphlet was not very clear, for although the names of those who signed the manifesto of March were listed, the Lebanese security officials believed the real sponsors to be Mohammed Jamil Beyhum, Abdul Wahab Rifa’i, and Dr Mustapha Khalidy. The issuance of this pamphlet aroused confessional feelings and various personalities; both Christian and Muslim were quick to denounce sectarianism. Leading Muslim leaders like Abdallah al-Yafi, Sami al-Sulh, and Saeb Salam refused to commit themselves, alleging no prior knowledge of the pamphlet’s existence. Prime Minister al-Yafi publicly disapproved it and ex-prime minister Saeb Salam issued a public denial that he had any connection with the document. While discussing this pamphlet, it is important to bear in mind that this was not a spontaneous isolated incident but rather represented the crystallization of a general feeling of alienation held by the Muslim community (particularly the Sunni sect) towards the Lebanese Republic ever since its inception. The subtitle of the pamphlet *Moslem Lebanon Today* explains the purpose of the document and summarizes the objectives of its authors, namely the abolition of state sectarianism and equality for its citizens: ‘A frank discussion of the struggle on the part of Lebanon’s non-Christian majority to secure a proportionate voice in the government in order to work effectively for the abolition of state sectarianism in the interests of national unity and equality for all citizens.’

The pamphlet then describes the present conditions whereby the ‘non-Moslem factions control Lebanon today’ through French-instituted devices ranging from the Christian dominated administration to impartial rural development, rent laws, educational policy and government contracts. According to the pamphlet, strong partisanship is shown to Christian interests in all the above-mentioned areas and President Chamoun is a greater offender than his predecessor. The pamphlet cites the American Point IV programme as a collaborator in such discrimination against the Muslims particularly in the areas of educational funding and government contracts, some of which are financed through Point IV aid.

In this vein, in November 1953, a British embassy report on the political situation from the Muslim perspective concluded that ‘President Chamoun has become the target of exactly the same criticisms and complaints directed at ex-president Bechara al-Khoury. All those
Moslems whom I meet are of the opinion that things have not changed and that President Chamoun is following an anti-Islamic policy in the Lebanon. These complaints are no more secret as they are expressed openly and everywhere. The specific complaints against Chamoun were the following: (1) the new electoral law, which was perceived as having been specially enacted in order to weaken Moslem leaderships; (2) the harsh sentence passed against deputy Suleiman al-Ali, accused of murdering his political opponent Mohammed al-Abboud. (Supporters of al-Ali in northern Lebanon accused the president of ingratitude, for they had hoped to see al-Ali appointed prime minister as a reward for his political support for Chamoun); and (3) the closure of the Najjade house, the refusal of the authorities to carry out a census of Lebanese inhabitants, and the delay in an economic agreement being reached with Syria. The report concluded: ‘Many say that the President is interested in two things only: (a) finding ways and means to weaken Moslem influence and (b) employing his followers in official departments.

This report elicited an interesting and perceptive comment from Maroun ‘Arab, the Oriental secretary at the British embassy:

All these grievances exist and sooner or later they might develop into something dangerous for the President. B. al-Khoury had Riad Solh [sic] to silence the Moslems; Chamoun has no such support. If one adds to this point the clumsiness and lack of method of the President, one is justified in expecting trouble at the 1st opportunity such as: Yafi going home; Sami Solh [sic] being ignored in the formation of the next Cabinet; or any major crisis. The report does not give a too gloomy picture but a relatively correct one.

Chamoun had been in office for one year when ‘Arab made this assessment, and four years later Chamoun would face serious trouble, which was only partially a result of his policies. Some of these grievances predated the Chamoun presidency and would outlast it to become, over the next 30 years, a stick with which to beat the Maronite establishment.

Muslim grievances against the state must be viewed within the broader context of the community’s attitude of opposition towards the creation of the French sponsored Greater Lebanon. Apart from cultural alienation and the predominant position of the Christians, the newly
delineated borders affected the economic well being of certain areas that had until then served the Syrian hinterland. The predominantly Muslim city of Tripoli was the most affected by its separation from Syria and its incorporation into the Lebanon in 1920. Its port had served the Syrian interior and it was a marketplace for Homs, Hama, and the ‘Alawi region. Although economic relations between Tripoli and Syria continued without serious hindrance, the city’s inhabitants demanded the re-attachment of Tripoli to Syria in a number of demonstrations and strikes that took place between 1920 and 1938.

