

## The French Mandate or the Independence Process in Lebanon in 1920 and 1943

**Linda Rizk Saber**

*University of the Holy Spirit Kaslik (USEK), Lebanon*

### **Abstract**

This paper emphasizes the origins of the French Mandate in Lebanon, from the French interventions in the Ottoman Empire until the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreements. It provides a comprehensive overview of the contemporary history of Lebanon and the Middle East. The Middle East has consistently held geopolitical significance, characterized by intricate socio-political shifts, conflicts, and a mosaic of diverse cultures. Over recent decades, Lebanon has emerged as a microcosm that encapsulates the multifaceted dynamics inherent in the contemporary history of the Middle East and offers insights into the region's challenges and opportunities.

The French Mandate, established in 1920, is part of the French colonial policies regarding the principles identified by Woodrow Wilson after WWI. We study the period between 1920 and 1943 through the question of the state-building process, which became more effective in 1926. This paper also aims to shed light on the contribution of France to the birth of a local political elite. Addition to define the role of French political and military figures in accelerating the independence process during WWII, such as Charles de Gaulle and General Catroux. Furthermore, analyzing the mandate will enable us to understand the significance of French presence in the Levant, France's perspective on this region, and the Lebanese populace's reaction to its existence.

**Keywords:** Independence, Levant, Mandate, Right to self-determination, National pact

## 1. Introduction

### **France in the Levant: Invention of the concept**

This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the contemporary history of Lebanon and the Middle East. The Middle East has consistently held geopolitical significance, characterized by intricate socio-political shifts, conflicts, and a mosaic of diverse cultures. Over recent decades, Lebanon has emerged as a microcosm that encapsulates the multifaceted dynamics inherent in the contemporary history of the Middle East and offers insights into the region's challenges and opportunities.

The term «France of the Levant» refers to France's presence in the Levant region, characterized by political and economic interventions within the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the 19th century. Furthermore, it signifies France's perspective on Eastern societies, shaped by the legacy of the capitulations system and the process of state formation. The term itself was coined by Catholic missionaries to glorify the actions of their missionary institutions. Later, during the Third Republic era, it was adopted by republicans to reference France's influence in the Levant within the context of French colonial imperialism. Etienne Lamy played a pivotal role in popularizing this phrase through his articles published between 1898 and 1900, notably in the "Revue des deux-mondes." In his writings, he stated, « *Europe identifies the place [the Orient region] by the place where the sun rises every morning, and, as if the land touched first by its rays retained a part of their brilliance, it was named the Levant. France's history, struggles, prosperity, virtues, and vitality can all be traced back to this region* » (Lamy, 1898).

France's vision of Lebanon and Syria relates to "domination" and "minority." Syria is often seen as a collection of distinct regions, like Mount Lebanon, the Alawite Mountains, Damascus, and Aleppo, each with its political coherence. This perspective, articulated by Robert de Caix in 1916, suggests that France's role should be that of an impartial mediator responsible for structuring a federation. In this sense, the mandate system reflects a historical pattern, bringing to mind the old protectorate regime centered on managing various religious and ethnic communities.

This raises the question of whether the mandate can be viewed as a deviation from traditional French colonialism, aligning with Pierre Viénot's assertion that « *the French mandate is exceptional, involving two independent states, Lebanon and Syria* » (Pierre, 1939). In the following paragraphs, we will examine how France attempts to Arabize its foreign policy in the Levant region and the reactions to the French presence. To address these questions, it is worth considering how the French mandate was linked to modern forms of statehood and understanding the state as a series of practices and regulations that impact a whole social body.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

Taking the above into consideration, this paper raises the following sub-questions:

- What is the role of French political and military figures in accelerating the independence process in Lebanon during World War II?
- How did France attempt to Arabize its foreign policy in the Levant region? And what remains from the mandate period in the present day?
- Whether mandate can be viewed as a deviation from traditional French colonialism?
- What are the theoretical and methodological obstacles to teaching modern history?

#### **1.1.1 Methodology**

This paper utilizes an in-depth case study of Lebanon to understand the French mandate or the independence process in Lebanon. The pros of studying Lebanon are that it is one of the most ethnically diverse countries, and its long history is how it shapes the state-society dynamics. Besides its geopolitical location, it adds further consideration before making broader generalizations. An in-depth case study is recognized as a valid strategy for understanding deep political trends, which allows the researcher to gather a wealth of details essential for developing a nuanced view of reality. I used documentary, biographical, archival methods, and qualitative content analysis to interpret the meaning of the text data. This was complemented by attendance at workshops and community initiatives related to my subject area and topic.

