Chapter I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE FORMATION OF MODERN LEBANON
The Republic of Lebanon, though a part of the Arab World, is very different from the rest of the Arab countries in many important respects. Unlike the others, Lebanon does not have a Muslim preponderance and it certainly does not have a Muslim character. Non-Muslims constitute a sizeable section of its population and have played a historically dominant role in the domestic politics of Lebanon. An understanding of the history and politics of the Lebanese state is, therefore, of crucial significance before discussing the Israeli security interest in Lebanon.

(i) **Genesis of the Modern Lebanese State**

Lebanon in the form in which it exists today is of comparatively recent origin having been created in 1920. Prior to this Lebanon traditionally referred to Mount Lebanon. The geographic boundaries of Mount Lebanon included that part of the present Lebanese territory which extends roughly from the Lebanon mountain ranges to the sea excluding Beirut and the regions of Tripoli and Sidon. Mount Lebanon was in the main the ancestral home of two important religious sects - the Maronites and the Druze.

The Maronite were a sect of Christianity who first appeared in northern Mount Lebanon in the seventh century A.D. The term Maronite was used as early as the eighth century by John the Damascene and was derived from the reference to either the Syrian hermit Saint Maroun or Jean
Maroun the first Maronite Patriarch. Whatever its origin, the term clearly referred to a Syriac group of Aramean origin that embraced the Monothelite heresy (i.e., holding that Christ has one will but two natures) and consequently was persecuted under Emperor Justinian II. As a reaction to this persecution and also due to incursions from Muslim Arabs, between the seventh and twelfth century A.D., the Maronites increasingly retreated into Mount Lebanon. Towards the end of the twelfth century A.D. the Maronite Church abandoned its Monothelite doctrine and entered into partial communion with Rome.¹

The Druze on the other hand represented a heretical sect of Islam. An offshoot of Ismailism (which itself is a splinter of Shiism, which in turn is a major sect of Islam) the Druze or Druzes first appeared in Wadi al-Tayn in Southern Mount Lebanon. This religion sprang from the belief in the divinity of the sixth Fatimite Caliph of Egypt, Hakim (996-1020 A.D.) who declared himself to be the last incarnation of the deity. Two of his followers Hamza and Darazi (after whose name Druze are known) spread Hakim's doctrine, embellished with Ismaili philosophy, in Southern Mount Lebanon.²

¹ For an indepth study of the Maronite Community see Matti Moosa, The Maronites in History (New York, 1986).
² For further details regarding the origins and beliefs of the Druze sect see Philip K. Hitti, The Origins of the Druze People and Religion (New York, 1928); and Sami N. Makaram, The Druze Faith (New York, 1974).
In the early sixteenth century the Ottomans captured Mount Lebanon and Syria from the Mamluks and set about re-organizing the administrative structure of the conquered territories. In 1590 they set up an emirate over Mount Lebanon as a part of this process of administrative re-organization. During the entire period of its existence (1590-1842) the emirate, instead of being ruled by loosely spread families, was governed by two main dynasties - the Maans and the Shihabs. Initially the emirate was under Druze political hegemony. However, as a result of certain socio-economic and demographic changes in the mountains there was a gradual decline in Druze power and by the mid-eighteenth century the Maronites had replaced the Druze as the dominant political force in the emirate. 3

The Maronite political ascendency in Mount Lebanon generated considerable bitterness among the Druze. Resentful of the Maronite domination and angered by Christian intrusion into the South the Druze revolted in 1841. The Druze revolt led the Ottoman authorities to abolish the emirate the following year. They divided Mount Lebanon into two districts or qaim-maqamiyah, one Druze and the other Maronite governed by a district ruler (qaim-maqam) who was

appointed and could be removed by the Pasha of Sidon, the Sultan's direct representative in the coastal Levant. 