The next major blow came in June 1950 with the announcement of economic restrictions between Syria and Lebanon as a result of the dissolution of the customs union, which prompted the reappearance of the decentralization movement. Thus while the initial agitation for decentralization in the immediate aftermath of the creation of Greater Lebanon was mainly based on emotional ties to the hinterland, the second movement in 1950 was prompted by a very real cause of distress. Tripolitan grievances were furthermore aggravated by the French-styled centralization of the Lebanese bureaucracy and administration. Hence several meetings were held in 1952 at the homes of leading politicians and merchants bringing together the city’s notables (both Christian and Muslim) as reported to the British embassy. The embassy informant outlines the grievances of the Tripolitans:

They want to get rid of the Beirut influence, which, according to them is incurring heavy losses on Tripoli. An inhabitant of Tripoli should come to Beirut to secure a judicial report if he wishes to apply for a post anywhere; economic permits should be produced from Beirut; etc. … etc. … all these formalities which should be done in Beirut and not in Tripoli are, also, the cause of dissatisfaction. These added to economic restriction which deprived the inhabitants of Tripoli of a fairly good income made them work for the decentralization of their town … I am reliably informed that once they achieve their aim, the inhabitants of Tripoli shall resume their activity for the attachment of their town and the Qaza of ‘Akkar (Moslem) to Syria.\textsuperscript{86}

Despite the economic hardship suffered by the people of Tripoli due to
its separation from its natural hinterland, the Tripolitans would by their own admission join the insurrection of 1958 primarily because of their dissatisfaction with President Chamoun’s foreign policy.\footnote{87}

Muslim grievances were expressed often. An undisclosed source in a conversation with the American army attaché indicated his distress at the growing emphasis in the press on the subject of confessionalism and noted that the relationship between Muslims and Christians had been on the decline ever since the assassination of Riyad al-Sulh (in July 1951). He attributed this to the partiality shown by the government towards the Christians, illustrating his point with the case of the minimal funding allocated for the port of Tripoli compared with the extensive expenditure on the improvement of facilities at the port of Beirut: ‘Tripoli, which could well be the port of entrance for Northern Syria, has been allowed to deteriorate and the Syrians have spent large sums of money developing Latakia. The logical port for Homs and Hama, of course, is Moslem Tripoli.’\footnote{88} The source did not believe that a ‘return to Syria’ movement was imminent, yet he maintained that unless some strong leader could control the country, the present trend would lead to a separatist movement.

Sectarian tension continued to increase in the summer of 1954 and the Shakar incident led to a political crisis and to the resignation of the government.\footnote{89} George Ibrahim Shakar, a Christian of Zahle, published a book offensive to Muslims. He was arrested and brought to trial on 23 July and was reportedly acquitted. Muslim dissatisfaction with this outcome led to the \textit{abadaï} (strongmen and street toughs usually adhering to a certain political boss) marching and closing down shops through intimidation. Shakar’s book caused emotional outbursts and demonstrations that quickly got out of hand and became violent. The government then turned over internal security to the army. With the authority of the al-Yafi government in question, it resigned six weeks later.\footnote{90}

Religious tension reached a pitch in the autumn with the religious celebrations of the Day of the Cross and of the Prophet’s Birthday.\footnote{91} That year also happened to mark the 100th anniversary of the pope’s proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and Catholics throughout Lebanon celebrated the Marian Congress held on 20–24 October. The celebrations in Beirut were presided over by the patriarch of Venice and special papal envoy to the Congress, Cardinal Roncalli.
Special masses and processions were held in which ‘exceptionally large crowds took part’. An American embassy report draws attention to the increased fervour of the religious celebrations: ‘The Moslem community of Beirut is celebrating the anniversary of the Prophet's birthday this year on a greater scale than normal, in an attempt to offset the importance of the Christian celebration of the Marian Congress two weeks ago.’ The report relates the accident that marred the latter celebrations, and which was started by an oil fire from a torchbearer participating in a mass parade. Nine people died while 250 were ‘hospitalized with serious burns’. Such incidents only exacerbated sectarian tension.