## **2. Beginning of the mandate after the Sykes-Picot agreement**

The French mandate in Lebanon began after the end of World War I, precisely after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 and the Treaty of Sevres in 1920. The Sykes-Picot Agreements of 1916 marked the early stages of the new geopolitical landscape in the Middle East. The draft was made by the representatives of the British and French foreign ministries, Mark Sykes, and Georges Picot, respectively, and it was confirmed by the signing of the Grey-Cambon agreements. Later, these agreements were secretly modified by the prime minister of Britain, Lloyd George, and the president of the French council, Clémenceau, in 1918 (in response to King Hussein Fayçal's aspirations for an independent Arab Syria).

The Ottoman Empire ended with the truce signed at Moudros on October 30, 1918, after the Arab forces took over Damascus on October 1, 1918.

Following the command of General Gouraud, the French troops led a parade on al-Hamidiyé Square (nowadays known as Martyrs' Square). After the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from Syria and the domination of Arab forces in Damascus, numerous announcements - known as "Bayan Umumi" - were distributed throughout Greater Syria. Here is an illustration, signed by Omar el-Daouk, the newly appointed governor of Beirut, dated October 1, 1918 (24 Shu al-Hijjah 1336). The bayan announces a new administration in Beirut. The end of the war with the truce of 11 November 1918 and the terms outlined in the Treaty of Sevres, signed on 10 August 1920, essentially affirmed the conditions set in the Moudros Armistice.

Article 94 of the Treaty includes, among other things, that Syria be recognized as an « *independent State, under the condition that it receives administrative guidance and assistance from a mandated power until it becomes capable of self-governance* » (Sèvres, 1916). This term granted France the authority to rule over this territory in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreements of 1916: « *After establishing an agreement with the State or the Confederation of Arab States, France will be permitted to take on direct or indirect administration or control in the blue zone and Great Britain will be allowed to do the same in the red zone.* » (Paul Cambon, 1916).

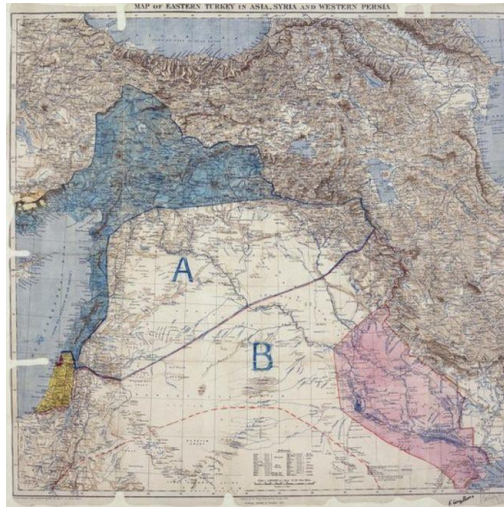


Figure 1 Carte originale des accords Sykes-Picot, 1916, Source: National British Archives

The secret Sykes-Picot agreements concluded between France and Great Britain, slightly modified by the Grey-Cambon agreements, are part of a process that lasted from 1914 to 1923, reconfiguring the map of the Middle East. The final borders were established following the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the San Remo Conference in April 1920. This resulted in a new form of guardianship over the former Ottoman Empire provinces, the mandate system. The formal recognition of French control in Lebanon and Syria was not officially acknowledged by international law until the League of Nations was founded, as outlined in Article 22.

« Article 22 »

1. *The following principles apply to colonies and territories which, as a result of the war, have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States that previously governed them. These regions are inhabited by people who cannot yet govern themselves under the difficult conditions of the modern world. The well-being and development of these people constitute a sacred mission of civilization, and it is essential to incorporate guarantees within this Covenant to ensure the fulfillment of this mission.*
2. *The most effective way to put this principle into practice is by transferring these peoples' custody to the developed countries that, due to their resources, experience, or geographic*

location, are best suited to carry on this responsibility and are willing to accept it. These nations would exercise this custody as the Society's representatives.

3. *The nature of the mandate will vary depending on the level of development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions, and other similar factors»* (Section of the Société des Nations, 1919).

Consequently, the mandate should facilitate local self-governance. In this article, our attention is directed toward the "mandate," its implementation in Lebanon, and its evolving status as independence movements gained momentum. Analyzing the mandate will enable us to understand the significance of French presence in the Levant, France's perspective on this region, and Lebanese populace's reaction to its existence.

### **Lebanese Delegations at the Peace Conference and the Decision to Align with France (1919-1920)**

The two Lebanese delegations at the Versailles Peace Conference wished for the French mandate. The first civilian delegation was represented by:

- Negib Abdel Malek is a member of one of Lebanon's oldest and most influential Druze families. He studied law at the University of Paris and participated in the delegation as the replacement of Mahmoud Bey Jumblatt.
- Abdul Halim Hajjar, a Sunni and former member of the judiciary.
- Abdallah Khoury Saadi, a Greek Orthodox from Koura and the first interpreter for the Lebanese government.
- Ibrahim Bey Abou Khater, a former governor and representative of Zahle. He refrained from choosing the Conference.
- Emile Eddé, a Maronite, holder of a doctorate in law from the University of Aix, and the president of the Volunteer Engagement Committee in Alexandria. France appointed him as an "inspector at the High Court of Justice" in Beirut immediately after Syria was liberated from Turkish authority.
- and Daoud Ammoun, a Maronite, served as the president and member of the Administrative Council.