The new solution, however, further aggravated the situation. The Druze and Christian population were already too intermingled to permit such a simple solution. Many Druze lived in the Northern Maronite district and the Christians of Southern Druze district outnumbered the Druze. Besides, Maronite Christians backed by the French wanted authority over all Christians including those in the Southern district. The contradictions inherent in the new system led to renewed clashes in 1945. Continuing tensions between the two sects finally resulted in 1860 in a civil war in the mountains. The fighting in that civil war assumed a savage character. Within a brief period of three months nearly 12,000 Christians were massacred, crops were destroyed and churches and monasteries burned down. In neighbouring Syria, for no apparent grievances, about 10,000 Christians were slaughtered in Damascus.

The large scale massacre of Christians immediately led to French intervention. French protection of the Christians in Syria and Lebanon had a long history of its

own. Official French contact with Syria and Lebanon can be traced back to the crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It was during the crusades that most Maronites came into communion with Rome. The earliest indication of what in later years was to become the French protectorate of Christians in the Ottoman Empire is to be found in a letter dated 21 May 1250 from Saint Louis to the Maronite patriarch which reads:

We are convinced that this nation (the Lebanon)... is a part of the French nation, for its friendship for the French resembles the friendship which the French have among themselves.... We promise to give you and your people protection... and to do whatever will be necessary for your well being.

The friendship that developed between the Maronites and the Crusaders lasted for nearly two centuries. The Lebanese took a keen interest in the French language and culture and inter-marriage between Franks and the Levantines furthered the bonds between the two people. With the end of the crusades, however, as the soldiers and missionaries began to depart from the Levant, the once strong French influence also gradually weakened.


8. Charles W. Hartwig and Samir Ghali, "France and the Lebanese Conflict" Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (Villanova), vol.III, no.1, Fall 1979, p.79.
The expansion of European trade and commerce in the fifteenth and sixteenth century led to a renewal of the close ties that had existed between France and the Levant in the past. In 1535 the French King Francois I and Suleiman the Magnificent signed the first Capitulation which accorded France certain commercial privileges and initiated the development of the French Catholic protectorate in the Levant. Subsequent renewals of the Capitulations enlarged its scope to include religious freedom to French subjects in the Ottoman Empire. In time the indigenous Catholics of Syria and Lebanon were also brought under the cover of the Capitulations and France came to be acknowledged as the protector of Catholic Christians in the Levant. In 1649 King Louis XIV in a response to an appeal by the Maronite Patriarch formally "adopted" the Maronite community in Lebanon. This royal protection was renewed by succeeding kings so that by the eighteenth century it had become a well established tradition.

As a result of the special status of France in the Levant, French Catholic missionaries flocked in large numbers to this area. The Jesuits who came to Mount Lebanon in 1634 established numerous schools. The Lazarists set up

the Antoura school in 1780, the first institution to impart secondary education. The Christian Brothers and Marist Fathers built schools in Beirut, Tripoli, Jounieh and Damascus for the education of boys. Similarly, religious orders for women like the Ladies of Nazareth, Sisters of Charity of Besancon, the Sisters of Saint Joseph and the Saint Vincent de Paul were actively engaged in girls' education. The French Cultural Mission eventually set up a cultural centre and a Lycee in Beirut.\(^{11}\)

In view of the deep and extensive relationship that existed between France and the Christian community of Syria and Lebanon, the events of 1860 caused considerable alarm in France. In August 1860 as the massacre of Christians continued a French expeditionary force of 7,000 men landed in Beirut to defend the Maronites and other Christians.\(^{12}\) The following year France along with other major European powers (England, Russia, Prussia and Austria) forced the Ottomans to change the system of governance in Mount Lebanon.

(ii) **Creation of the Mutasarrifiyah and the Development of Maronite National Identity**

On 9 June 1861 the representatives of the five European powers met with the representatives of the Ottoman

\(^{11}\) Hartwig and Ghali, n.8, p.80.

