

# ALI WAEL EL ROMEH

TOPIC: HISTORY OF STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE IN LEBANON

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# Introduction

- ▶ The **history of Lebanon** covers the history of the modern Republic of Lebanon and the earlier emergence of Greater Lebanon under the French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon, as well as the previous history of the region, covered by the modern state.



# Pre-Independence period

- ▶ While the Lebanese have been in a constant struggle for independence from foreign powers since the age of the Old Testament, the modern struggle for Lebanese independence can be traced back to the emergence of Fakhr-al-Din II in the late 16th century, a Druze chief who became the first local leader in a thousand years to bring the major sects of Mount Lebanon into sustained mutual interaction. Fakhr-al-Din also brought western Europe back to Mount Lebanon.



# A Phoenician identity

- ▶ Following Ottoman repression, the Arabs were fed up with Ottoman rule. After the Turks were expelled from the Levant at the end of World War I, the Syrian National Congress in Damascus proclaimed independence and sovereignty over a region that also included Lebanon in 1920.<sup>[4]</sup> In Beirut, the Christian press expressed its hostility to the decisions of the Syrian National Congress.

# Government of Bechamoun

- ▶ After the imprisonment of the Lebanese officials, the Lebanese MPs reunited in the house of the speaker of parliament, Sabri Hamadé, and assigned the two uncaught ministers Emir Majid Arslan (Minister of National Defence) and Habib Abou Chahla to carry out the functions of the government. The two ministers then moved to Bechamoun and their government became known as the **Government of Bechamoun**.

# Post-Independence period

- ▶ After the independence, the modern Lebanese political system was founded in 1943 by an unwritten agreement between the two most prominent Christian and Muslim leaders, Khouri and al-Solh and which was later called the National Pact (الميثاق الوطني).



# *al Mithaq al Watani*

- ▶ The National Pact had 2 principles:
- ▶ Lebanon was to be a completely politically independent state. Lebanon would not enter into Western led alignments; in return, Lebanon would not compromise its sovereignty with Arab states.
- ▶ Lebanon would have an Arab face and another for the West, as it could not cut off its spiritual and intellectual ties with the West, which had helped it attain such a notable degree of progress.



# League of Nations Mandate (1920-1939)

- ▶ On October 27, 1919, the Lebanese delegation led by Maronite Patriarch Elias Peter Hoayek presented the Lebanese aspirations in a memorandum to the Paris Peace Conference. This included a significant extension of the frontiers of the Lebanon Mutasarrifate,<sup>[29]</sup> arguing that the additional areas constituted natural parts of Lebanon, despite the fact that the Christian community would not be a clear majority in such an enlarged state.



# World War II and independence(1)

- ▶ During World War II when the Vichy government assumed power over French territory in 1940, General Henri Fernand Dentz was appointed as high commissioner of Lebanon. This new turning point led to the resignation of Lebanese president Émile Eddé on April 4, 1941. After five days, Dentz appointed Alfred Naqqache for a presidency period that lasted only three months. The Vichy authorities allowed Nazi Germany to move aircraft and supplies through Syria to Iraq where they were used against British forces. Britain, fearing that Nazi Germany would gain full control of Lebanon and Syria by pressure on the weak Vichy government, sent its army into Syria and Lebanon.

# World War II and independence(2)

- ▶ After the fighting ended in Lebanon, General Charles de Gaulle visited the area. Under various political pressures from both inside and outside Lebanon, de Gaulle decided to recognize the independence of Lebanon. On November 26, 1941, General Georges Catroux announced that Lebanon would become independent under the authority of the Free French government.
- ▶ Elections were held in 1943 and on November 8, 1943 the new Lebanese government unilaterally abolished the mandate. The French reacted by throwing the new government into prison. In the face of international pressure, the French released the government officials on November 22, 1943 and accepted the independence of Lebanon.

# Conclusion

- ▶ Despite recurrent efforts to introduce a civil personal status code since 1926, personal status laws in Lebanon remain regulated by the confessional codices of the country's eighteen denominations. This chapter provides an overview of the debate from 1926 until the present, and examines how efforts at secularization were repeatedly thwarted due to veto rights accorded to sectarian heads in the Lebanese constitution. The codification of sectarian marriage and inheritance laws is related to Lebanon's confessional political system and to the attendant perpetuation of kinship ties and fluctuating confessional attitudes. The latter are measured and compared diachronically with a series of surveys. Paradoxically, the chronic weakness of the Lebanese state would render top-down reform measures an exceedingly difficult task, even as it opened the space for increasingly effective civil society activism aimed at dismantling the juridical hegemony of the sects.