These latter two individuals supported the establishment of Greater Lebanon, restoring it to its historical boundaries (including the three cities of Beirut, Sidon, and Tripoli, as well as the districts of Akkar, Baalbek, Hasbaya, Rachaya, Sidon, and Marjeyoun). They also advocated for the protection of France. According to D.H. Miller, the statements made by members of the Lebanese delegation were as follows:

*« After Daoud Ammoun, the members of the delegation, Mr. Négib Abd el-Malek, the Druze delegate, and Abd el-Halim Haggiar, the Muslim delegate, each spoke on behalf of their religious groups respectively. They declare that a government based on theocratic principles and aligned with a specific religion would not be accepted. Instead, they advocated for a theocratic regime that respects all religions equally. While expressing a strong desire for their country's independence, they also recognized the need for foreign support, and their preference, like Daoud Ammoun's, leaned towards France»* (Miller, 1942).

However, the Druze delegate representing Mahmoud Bey Joumblatt disapproves of the separation of Lebanon from the rest of Syria. The second delegation comprised of religious leaders, including three Maronite bishops and one Greek Catholic bishop, led by Maronite Patriarch Howayek. They were received by President Poincaré and shared the same aspiration as the first delegation, which was the independence of Lebanon within its historical borders.

In the March 1, 1919, edition of « *La Correspondance d'Orient* » you can also read the following declaration:

« *The Lebanese aspirations presented by the Official Delegation of the Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon can be summarized as follows:*

1. *The independence of Lebanon.*
2. *The re-establishment of its historical and geographical borders.*
3. *Collaboration with France... » (In La Correspondance d'Orient, 1919).*

The French government officially announced that it will respect the wishes of the Lebanese to calm the sentiments of the Lebanese population:

« 1. *The request for Lebanon's independence, both politically and administratively, within its historical and geographical boundaries, including the territories that were separated from it.*

2. *The establishment of a democratic government in Lebanon, one that maintains "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality," respects the rights of minorities, and ensures religious freedom.*

3. *The Lebanese government and the overseeing French government will cooperate to establish the economic relations that will bind the Lebanese government with neighboring nations.*

4. *The immediate initiation of the constitution's study and organization.*

5. *The presentation of these decisions at the Peace Congress.*

6. *The publication of these decisions in the official journal or other publications, with the aim of reassuring the state of mind of the Lebanese people. »*

The recognition of the wishes of both delegations by Clémenceau paved the way to the declaration of Greater Lebanon by the first High Commissioner, Henri Gouraud, on September 1, 1920, from the Pine Residence in Beirut.



*Figure 2 On September 1, 1920, at 5:30 PM, a formal and official ceremony was held for the proclamation of Greater Lebanon at the Pine Residence*

In the image below, we can recognize, standing to the right of General Gouraud, Maronite Patriarch Mgr Elias Howayek, alongside Admiral de Bon, who commands the navy. On the left side, there stands the representative from the Orthodox Church, Maronite Patriarchal Vicar Mgr Paul Akl, as well as the Grand Mufti of Beirut.

Gouraud stated that « *the Great Lebanon was made for the benefit of all* » and the Lebanese could « *count on the assistance of France*» to achieve their independence.

### **Definition and Implementation of the Mandate**

According to the historian Henry Laurens, the French mandate in Lebanon and Syria is part of the continuity of French domination and influence that dates to the system of capitulations in the 16th century, and possibly even further since the Middle Ages.:

*« The European powers, primarily France, exerted an actual control over these regions through the system of capitulations, consular protection, and, in general, "gunboat diplomacy." The instruments of French influence included the Catholic protectorate, economic interests, and a cultural presence defined at the time as "moral presence." The vibrant eastern Mediterranean civilization of the latter Ottoman Empire decades was expressed in French, and Parisian publicists (though not diplomats) did not hesitate to refer to the region as the "France of the Levant." » (Laurens, 1964).*

The mandate is intended to serve as a transitional phase toward the eventual independence of the territories. It grants France administrative authority, primarily overseen by the High Commissioner's office in Beirut. According to Edmond Rabbath, the mandate can be characterized as « *a regime of direct administration*» by France in Lebanon. However, at the beginning of 1922, recognition was extended to a representative council led by Habib Pacha el-Saad, Na'um Labaki, and Emile Eddé, who played a role in the mandate's civil administration. The mandate has two aspects: one civilian within this administration and the other military through intelligence services and the presence of French forces in the territory.