\(^{12}\) Hitti, n.13, p.439.
Empire and signed the *Reglement Organique* (Constitutional Document) which called for the unification of Mount Lebanon and the creation of a semi-autonomous governorship (*Mutasarrifiyah*). The governor (*Matasarrif*) was to be a non-Lebanese Christian designated by the Ottoman Sultan with the consent of the European powers. The area's special status was to be guaranteed by the European powers.¹³

Maronite power and influence during the Mutasarrifate grew steadily. The fundamental assumption underlying this new political arrangement was that, while all the religious sects coexisted, the Maronites were dominant.¹⁴ At the same time the formal guarantees of the five European powers bolstered the tendency of the Maronites to rely on the West, particularly France with whom they now developed strong political, linguistic and cultural ties. French became the cultural and literary language of the middle and upper classes and soon replaced Arabic in the houses of many Lebanese Christians.

In time the *Mutasarrifiyah* came to be regarded as a Maronite national homeland by a majority of the Maronite Christians. However, an enterprising minority among them...

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visualized the Mutasarrifiyah not as an end itself but as a stepping stone towards full Lebanese statehood. The borders of the Mutasarrifiyah were confined to Mount Lebanon. But in order to make the state economically viable it was imperative that it should have access to ports and suitable agricultural lands. Hence this minority argued that the Mutasarrifiyah's borders should be enlarged to include the Biqa valley, the Akkar plain, the coastal cities of Tripoli Beirut, Sidon and Tyre and Southern Lebanon. However, these regions were still directly administered by the Ottomons as separate districts. In order to realize the vision of an expanded Lebanon the Maronite leadership, therefore, had to turn to their long time ally France for help.

The outbreak of the First World War temporarily disrupted the Maronite plans for a separate state with extended boundaries. The Mutasarrifiyah system which had given Mount Lebanon an autonomy and internationally recognized status within the Ottoman empire came to an end in 1915. Owing to military compulsions the Ottoman authorities unilaterally abrogated the autonomous status of Mount

Lebanon and placed it under the direct rule of an Ottoman military governor. 17

With the end of the war the Maronites once again revived their efforts for a separate state and extended frontiers. Their efforts acquired an added urgency because with the collapse of the Ottoman empire after its defeat in the war, the Maronites feared that in the political restructur-ting that would take place, Lebanon would be incorporated into a pan-Arab Islamic state in which they would lose their autonomy which they had enjoyed under the Ottomans. 18 During 1919, therefore, various Maronite delegations, including one led by the Maronite Patriarch Elias Botrus al-Howeik himself, travelled to Paris and Versailles to plead for the creation of a separate state for themselves under French supervi-sion. 19

The Muslims of Syria at whose expense Mount Lebanon was sought to be enlarged, however, were resolutely opposed to the Christian demand. Nationalist sentiments among them were running high. Immediately after the allied victory, Amir Faisal - son of Sharif Hussain of Mecca who was Britain's war time ally - had set up an Arab government in

Damascus. Arab administrations in Beirut, Sidon and Tripoli, owing allegiance to Damascus had been established. Syrian nationalists wanted complete independence of geographical Syria, on the basis of British wartime pledges to Sharif Hussain contained in the Hussain-McMohan correspondence. But the British had concurrently concluded secret Sykes-Picot agreement with France for dividing geographical Syria among themselves after the war. Very soon, therefore, General Henry H. Allenby replaced the Arab administration in Beirut with a French Military Governor; wherever the Arabs of the coastal region had taken control in the name of the Damascus government were dislodged. In Sidon the Arabs put up a violent resistance and had to be quelled by force. He then divided geographical Syria into three parts. In the south, Palestine was placed under a British officer; in the north, Beirut, Mount Lebanon and the northern coastlands were placed under a French officer and in the east, internal Syria and Transjordan, were placed under an Arab Military Governor. Syrian nationalists vigorously protested the division of Syria and the imposition of British and French control. In March 1920 the Syrian National Congress met in Damascus and