External developments in the Arab world were another major source of division and instability for Lebanon. Historical divisions of political loyalty among Christian and Muslim communities resurfaced with the polarization between pro-Western and Arab nationalist regimes in the Arab world. Both at the popular and leadership levels of the Muslim community, the Lebanese government’s policy was criticized for its inadequate adherence to Arab nationalist ideals.

The above-mentioned issues took precedence over economic grievances that were not a predominant factor in Muslim alienation in 1958 and were not cited by the opposition as the major cause of their discontent. Critics of the Chamoun presidency often cite a study carried out by the French survey mission, the Institut de Recherche et de Formation en vue du Développement (IRFED), to Lebanon in 1959–1960, which concluded that 4 per cent of the ‘wealthy’ held 33 per cent of the national revenue while 50 per cent of the ‘poor’ held only 18 per cent. However one cannot conclude from these figures that economic discontent contributed to creating a rebellion in 1958. The distribution of national income in Lebanon was comparable to that of other Middle Eastern states (for example Turkey, Iran and Iraq) as well as other developing countries outside the Middle East such as Latin America (Colombia and Brazil).

Moreover, while the 1953 pamphlet Moslem Lebanon Today refers to the government’s unequal distribution of aid such as that given through the American Point IV program and the government’s neglect of rural development in Muslim inhabited areas, these disparities were insufficient on their own in inciting a rebellion. The conclusions of the pamphlet itself focus on the issues of cultural identity and of Lebanon’s
place in the Arab world (rather than on economic issues) — issues that appear, according to the authors of the pamphlet, to be distorted by the Christians, particularly by the Maronite community:

The Maronite sect of Lebanon and some of the other Christian groups in our country do not feel or sympathise with the Arab national spirit, but, to the contrary, are prepared to fight it in every possible way and to impose by force their own Christian civilisation on all of Lebanon and to violently separate Lebanon from the rest of the Arab world.\(^{96}\)

This document indicates that the petitions of protest by Muslim political and religious leaders express social and cultural alienation rather than socioeconomic deprivation. While perception of inequality ensured an agenda for the opposition despite the expanding economy and the ensuing economic prosperity in Lebanon in the 1950s, an increasingly favourable regional environment provided the impetus for action where revolutions proclaiming sweeping sociopolitical reforms were the hallmark of the 1950s in the Arab world.

It was to Chamoun’s credit that he was able to maintain a democratic system in Lebanon with its concomitant liberties at a time when military regimes were taking over in neighbouring countries. However, Chamoun was unable to do away with some of the endemic weaknesses of Lebanese society and politics such as its sectarianism, parochialism, disrespect for law and order, and corruption. Some of his policies, particularly in the post-Suez period of his tenure, reinforced these weaknesses. While these problems were obscured by the unprecedented economic prosperity affecting Lebanon in the 1950s, they constituted a fragile Lebanon that was unable to withstand the pressures of regional politics that ultimately proved to be Chamoun’s undoing.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

2. On this day, known as Black Saturday, foreign particularly British establishments such as BOAC, Barclays Bank, and Thomas Cook were attacked.

5. Ian D. Scott to Selwyn Lloyd, Confidential, 1 January 1956, FO 371/121605.


8. This is Laila Fawaz’s thesis. She has written the history of the growth of Beirut in the nineteenth century and accounted for the growth of the town of 6000 to the political, economic cultural and educational centre of over 100,000 within the century and the socio-political effects these changes brought about, such as the rise of sectarian tension within the city, a legacy passed on to mandate Lebanon and beyond. See *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983).