The mandate begins in a region devastated by war and poverty. The first objective of the French was to rebuild and develop the country, which involved the development of Beirut through a new urban plan and a policy to reconstruct the port of Beirut to boost economic activities. By 1920, the port of Beirut returned to function once again. The mandate quickly transformed from « *a colonial domination project to a policy of cultural cooperation*» (Laurens, 1964) with the local elites. It was through the existence of a quality education system that the French civil service became a privileged field for educated elites (Laurens, 1964).

Throughout the mandate, France governed Lebanon through the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A High Commissioner is appointed locally with administrative, military, and legislative powers. The first High Commissioners assigned were from the military :

-General Henri Gouraud, de 1919 à 1923

-General Weygang (1923-1925)

-General Sarrail (1925-1926)

Reforms were proposed in the early years of the mandate, but they were rejected by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Quai d'Orsay), primarily due to the pressure exerted by the Maronite Church. The proposed reforms included :

-Dividing Lebanon into eleven mouhafazas (districts)

-Uniting the tax system,

-assigning Muslim candidates for government positions

-Implementing a public education system

-Appointing a Lebanese governor, even though Léon de Cayla was eventually appointed provisional governor.

Daniel Rivet interprets this scenario as transforming France into a « Rational-Legal State.». France then instituted a structured administration, headed by the High Commissioner, who oversees the Administration and technical departments. A political cabinet was tasked with managing intelligence services, and a general secretariat, under the leadership of Robert de Caix, was responsible for overseeing the twelve administrative and technical divisions. France's involvement extended across four key areas: the Finance Directorate (responsible, among other things, for handling the Ottoman public debt), the Customs Directorate (which also had jurisdiction over the railway network), as well as the Justice Directorate, and the Directorate for Public Education, Health, and Social Services.

While the first year of the mandate had a budget deficit of nearly four million Francs, the second year had a surplus of more than two and a half million Francs. This shows that France pursued a policy of economic and social development. Between 1924 and 1937, the budget increased from 21 million to 57 million Francs.

### **The creation of a Constitution for Lebanon amidst the crisis of 1925-1926**

In 1926, a civilian High Commissioner was appointed to address the crisis: Henri de Jouvenel. He assessed the Lebanese political situation and expected that a constitution would accelerate the process of independence:

*« Once these states have adopted their constitutions, it is essential that they pledge to one another and collectively to us, committing to thirty-year treaties aimed at mutually safeguarding their external borders, refraining from employing force against each other, and turning to French arbitration to settle any potential disputes that may arise among them. »*

[...] He continues by stating: *« This strategy is consistent with the approach that brought us to Locarno. It is a natural extension of it. To be more explicit, it represents the embodiment of the Locarno spirit in the Eastern context. »* (Shat, 1926).

Indeed, as per de Jouvenel, the mandate is in line with the principle of maintaining the self-determination of nations. Consequently, a constitution was adopted on May 23, 1926, which delegated specific authority to the Lebanese, although France held the privilege of veto



and the option to resort to force if necessary. In addition, after his resignation in 1926, Henri de Jouvenel alerted the Quai d'Orsay about the growing demographic issue in Lebanon:

*« When nations have the freedom to determine their own constitution, electoral procedures, and fiscal matters, it is only natural for them to seek complete national independence unless they view it as a threat. The Christians of Lebanon, being a vulnerable minority, may indeed perceive such independence as a danger. In contrast, the Arabs of Syria do not have the same motivations to accept our guardianship. Hence, they resist it. Why does the Ministry refuse to acknowledge this cause-and-effect chain? » (Cadn, 2003).*

The French mandate ultimately resulted in the establishment of political sectarianism, as outlined in Article 95 of the Constitution. De Jouvenel advises France to consider a strategy to ensure the ongoing dominance of Christians in positions of authority:

*« At some point, we must address the issue of Lebanese borders, which has a profound impact on our Levant policy more than anything else. The strategy of relying on Lebanon's Christian majority and diminishing it to 52% by annexing 48% of advocates to prepare for the inevitable transition from a shrinking majority increasingly affected by emigration, to a minority, is a flawed approach. Pursuing such a course of action risks damaging France's relationships with Syrians, who vastly outnumber the Lebanese, and the broader Muslim population in Asia. It would essentially amount to placing Mandate on an unwinnable bet » (Cadn, 2002).*

In the aftermath of this crisis, France appointed civilian High Commissioners. Subsequently, three officials held this position: Henri Ponsot (1926-1933), Damien de Martel (1933-1939), and Gabriel Puaux, who served from 1939 to 1940.