20. Geographical or natural Syria refers to the territory bordered by the Taurus Mountains in the north, Arabian desert in the South, the Euphrates in the east and the Mediterranean in the West. This area though almost never politically united was in the minds of its inhabitants a whole, homogeneous in culture, threaded with economic ties and known for centuries as bilad al-Sham.
proclaimed the complete unity and independence of geographical Syria within which Mount Lebanon was to have an autonomous status. The British and French, however, refused to recognize this Greater Syria. The following months the Allied Supreme Council meeting at San Remo awarded France the Mandate over Syria and Lebanon and Britain a Mandate over Palestine and Transjordan. In July French General Gouraud sent an ultimatum to Faisal demanding immediate acceptance of the Mandate. He then captured Damascus and deposed Faisal.21

(iii) The Establishment of Le Grand Liban

On 1 September 1920, General Henri Joseph Eugene Gouraud, now the French High Commissioner in Lebanon, officially declared the establishment of the state of Greater Lebanon (Le Grand Liban) by adding to Mount Lebanon the coastal cities from Tripoli to Tyre, the regions around them and the Biqa valley.22 The longstanding Maronite vision of an enlarged Lebanon was now fulfilled (see Map 1).

The creation of Greater Lebanon by France was not motivated by any kind of altruism nor was it solely the result of their concern for the Maronite community. France

21. For details regarding the Hussain-McMohan correspondence the Sykes-Picot agreement and the struggle of the Arab government in Syria against France and Britain between 1918 and 1920 see Al Tibawi, A Modern History of Syria Including Lebanon and Palestine (London, 1969), Chapters 8, 9 and 10.

Map 1
Mount Lebanon and Greater Lebanon

had its own imperial interests in the region and this could be best served by creating Greater Lebanon. Perhaps the most important reason behind the French move was the desire to establish a permanent and loyal base in the Levant to act as a bastion against the rising Arab nationalism in its colonies, particularly in North Africa. 23

While the expansion of Mount Lebanon marked the successful culmination of a long standing Maronite aspiration it also brought with it dramatic demographic change (see Table 1). The Maronites who were in absolute majority (58.4 per cent) in Mount Lebanon were reduced to the status of largest single sect in Greater Lebanon. According to the census of 1932 the Maronites constituted approximately 29 per cent of the population and all the Christian sects together constituted only 51.7 per cent of the population. Even this thin majority was largely attained by including the Armenians who had settled in Lebanon after the First World War. 24 In contrast, the Sunnis who had constituted only 3.5 per cent of the population of Mount Lebanon now became the second largest sect in Greater Lebanon comprising 22 per cent while the Shiits increased from 5.6


24. Higher Muslim birth rate and Christian emigration in any case soon shifted the balance in favour of the Muslims. But since 1932 successive Lebanese government have refused to conduct another census due to opposition from the Christians.
### Table 1

A Comparison of the Population Distribution Between Mount Lebanon and Greater Lebanon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sect</th>
<th>Mount Lebanon (1911)</th>
<th>Greater Lebanon (1932 census)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maronites</td>
<td>242,308</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Orthodox</td>
<td>53,356</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Catholic</td>
<td>31,936</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (including Jews)</td>
<td>2,901</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Christians</td>
<td>329,568</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnis</td>
<td>14,529</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiites</td>
<td>23,413</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td>47,290</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Muslims</td>
<td>85,232</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAND TOTAL</td>
<td>414,800</td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
to 19.4 per cent. More important than this loss of overwhelming Christian majority was the fact that the inhabitants of the incorporated territories, who were predominantly Muslim, strongly resented their inclusion in Greater Lebanon. The Sunni Muslims in particular had pronounced pan-Arab sympathies. They felt themselves an integral part of the Arab world and many among them wished to see Lebanon become part of a large, powerful united Arab nation. Still others saw Lebanon as an integral part of Greater Syria. The Sunnis, therefore, came to regard Lebanon as an artificial state created by an imperialist power in order to dominate the Arab world. In addition, their incorporation in Lebanon involved for the Sunnis a grave religious crisis and a powerful emotional blow. For the first time in history they were a minority in a Christian state. They feared that their religion and culture would suffer in such a state. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that in the Ottoman empire the Sunnis had constituted the ruling class. In Lebanon they would have had to live under political hegemony of Christians whom they had always regarded as their inferiors. This question of secondary political status was the main grievance of the Sunnis throughout the mandate period and continues even till this day.25 The