10. Ibid., p. 95.


14. For an account of his years in exile see Chamoun, *Crise Au Moyen Orient*, pp. 41–58.

15. The first president of independent Lebanon, Bechara al-Khoury, had also trained to practice law at Eddé’s firm.


17. Ibid., p. 79.


20. For a detailed account of the incident concerning the newly elected north-
22. Chamoun, *Crise*, pp. 106–8. According to Chamoun, it was he who advised Bechara al-Khoury to use his candidacy as a threat against the French, see p. 108.
24. For a discussion of these events, see Chapter 1.
25. For Chamoun’s personal account of those years, see Camille Chamoun, *Marahil al-Istiqlal* (Stages of Independence) (Beirut, 1949).
28. The electoral law was modified in August 1950 to enlarge the chamber of deputies from 55 to 77 and reduce the size of the electoral districts.
29. As minister of the interior, Chamoun had given the PPS a licence to operate as a legitimate political party in Lebanon in 1944. The PPS and its deputies supported Chamoun in 1958.
30. Antun Saadeh was arrested on 6 July, given a 24-hour military trial and executed on 9 July 1949.
33. A banker by profession, Pierre Eddé was from a prominent landowning family and the son of the former president Emile Eddé. He would become minister of education in the Salam cabinet of April–August 1953, and thereafter minister of finance in the cabinets of al-Yafi (August 1953–March 1954), al-Sulh (July–September 1955) and al-Sulh (March–September 1958). He was a member of the opposition National Socialist Front formed against President Bechara al-Khoury.
34. Al-Deiry, *Man Yasna’ al-Ra’is?* Interview with al-Deiry, p. 57.
36. Al-Deiry, *Man Yasna’ al-Ra’is?* Moussa Moubarak in an interview with al-
Deiry. Moubarak was a deputy in parliament and minister of foreign affairs in the first cabinet of the Chamoun presidency, pp. 50–1.


39. Among the accusations directed at President Bechara al-Khoury and his family in August 1951 were, reports of a £12 million discrepancy in presidential funds during his tenure; the import of 51 automobiles by his family during the same period; and rumours that the president's brother nicknamed 'Sultan Selim' received £10 for every ton of cement produced at the Chekka plant. US Army Report, Beirut, To: Department of Army Washington DC, NR: 712, Confidential, 8 August 1951.

40. Other members elected to the 1951 77-man parliament included Kamal Jumblatt, Pierre Eddé, Ghassan Tueini, Emile Bustani, Anwar al-Khatib, Abdallah al-Haj, and Dikran Tosbat.

41. On the eve of the presidential elections, Britain's representative in Lebanon reported to the Foreign Office that while the Sunni Muslim members of the opposition affirmed that they did not wish to interfere with the tradition whereby the President of the Republic should be a Maronite. [However,] at the same time they remain genuinely determined on Constitutional and Electoral reform which will ensure that the President becomes more of a figurehead and that the real power shall lie with the Sunni Moslem Prime Minister'. Chapman-Andrews to A. D. M. Ross, Confidential, 19 September 1952, FO 371/98527.

42. Al-Deiry, *Man Yasna’ al-Ra’is?*, pp. 57–8. True to these words, Kamal Jumblatt would be one of the main leaders of the insurrection of 1958.


45. Ibid., p. 28.

46. Ibid., p. 40.

47. Ibid., p. 42.


50. Two years later, Jumblatt (left out in the cold by Chamoun) would make the following statement in parliament accusing the president of encroach-
ing on the prerogatives of parliament: ‘The present regime in the country is neither parliamentary, democratic nor legal, but is a Mutasarifiga regime, for the Mutasarif (governor) is simultaneously a qa’imaqam and a gendarme of the Shuf.’ *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab*, meeting of 28 September 1954, pp. 1534–5.

51. Al-Deiry, *Man Yasna’ al-Ra’is?*, pp. 58–9, al-Deiry does not reveal his sources.

52. In his memoirs Chamoun points out that in order to resolve the deadlock he chose a neutral government headed by a moderate politician and composed of high-ranking civil servants whose probity and experience presented ‘a maximal moral guarantee’. The cabinet formed by Khaled Chehab included Moussa Moubarak, Nazem Akkari, and Selim Haidar. See Chamoun, *Crise*, p. 246.