### **From 1926 to 1936: The political Landscape in Lebanon during the Mandate**

The French mandate witnessed the adoption of a new flag as the symbol of the country:



Figure 3 French flag in Lebanon, 1920-1943

The political landscape in Lebanon is structured by the 1926 Constitution, which serves as a foundational document that outlines the division of authority among various institutions. It establishes a Chamber of Deputies with legislative authority, a President of the Republic with executive powers, and an independent judiciary represented by a dedicated court. The initial

president, Charles Debbas, comes from the Greek Orthodox community. Notably, the Chamber of Deputies is elected through a sectarian system. At the same time, there was an initial plan for a Senate comprising sixteen members appointed by Henri de Jouvenel, although this plan was revoked in 1927. In 1932, France conducted the first population census; the demographic composition was as follows:

- Maronites constituted 28.8% of the population
- Sunnis comprised 22.4%
- Shiites made up 20.3%
- Greek Orthodox adherents accounted for 9.7%
- Druze adherents represented 6.8%

Consequently, France consents to support the path towards independence, enabling Lebanon to evolve as a sovereign entity. Initially, this involved establishing institutions, followed by constitutional adjustments such as enhancing the authority of the President of the Republic in 1927 and extending the presidential term from 3 to 6 years in 1929. Nevertheless, as specified in Article 90 of the Constitution, the High Commissioner maintains, and at times amplifies, his authority in foreign policy, defense matters, the annulment of laws, and even modifications to the Constitution itself.

### **Political ideologies in Lebanon from 1926 to 1943**

The Lebanese political landscape witnessed the establishment of its first political party in 1924, the Communist Party. However, by 1932, the political scene had evolved into two prominent blocs: the National Bloc, initiated and led by Emile Eddé, in favor of a western-oriented Lebanon, and the Constitutional Bloc (known as "Destour"), under the leadership of Béchara el-Khoury, advocating for a Lebanon firmly rooted with the Arab world. This latter bloc garnered support from moderate Muslims, including figures like Riad el-Solh and the influential Hamadé clan. Additionally, in 1932, a new political party emerged on the scene: the Syrian National Social Party (SNSP), founded by Antoun Saadé.

In 1932, it marked a significant turning point during the mandate era, igniting a heated debate regarding the path to independence. At the core of this debate stood France's unequivocal stance. Lebanon was a mosaic of diverse religious communities, and the prevailing belief was that political dominance should be vested in the Maronite community. Emile Eddé promoted this perspective and, in a memorandum addressed to the Quai d'Orsay, presented Greater Lebanon's population as 405,000 Muslims and 425,000 Christians, highlighting the concerns previously raised by de Jouvenel six years earlier. As a result, he proposed granting autonomous status to Tripoli under French administration. Contrarily, Riad el-Solh emerged as a vocal opponent of France in this debate, advocating for Lebanon's annexation to Syria in line with the promises made by Prime Minister Aristide Briand.

In 1936, Pierre Gemayel established a new political party inspired by the Falange Franquista and named it the Lebanese Phalanges (Kataeb). This party was often viewed as a social democratic group, primarily composed of Christians. Subsequently, in 1937, the Najjada Party was formed, following the model of the Kataeb, to serve as a political representation for the

Sunni community. The legislative elections resulted in Emile Eddé becoming the president of the Republic and Béchara el-Khoury as the Prime Minister.

### **The conditions of independence**

#### **Analysis of General de Gaulle's speech at USJ in 1931**

*« The profound influence of Hellenism, the might of the Roman Empire, the widespread of Christianity, the principles of classical order, the French Revolution, the recent era of imperialism, and the ongoing social transformations didn't merely arise from external circumstances. These significant historical movements were made possible by a shared and deeply rooted passion for an ideal. »*<sup>[1]</sup>

*« Yes, the dedication to the common good is what stands imperative today, as the moment of reconstruction has arrived. This moment carries immediate and pressing importance, especially for the youth of Lebanon, who have a homeland to build. In this splendid land, steeped in history and embraced by the protective embrace of the mountains, bridged to the Western world through the sea, and guided by the wisdom and support of France, you are entrusted with the task of crafting a state. It's not just about assuming its functions or exercising its powers; it's about infusing it with vitality and inner strength, for without these, institutions remain hollow. Your mission is to cultivate a collective spirit, where individuals willingly place the common interest above personal concerns – a fundamental prerequisite for the legitimacy of governing authorities, the establishment of genuine justice within the courts, the maintenance of order in the streets, and the conscientiousness of public servants. The creation of a state demands sacrifices, after all, it was all through sacrifices that Lebanon emerged».*

*« Yes, the Lebanese youth graduating from this institution will be well-equipped for the national mission. Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, including, above all, the President of the Lebanese Republic, with a commitment to discipline and selflessness, and bound to France through shared values and sentiments, this elite group will serve as the driving force for a people now burdened with the heavy responsibilities of liberty. »* (Najjar, 2002).