Shiites and Druze also shared much of the Sunni sentiments. However, their opposition to Greater Lebanon was neither as strong nor as uniform as that of the Sunnis. Among the Christians only the Greek Orthodox were anti-Greater Lebanon. This was because of their fear of a Catholic Christian domination in Lebanon. Moreover, the Greek Orthodox had been influenced by Arab nationalism much more than other Christian sects. ²⁶

The events of 1920 had left the Sunni Muslims in a state of shock. For some months to come, there was hardly any organised protest against the creation of Greater Lebanon. The first significant protest took place only in the summer of 1921 when the French were preparing to conduct a census. Sunni Muslims refused to participate on the grounds that they did not recognize Greater Lebanon and denounced the census for differentiating between various Muslim sects as an imperialist device designed to divide the Muslims. Muslim protest intensified the following year. In April 1922, Khurshid Pasha, a high ranking Muslim official in the Lebanese government, was assassinated by a secret Sunni organization in Beirut. The assassination was aimed at deterring Muslims from collaborating with the French, who in order to enlist Sunni cooperation sometimes offered them lucrative government posts. ²⁷

²⁶. Smock and Smock, n.18, p.43.
In 1925, in the midst of this Muslim agitation, the Druze of Jabal Druze in Syria rose up in revolt against the French. The Druze uprising quickly assumed a nationalist character as Syrian-Arab nationalists rallied to its support. On 23 August 1925 Sultan al-Atrash, the leader of the Druze uprising, issued a proclamation in his capacity as president of the provisional national government demanding complete unity of Syria and Lebanon and independence from French rule. The revolt soon spread to Lebanon and violent clashes between the Druze and Christians took place in many areas. A wave of intensive pro-Syrian agitation, unprecedented since 1920, engulfed Lebanon, with Muslims coming out in support of the Druze. Petitions were submitted to the French government and the League of Nations, strikes were organized and numerous public meetings were held against the French rule. As rebel activities intensified the French started distributing arms among the Christians and a campaign was conducted in the Christian press calling upon the Christians to assist the French in putting down the revolt. A force of Christian volunteers was quickly put together under the leadership of Butrus Karam, a Maronite from North Lebanon, and despatched to the South to fight alongside the hard pressed regular French army. By March the following year, the French troops with the help of Christian auxillaries had been largely successful in putting down the revolt.  

28. Ibid., pp.188-94.
suppressing the revolt had grave implications for Christian-Muslim relations in Lebanon. Christian collaboration with the French was construed by the Muslims as an act of treason of the highest degree and for a long time to come the Maronite Christians were regarded as traitors who opposed the national aspirations of the Arabs. Even today their role in suppressing the anti-French rebellion is sometimes recalled as an example of their deep-seated hatred for Arabs and Arabism.

In May 1926, shortly after the suppression of the nationalist Druze uprising in Lebanon, a French-inspired constitution came into force. The purpose of this constitution (still in force today with some important modifications) was not so much to introduce responsible government in Lebanon as to secure for the Maronites a position of predominance in the political system. The constitution as per Maronite wishes declared that the boundaries of Greater Lebanon were immutable. Sunni Muslims all over Lebanon refused to take part in the drafting of the constitution in order to make it clear to the French authorities that they did not support a Lebanese republic separate and independent from Syria. Of the 210 questionnaires sent out by the Drafting Committee to representatives of the different communities in order to ascertain their views only 132 replied. Most of those who refused to reply were Sunni
Muslims. Resolutely opposed not only to the present frontiers of Greater Lebanon but also to its independent existence, the Muslims could not have been expected to take part in the making of a constitution which was a very symbol of all that they had rejected. 29