55. This polarization predated the Chamoun regime and was apparent during the last year of his predecessor’s tenure when feeble attempts at reform were made by the Yafi government of June 1951. An eyewitness report related that the incoming prime minister’s parliamentary speech in which he outlined that the government’s programme was: ‘followed by 6 hours of often heated but orderly debate during which deputies of the reform front criticized the program as not going far enough and disgruntled professional politicians viewed the program as a virtually impossible accomplishment’. From: USARMA Beirut, To: Washington DC, No: 692, Confidential, 22 June 1951, Department of the Army, Staff Communications Office. Malcolm Kerr succinctly analysed this deadlock in the system in his definition of the role of government in Lebanon as ‘an administrative, judicial body rather than a creator of public policy’. See ‘Political Decision Making in a Confessional Democracy’, in Leonard Binder ed., *Politics in Lebanon* (New York, 1966), p. 190.


57. It is relevant to bear in mind that the average life span of cabinets during the Chamoun presidency as well as that of his predecessor was six months.


60. While tax exemptions were given to a dozen industries, not all were above
suspicion of vested interest. A British embassy report noted that although both the president and the then minister of finance Muhieddin Nsouli were ‘both men of complete integrity’ yet ‘for the first time hints, if not specific charges of corruption have been uttered against the Chamoun regime’. See Chapman-Andrews to Shuckburgh, Personal and Confidential, 9 September 1955, FO 371/115725.

61. See Roger Owen, ‘The Political Economy of Grand Liban 1920–1970’, in Roger Owen, ed., Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon (London, 1976), p. 28. Owen quotes figures from a preliminary study published by the Lebanese Ministry of Planning in the late 1950s to the effect that ‘between 1950 and 1957 the value of Lebanese commercial activity increased by 56.3 per cent and in 1957 itself contributed to nearly a third of GNP’ while ‘industry, on the other hand, continued to lag.’


63. It is interesting to compare these figures with those for the presidency of Fuad Chehab where government expenditures by 1964 had almost doubled to 23.2 per cent of GNP. See Hudson, The Precarious Republic, p. 308, Table 25.


66. Ibid., p.129.


68. Ian D. Scott to Selwyn Lloyd, Confidential, 1 January 1956, FO 371/121605.


71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. For the context within which this organization was set up, see Najla W.
Atiyah, *The Attitude of the Lebanese Sunnis Towards the State of Lebanon*, p. 235, who maintains that although al-Mu’tamar did not enjoy great popular following, yet like other popular organizations it represented the general mood of the community [and its formation] clearly indicated a decline in the Sunnis’ approval of the Independent Lebanese state.


75. A Foreign Service dispatch from the American embassy in Beirut identifies them as follows: ‘Mohammed Jamil Beyhum, prominent Beirut businessman, Abdul Wahab al-Rifa’i, secretary-general of the National Organization; Dr Mustapha Khalidy, a highly qualified gynaecologist who some years ago was removed from the staff of the American University of Beirut because of his excessive political machinations.’ The dispatch gives a grave assessment of the potentially destructive impact that such publications could have on the country: ‘Striking as it does at the very core of Lebanon’s existence, *Moslem Lebanon Today* is the most serious assault on Lebanon’s precarious religious equilibrium since the Moslem manifesto of last spring.’ American Embassy (Beirut) to Department of State, Foreign Service Dispatch No. 279, Restricted, Department of State, Central Files, 883A.413, 27 November 1953.


77. Foreign Service Dispatch No. 279, American Embassy (Beirut) to Department of State, Restricted, Department of State, Central Files, 883A.413, 27 November 1953.

78. For a succinct discussion of the perception of Greater Lebanon as a symbol of Sunni defeat, manifested in the press and writings of prominent Muslim personalities, see Najla W. Atiyah, *The Attitude of the Lebanese Sunnis Towards the State of Lebanon*, pp. 76–8.