From 1929 to 1931, Commander de Gaulle served in the Levant region. He possessed a profound knowledge of Middle Eastern history and canon law and enjoyed reading the works of renowned orientalist novelists like Chateaubriand and Barrès. In his capacity overseeing the second and third bureaus (intelligence and operations), de Gaulle was responsible for ensuring the security and reorganization of the territories, which included 15,000 French soldiers and 13,000 special forces personnel. Upon concluding his mission in 1932, he authored the "Histoire des troupes du Levant" (History of the Levant Troops). A decade later, in 1942, he made an informal visit to Lebanon, emphasizing that France alone held the legal authority to initiate the independence process. These speech extracts were part of Charles de Gaulle's speech during the graduation ceremony for law students at USJ in 1931. De Gaulle emphasizes the role of the new generation in shaping the future Lebanese state. He outlines the conditions for independence, starting with constructing a homeland and a population

committed to their national responsibilities, which de Gaulle calls "the common good." This includes creating stable institutions and upholding core values, particularly "public spirit," which means a willingness to abide by the law, serve the common interest, keep justice, exercise discretionary duties within the administration, and, above all, respect the institutions.

De Gaulle challenges the students and, by extension, the broader Lebanese youth to reflect on the significance of serving their country, acknowledging the legacy of their ancestors and, most significantly, the role of France in the history and future of Lebanon. While de Gaulle supports independence, he even more strongly wishes for the continuity of the historical relationship between France and the Lebanese people.

### **From 1940 to 1943: the battle of independence**

World War II accelerated the process of independence. France initiated concessions as early as 1939, such as yielding the Alexandretta region to the Turkish government. Faced with Syrian nationalism, France had little choice but to consider the demands. The French government acknowledged the « *presence of a Syrian threat and Syrian disorder* », that required alleviation. In 1940, a new High Commissioner, General Dentz, was appointed by the Vichy government. Since the armistice's signing, Lebanon became the battleground between the Resistance (General Catroux's Free French Forces) and the French Levant troops. The armistice of Saint-Jean d'Acre was concluded, and the mandate was transferred to Britain. Britain weakened France's position. Churchill declared in the House of Commons in 1941 that « *there is no prospect of France retaining the same status in the Levant as it had before the war... or that, even during the ongoing hostilities, Free France should replace Vichy.* » (Naaman, 2016). During the summer of 1941, General Catroux voiced his support for independence: « *I am here to terminate the mandate regime and declare your freedom and independence. You can form either two distinct states or unite into a single state. Your sovereignty will be secured through a treaty that outlines our mutual relations.* » (Catroux, 1944) On December 25, 1941, General Catroux announced, « *Lebanon has now attained the privileges and rights associated with the status of a sovereign and independent state.* » (ibid., p. 227). However, the path to independence is quite complex. On March 18, 1943, General Catroux reestablished the Constitution, setting up a transitional government with a President of the Republic who simultaneously held the role of the head of government, assisted by two ministers. Catroux appointed Ayoub Tabet, whose mission was preparing for the upcoming legislative elections on August 29 and September 5. These elections ultimately led to the election of a new Lebanese president on September 21, Bechara el-Khoury, who, in turn, appointed Riad el-Solh as prime minister. Their agreement was formalized two days earlier, on September 19, when they reached a consensus on the National Pact. As defined by Catroux, the National Pact « *amounts to an agreement between the two constituents of the Lebanese population, with the aim of merging their diverse tendencies into a common ideology: the complete and absolute independence of Lebanon, without seeking Western protection or pursuing unity or federation with Eastern nations* » (El Khoury, 1983) If France resisted the mandate's end, independence became an «established fact». General Helleu

opposed any move toward independence during the war. Faced with the demands of Lebanese leaders who had voted for the dissolution of articles in the Constitution that referred to the mandate and who had gathered on the night of November 9 in the Chamber of Deputies to proclaim Lebanon's independence, General Helleu even resorted to imprisoning them. These leaders included deputies such as Adel Osseirane, Sélim Takla, Majid Arslan, Pierre Gemayel, Camille Chamoun, Saeb Salam, Abd el Halim Karameh, along with President Bechara el-Khoury and his Prime Minister Riad el-Solh. After negotiations with the French Committee of the National Liberation, these leaders were eventually released. On November 22, 1943, upon his return to Beirut, Bechara el-Khoury declared Lebanon's independence, although official recognition from France only came on January 3, 1944.