Of particular importance in the constitution that came into force in 1926 was Article 95 (still operative) which reads: "As a provisional measures and for the sake of justice and concord the communities shall be equitably represented in public employment and in the composition of the cabinet such measures, however, not to cause prejudice to the general welfare of the state." 30 A bicameral legislature 31 was set up on the basis of proportional sectarian representation (six to five Christian-Muslim ratio) and the entire administration reorganized so as to conform to the provisions of Article 95.

According to the new constitution the Lebanese had to elect their own Head of State. The Maronites were determined that someone from their community should be made President. However, the French proposed the name of Charles Dabbas who they thought would be more acceptable to the

29. Ibid., pp.207-9.
31. The two houses of the legislature were known as the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. The Senate was abolished in 1927 as a result of the first constitutional amendment.
Muslims than a Maronite candidate. Dabbas consequently became the first President under the new constitution. However, in 1932, when a Sunni Muslim, Muhammad al Jisr, announced his intention to run for the Presidency the French immediately intervened to prevent him from contesting. Instead, Habib Pasha, a Maronite, was elected as President. Since then, the powerful Presidency has remained the exclusive preserve of the Maronites. As a concession to the Muslims, the French started the convention of reserving the much weaker post of Prime Minister for the Sunnis from 1937 onwards. 32

Muslim agitation for union with Syria did not cease even after the promulgation of the constitution in 1926. It continued intermittently during the next few years reaching its peak in the mid-1930s in response to the resurgence of militant nationalism in Syria. In April 1935 the largely Sunni taxi-drivers of Beirut went on a strike. After some violent incidents Riad al-Solh a leading nationalist figure was exiled to the Jazira region in Syria. In March 1936, Salim Ali Salam convened the famous conference of the coast in Beirut which demanded the return of the annexed territories to Syria and in July the Mufti of Lebanon along with leading Muslim leaders set up a Muslim Consultative Council with strong pro-Syrian sympathies.

32. Smock and Smock, n.18, p.44.
Muslim-Christian relations rapidly deteriorated from mid-1936 onwards culminating at the year's end in large-scale country-wide riots.33

While the Muslims were demanding Lebanon's unity with Syria, Maronite and other Catholic Christians busied themselves with developing historical, cultural and even geographical arguments aimed at demonstrating the 'special nature' of Lebanon and justifying its existence as an entity separate from the rest of the Arab world. Phonecianism and Mediterreanism were two important intellectual movements which emerged in the mid-1920s with the specific aim of distinguishing Lebanon from its Arab milieu. Phonecianism was the attempt to trace the ancestry of Lebanese to the Phonecian civilization which existed some five thousand years ago. Its chief proponent was a Maronite intellectual Charles Corm whose main aim was to show that the Lebanese have very little in common with the Arabs. Mediterreanism whose prophet was a Greek Catholic Michel Chiha did not stress the historical origins of Lebanon but sought to link Lebanon's physical and cultural origins to the Mediterranean basin. Its intent, therefore, was very similar to Phonecianism.34


The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 had far reaching consequences for Lebanon. France, the traditional protector of Maronites came under Nazi occupation in June 1940. When France surrendered, the Vichy regime sent its officials to administer the Levant and Axis influence became widespread. Numerous German and Italian officers came to the region in an attempt to turn it into a base for anti-Allied activities. The danger of a German domination of the Levant moved the British to join forces with the Free French under General Charles de Gaulle and launch an invasion of Syria and Lebanon. On 8 June 1941, British and Free French forces invaded Syria and Lebanon from Palestine. Leaflets dropped from Allied aircrafts proclaimed the independence of Syria and Lebanon. Once Lebanon and Syria were occupied by the joint forces of British and Free French, General de Gaulle was no more eager than previous French governments to surrender France's position in the Levant. However, the British who had occupied the Levant during the First World War and then handed it to France, were determined not to repeat this again. Britain was then

busy promoting the concept of Arab unity in the form of the Arab League through which it hoped to secure its own interest in the region after the war. French presence in Syria and Lebanon was, therefore, incompatible with such a policy.  