79. FO 1018/93, cover page and p. 3.

80. The Point IV program was set up in 1952 as a technical cooperation service, staffed by 48 technicians who worked closely with the relevant Lebanese ministries on various studies for development projects in areas

81. FO 1018/93, pp. 7–12.
82. ‘A General Review of the Political Situation’ by Wadih Malouf, a Lebanese employee of the British embassy, Confidential, 26 November 1953, 1018/93.
83. The former minister and deputy Suleiman al-Ali and his brother Malek al-Ali, accused of complicity in the murder of former minister and deputy Mohammed al-Abboud, were sentenced to ten and twenty years imprisonment respectively by the Judicial Council appointed by President Chamoun to try the case. The assassin was hanged publicly on the morning of 3 December 1953. In a comment on the general state of affairs in Lebanon, the American ambassador Raymond A. Hare wrote: ‘The whole affair has been, in a sense, symptomatic of the general lack of public respect for law and order which prevails in Lebanon today. In this connection, the 73-year-old father of the victim, when he called on me recently, stated that internal security in the country had evidenced a steady deterioration since the departure of the French in 1943.’ Hare to Dulles, Foreign Service Dispatch No. 299, Restricted, Department of State, Central Files, 883A.52, 4 December 1953.
84. FO 1018/93.
85. Minute by Maroun ‘Arab’, Confidential, 12 December 1953, FO 1018/93.
87. See the speech by Tripolitan deputy Sheikh Nadim al-Jisr delivered at a press conference at the Bristol Hotel in Beirut on 15 May 1958. Foreign Service Dispatch No. 232, American Embassy (Beirut) to Department of State, Confidential, Department of State, Central Files, 783A.00, 18 May 1958, Subject: ‘The Roots of the Lebanese Revolution: A Speech by Sheikh Nadim el-Jisr, Deputy from Tripoli’.
89. Embassy (Beirut) to Department of State, Foreign Service Dispatch No: 67, Confidential, Department of State, Central Files, 883A.413, 30 July 1954. Shakar was later persuaded by the authorities to leave the country.
90. For the debate of the Shakar incident in parliament, see Mahadir Majlis al-

91. ‘In the attempt by each sect to stamp Lebanon with its characteristics, the religious feasts were celebrated vociferously. The Christians celebrated ‘Id al-Salib (The Day of the Cross) on 14 September in this manner; the Muslims reacted by an even more vociferous celebration on the Prophet’s Birthday on 7 November. See the press of the period. This “duel” and its aftermath shook the country and brought it to the brink of civil war. See the discussion in parliament on 9 November 1954, Minutes of Parliament, Vol. 1954–55, pp. 1682–92.’ Quotation and reference in Atiyah, The Attitude of the Lebanese Sunnis, p. 239.

92. American Embassy (Beirut) to Department of State, Foreign Service Dispatch, No: 272, Department of State, Central Files, 883A.413, 3 November 1954. The report also notes that efforts were made to include other religious groups in the celebrations and thus give them a national rather than a confessional colouring. Thus the sponsoring committee included prominent Muslims such as Sami al-Sulh, Saeb Salam, Abdallah al-Yafi, and Adel Osseiran.

93. ‘Unfortunate accident marred celebration Prophet’s birthday in Beirut November 7 when oil fire started in midst torch bearer assembling for mass parade. Panic caused many participants to drop torches and individual oilcans in street, thereby adding to fire which quickly spread enveloping several persons who fell and were trampled on in resulting shuffle. According to Ministry of Health, nine persons have died, 250 were hospitalized with serious burns and some 300 others were less severely injured.’ Beirut to Secretary of State, No: 460, Department of State, Central Files, 883A.413, 8 November 1954.

94. See Claude Dubar and Salim Nasr, Les Classes Sociales au Liban (Paris, 1976) who note that during the 1960s these inequalities were exacerbated mainly due to the effects of inflation and integration into the world market, p. 291.

95. Caroline L. Gates made this analogy in an unpublished paper read at the ‘Conference on Lebanon in the 1950s’ at the University of Texas at Austin, September 1992. In her paper entitled, ‘Choice, Content and Performance of a Service-Oriented Open Economy Strategy: The Case of Lebanon, 1948–1958’, Gates concluded that Lebanon’s economic model was not in itself a cause of the 1958 rebellion. Challenges to Lebanese society that year came from other sources such as internal divided loyalties, sectarianism, and foreign intervention. See pp. 37–40.

96. FO 1018/93.