Catroux commented on these recent events:

*«The arrest of a head of state and constitutional ministers under a regime of even partial independence deeply wounded the pride of the Lebanese across all intellectual circles, whether Muslim or Christian. It greatly undermined the trust placed in us and amplified the growing tendency of Lebanese populace toward England. Helleu came to be perceived as an occupier, while Spears was viewed as a liberator» (Guerre, 1943).*

### **The legacy of the mandate in Lebanon**

France contributed to the economic and social development of Lebanon during the mandate period. In terms of urban planning and architecture, three urbanists played a role in Westernizing the city of Beirut with their projects: René Raymond Danger and Michel Ecochard. (Verdeil, 2010). We can highlight two typical buildings from the mandate period in Lebanon: The first one is Saint-Georges Hotel, which was the first modern building constructed in Beirut in 1920s-1930s. The hotel was designed and built by Jacques Poirrier, André Lotte, and Antoine Tabet.



Figure 5 Photograph of Saint-Georges Hotel, towards 1920-1930

The second one is Pine Residence, serving as the High Commissioner's residence since General Gouraud's arrival on November 21, 1919, and where he declared the State of Greater Lebanon on September 1, 1920. Its interior design is inspired by the Lyautey Residence in Rabat.

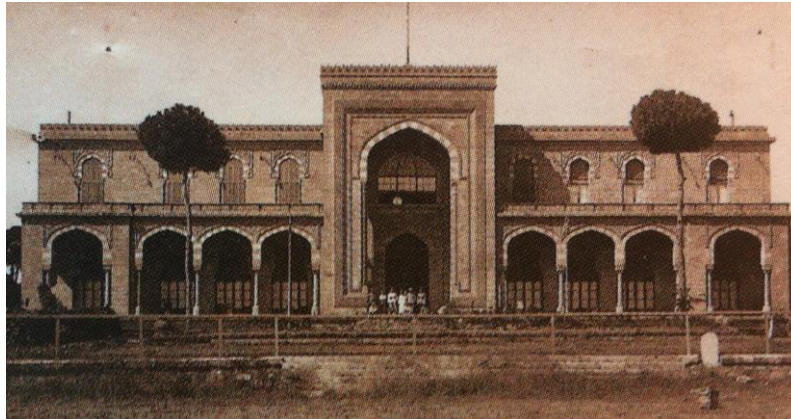


Figure 4 Photograph of the Pine Residence in Beirut. Source: Amoun Denise, *The Residence of Pine - Beirut. Art Creation Realisation, 1999*

France facilitated the construction of a tramway network and a railway network spanning nearly 1663 km, along with a pipeline in 1934. Additionally, France established an electricity and water supply network. Beyond infrastructure, France made significant contributions to Lebanon's educational and cultural landscape. Approximately fifty French-language newspapers were published during the mandate period. The network of the French Secular Mission operated six academic institutions, and France played a crucial role in establishing the Faculty of Law at USJ (University of Saint Joseph). As recounted by Senator Etienne Flandin in 1921:

*« This mandate represents an extension of our longstanding educational mission. It is the continuation of the work we must carry out by imparting the benefits of our governmental experience to a young nation needing guidance. » (Flandin, 1921).*

What remains from the mandated period in the present day?

France has left Lebanon with a substantial educational network. Despite French no longer being the official language of Lebanon as per the Constitution, Lebanon remains one of the largest French-speaking countries in the world. The area known as the "mandate district" in Beirut commemorates those who contributed to the establishment of Greater Lebanon, with streets named after notable figures like Foch, Allenby, Gouraud, and de Gaulle.

## Results

- French mandate ultimately established political sectarianism, as Article 95 outlined.

- In 1932, it marked a significant turning point during the mandate era, igniting a heated debate regarding the path to independence.
- World War II accelerated the process of independence. France initiated concessions; faced with Syrian nationalism, France had little choice but to consider the demands.
- France contributed to Lebanon's economic and social development during mandate period. In urban planning and architecture, three urbanists contributed to Westernizing the city of Beirut with their projects: René Raymond Danger and Michel Ecochard.
- France facilitated the construction of a tramway network and a railway network spanning nearly 1663 km, along with a pipeline in 1934. Additionally, France established an electricity and water supply network.
- France made significant contributions to Lebanon's educational and cultural landscape. Approximately fifty French-language newspapers were published during the mandate period. The network of the French Secular Mission operated six academic institutions, and France played a crucial role in establishing the Faculty of Law at USJ (University of Saint Joseph).

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, our article has explored the mandate era through the perspective of France's role in initiating and facilitating Lebanon's path to independence during a specific timeframe. While France initially did not intend to accelerate the process in 1926, it found itself compelled to do so due to regional issues, including the rise of Arab nationalism, particularly in Syria, and local concerns related to the balance between minority groups and the advantage given to Christians. Engaging in development initiatives, France significantly contributed to Lebanon's increased engagement with Western influences. This transformation is evident in the principles outlined in National Pact and, practice, in Lebanon's contemporary political landscape.

## **Acknowledgements**

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the Holy Spirit Kaslik University (USEK). I wish to express an immense depth of gratitude to Father Professor Karam Rizk and Father Joseph Makarzel for their guidance and initial support.