The significance of these new developments was not lost upon the Maronite community. A section of them correctly assessed that it was just not possible to establish a Christian state in Lebanon without the backing of French power. A moderate group advocating pragmatism gradually came to the forefront of Maronite leadership. This group which was led by Bishara al-Khouri felt the urgent necessity of coopting nationalist Muslim leaders into the political power structure and win their confidence in order to preserve the viability and independence of Greater Lebanon. Khoury, therefore, offered to cooperate with Muslim leaders in their struggle to throw out the French. The response of the Muslim leaders was positive. After years of fruitless agitation many had resigned themselves to the existence of Greater Lebanon and in Khoury's offer they saw at least an opportunity to end the much hated French rule. Secondly, many among them feared that failure to


cooperate with Khoury would only strengthen his arch rival, the rabidly anti-Arab Emile Edde who was secretly negotiating with the French for the establishment of a purely Christian state in Mount Lebanon. Finally, many Sunni politicians and officials thought it preferable to hold on to the influential positions they had already achieved within Greater Lebanon than to play a minor role in a large Syrian State whose power centre would inevitably lie in Damascus rather than Beirut.

Under pressure from Britain, the Gaullist were forced to hold free election to the Lebanese Parliament in the summer of 1943. It resulted in a victory for Khoury's 'Constitutional Bloc' over Emile Edde's 'National Bloc'. Khoury was elected President of the Republic on 21 September 1943 and one of his first acts as President was to conclude a verbal agreement with the popular Sunni Prime Minister Riad al-Solh which came to be known as the National Pact. The Pact laid down that Lebanon was to be a completely independent sovereign state in which the Christians would not seek foreign protection or try to bring Lebanon under foreign control. Likewise the Muslims would not try to bring Lebanon into any political union with Syria or into any form of Arab union. In relation to the Arab world


40. Zamir, n.27, p.211.
Lebanon was to regard itself as an Arab state with a "special character" and cooperate fully with it provided it recognized its sovereignty. Despite its Arabism, however, Lebanon would retain its cultural ties with the West. The Pact further laid down that public offices in Lebanon were to be distributed equitably among the recognized sects and that the President of the republic should belong to the Maronite community and Prime Minister to the Sunni community. 41 This verbal agreement was followed by a unilateral declaration of independence by the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies which met on 8 November 1943 and amended the constitution so as to eliminate all mandatory restrictions. 42 The more militant elements in the Maronite community like the church and the Lebanese Phalanges (Kataib al-Lubnaniyya), 43 however, were at best only lukewarm towards


43. The Lebanese Phalanges was founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel who was its chief, Shaffic Nassif a lawyer, Georges Naccache, publisher of L'Orient and Charles Hilu who later became President of Lebanon from 1964-70. Initially a paramilitary youth movement that later became a political party, the Phalanges was dedicated to fighting any and all national ideas that contradicted its narrow concept of Lebanese nationalism. During 1943, it had collaborated briefly with the Muslims for the termination of the mandate. But no sooner was independence achieved, the Phalangists returned to their traditional position. For a study of the Phalangist Party see, John P. Entelis, Pluralism and Party Transformation in Lebanon, Al-Kataib: 1936-1970 (Leiden, 1974); also Michael W. Suleiman, Political Parties in Lebanon: The Challenge of a Fragmented Political Culture (New York, 1967), pp.232-49.
the National Pact. They still entertained the narrow and parochial notion of Lebanon as a Christian homeland and continued to seek allies outside the Arab world. It was no wonder, therefore, that these parochial groups resolutely opposed Lebanon's membership of the Arab League in 1944. "Regarding the Arab League as indeed leading to Arab unity... these groups began to consider very strongly the matter of making Lebanon a national home for the Christians". 44

In 1945 an anonymous pamphlet entitled S.O.S.: The Lebanon, the "Christian National Home" of the Near East endorsed by the Maronite Patriarch Antoine Arida appeared in Lebanon and North America in which an appeal was made to the Great Powers for the establishment of a Christian state in Lebanon. On the title page of this pamphlet Arida declared, "At a time when the Great Powers are being called upon to establish a peace which will secure the greatest possible happiness for the people of the world, it is essential that they should know the true sentiments of the Christians of the Near East". 45

The pamphlet then goes on to detail the grievances of the Christian community and the inferior treatment meted out to them in an Islamic society. 46 It warns of the


46. Ibid., p. 47.
dangers that would befall the Christians if Lebanon were to become a part of some large Arab entity. Finally, it argues that like the Jews who were demanding a national home, the Christians of West Asia too had a right to set up a state of their own wherein they could live as equals and not as inferiors. Meanwhile Edde, Patriarch Arida and other Maronite leaders sent a letter that year to the US President Theodore Roosevelt declaring that Arab unity would prove to be disastrous for the non-Muslim minorities in the region. They then pleaded for US aid to prevent Lebanon's absorption into an enlarged Arab State. Arida in a similar appeal to American Maronites attacked the League of Arab States and cautioned that the Arab states had aggressive intentions towards Lebanon. The following year Bishop Aql, delegate of the Maronite Patriarchate to the Lebanese emigrants in America submitted a memorandum to the United Nations (UN) seeking its intervention in the setting up of a Christian state in Lebanon. The same year the Maronite Patriarch Arida while praising the French role in Lebanon attacked all those who were demanding the withdrawal of French troops still stationed in Lebanon. He asserted that the continued presence of French troops was in no way contradictory to the

47. Entelis, n.43, p.35.


49. Yamak, n.44, p.47.
independent and sovereign status of Lebanon. In August 1947, the Maronite Archbishop of Beirut Ignatius Mubarak submitted a memorandum to the UN Conciliation Commission on Palestine wherein he declared that "Lebanon as well as Palestine should remain permanent home for the minorities" in the Arab world and that the UN should take the initiative in establishing a Christian state in Lebanon.

These actions by an influential section of the Maronite community amounted to a virtual negation of the basic tenets of the National Pact. But despite such persistent efforts a Christian State in Lebanon failed to materialize as the Western powers showed little interest in the Maronite Community and the Christian cause which it so ardently championed.

Conclusion

The Republic of Lebanon, though a part of the Arab world is very different from the rest of the Arab countries. Unlike the others it does not have Muslim preponderance or a Muslim character. Christians, particularly Maronites constitute a sizeable section of the population and are known to harbour separatist ambitions. The Maronites have a long history of connection with the French which started with the Crusades of the twelfth century.

50. Suleiman, n.43, pp.22-23.

After the First World War France was given mandatory powers over Syria and Lebanon. In September 1920 France created the state of Greater Lebanon by annexing territories from neighbouring Syria. During the French rule a concerted effort was made by the Maronites to differentiate Lebanon from its Arab milieu and justify its existence as an entity separate from the rest of the Arab world.

The outbreak of the Second World War had far reaching consequences for Lebanon. France, the traditional protector of Maronites came under Nazi occupation. The significance of this development was not lost upon the Maronite Christians. A section of them correctly assessed that it was just not possible to establish a Christian state without the backing of French power. A moderate group advocating pragmatism gradually came to the forefront of Maronite leadership. This group arrived at a political understanding known as the 'National Pact' with the Muslims for sharing power once independence was achieved. The more militant elements like the clergy and the Phalanges, however, still entertained the parochial notion of Lebanon as a Christian homeland and continued to seek allies outside the Arab world. But despite their persistent efforts a Christian state in Lebanon failed to materialize as the Western powers showed little interest in their cause.