## References

### References in English

Hourani, Albert. (2016). « *Lebanon from feudalism to modern state* », Middle Eastern Studies, 2(3), 256-263.

Khoury, P. (1988). *Syria and the French Mandate*, Princeton University Press, 722.

Kurani, Habib. (1936). « *Education in territories under French mandate* », *The Open Court*, (2), 79-93.

Longrigg, Stephen (1972). *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, New York, Octagon Books, 404.

Miller. D.H. (1924). My diary at the Conference of Paris, vol. XIV.

Philipp, Thomas. (2004). SCHUMANN Christoph (dir.), *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syrian and Lebanon*, Beyrouth, BTS 96, 366.

Philippe, Gouraud, (2007), General Henri Gouraud in Lebanon and Syria 1919-1923, L'Harmattan, (1993), La Revue du Liban, No. 4121.

Schayegh, Cyrus and Arsan, Andrew. (2015) « *Pedagogical constituencies* », *In the Routledge handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, Routledge, 462.

Trabulsi, Fawaz (2012). *A History of modern Lebanon*, Pluto Press,

### References in French

Amoun, D. (1999). *La Residence des Pins*, Art Creation Réalisation, Beyrouth, 132.

Catroux, (1949). *Dans la bataille de la Méditerranée (Egypte, Levant, Afrique du Nord, 1940-1944)*, Paris.

Cadn, fds BM, 363. (2003). De Jouvenel à ministre des A.E., 3.9.1926, cité in Jean-David, Genèse de l'État mandataire : service des renseignements et bandes armées en Syrie et au Liban dans les années 1920, Publications de la Sorbonne, 383.

Cadn, fds BM, 363. (2002). De Jouvenel à ministre des A.E., 3.9.1926. Cité in Mizarahi Jean-David, « *La France et sa politique de mandat en Syrie et au Liban (1920-1939)* », in Meouchy Nadine, France, Syrie et Liban 1918-1946 : Les ambiguïtés et les dynamiques de la relation mandataire [online], Damas: Presses de l'Ifpo.



Chaigne-Oudin Anne-Lucie. (2006). *La France et les rivalités occidentales au Levant, Syrie-Liban 1918-1939*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 323.

EL Khoury, Béchara. (1983). *Haqa'iq lubnaniyya (Vérités libanaises)*, II, Beyrouth.

Flandin, Etienne. (1921). In *Journal Officiel de la République*, discussion du budget devant le Sénat, 5 avril.

Hokayem, Antoine. (1992) « *Emergence et affermissement de l'entité libanaise dans les tourmentes du Proche-Orient : 1841-1991* », *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, n°44, Liban, (1) 7-53.

Jaulin, Thibaut (2009) « *Démographie et politique au Liban sous le Mandat* », *Histoire & mesure*, XXIV – 1, 189-210.

Lamy, Etienne. (1898). « *La France du Levant* », *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Quatrième Période, Vol. 150, No. 2 (15), 421-439.

Laurens, Henry (2002) « *Le mandat français sur la Syrie et le Liban* », in Nadine Meouchy (dir.), *France, Syrie et Liban 1918-1946 : Les ambiguïtés et les dynamiques de la relation mandataire* [online], Damas: Presses de l'Ifpo, ISBN: 9782531594470.

Loheac, Lyne. (1994). *Daoud Ammoun et la création de l'Etat libanais*, Dar'oun, 199.

Malsagne, Stéphane. (2017). *Un oeil sur la diplomatie française. Le Liban de 1946 à 1990*, Geuthner, 338.

Meouchy, Nadine (dir.) (2002). *France, Syrie et Liban 1918-1946: Les ambiguïtés et les dynamiques de la relation mandataire* [online]. Damas : Presses de l'Ifpo, 436.

Meouchy, Nadine and Slugett Peter. (2004). *Les mandats français et anglais dans une perspective comparative*, Brill, 743.

Mizarahi, J.D. (2003). *Genèse de l'État mandataire: service des renseignements et bandes armées en Syrie et au Liban dans les années*, Publications de la Sorbonne, 462.

Naaman, Abdallah (2016). *Le Liban, Histoire d'une nation inachevée*, Editions Glyphe.

Najjar, Alexandre. (2002). *De Gaulle et le Liban. Vers l'Orient compliqué 1929-1931*, Editions Terres du Liban, 113.

Rabbath, Edmond. (1973). *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionnel*, Librairie orientale, Beyrouth, 586.

Verdeil, Éric. (2010). *Beyrouth et ses urbanistes : Une ville en plans (1946-1975)* [online]. : Presses de l'Ifpo, Beyrouth, 420.

Vienot, Pierre. (1939). « *Le mandat français sur le Levant* », *Politique étrangère*, n.2.