

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Conflict and Institution Building in Lebanon, 1946-1955

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
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by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation broadens the inquiry into the history of state formation, economic development, and popular mobilization in Lebanon during the early independence period. The project challenges narratives of Lebanese history and politics that are rooted in exceptionalist and deterministic assumptions. It does so through an exploration of the macro-level transformations of state institutions, the discourses and practices that underpinned such shifts, and the particular series of struggles around Sharikat Kahrubah Lubnan that eventually led to the nationalization of the company. The dissertation highlights the ways in which state institutions during the first decade of independence featured a dramatic expansion in both their scope and reach vis-à-vis Lebanese citizens. Such shifts were very much shaped by the contexts of decolonization, the imperatives of regime consolidation, and the norms animating the post-World War II global and regional orders. However, they also reflected the contingent nature of the

nexus of alliances and conflicts that animated the local political economy. The dissertation therefore combines an attention to historical legacies with an appreciation of the strategies and options available to social actors in the dynamic juncture of decolonization. In doing so, this dissertation seeks less to posit an alternative static model of state formation, economic development, and popular mobilization. Rather, it argues that such processes must be disaggregated in both time and place so as to appreciate the ways in which they challenge rather than follow the scripted trajectories that have thus far characterized discussions of the period.

This dissertation of Ziad Munif Abu-Rish is approved.

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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

I have used a modified version of the style of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* for the transliteration of all Arabic terms, which favors minimal diacritics. Only those diacritical marks indicating the hamza (') and the 'ayn (‘) are used here. In references, I have retained the spelling of names (or their correct transliteration) as they appear in original source documents, even though in the body of the text itself I may have used the more commonly used spelling; for example, Khuri versus Khoury. All Arabic words have been italicized save for those that are proper nouns or have entered the English language, such as “hadith,” for example.

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I was extremely fortunate that my time in the Department of History coincided with the tenure of three graduate advisors: Lindsay Kovner, Eboni Shaw, and Hadley Porter. Their relentless commitment to ensuring graduate students funding and their assistance in surviving the University of California's bureaucracy anchored me in more ways than one

Lebanon is not the easiest of research sites to navigate, for reasons that have nothing to do with Orientalist clichés of mystery, treachery, and violence. Institutional affiliations granted to me by the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies, the Center for Behavioral Studies, and the Issam Faris Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, all at the American University of Beirut, afforded me regular campus access as well as the academic credentials necessary for networking throughout Lebanon. I was lucky to have countless conversations with colleagues and scholars who were kind enough to share their thoughts on my research topic, pass on lessons learned from their own research experience, introduce me to others, or simply allow me to think out loud with them. These individuals include Betty Anderson, Sami Atallah, Reem Baylouni, Michael Gasper, Mona Harb, Nubar Hovsopian, Nick Kardahji, Laleh Khalili, Jamil

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mobilization, and institutional outcomes. Maya Mikdashi highlighted new ways of thinking through the complexities and problematics that inform the historiography and contemporary politics of Lebanon. Rosie Bsheer shared with me a love for the peripheral geographies that make up Middle East studies as well as an interest in the forgotten histories of foreclosed possibilities. Her friendship and camaraderie have been crucial to my ability to withstand the pressures of graduate work. I am particularly indebted to Nadya Sbaiti and Sherene Seikaly, two individuals who graciously gave me much of their time long before we became the friends that we are today. Nadya was the first person to encourage me to take up my dissertation topic and she guided and facilitated my fieldwork in Lebanon. Sherene inspired me to relish in the specificities of history while at the same time not lose sight of the comparative implications of one's research. Her academic contributions inspire me to be a better scholar. The feedback from Rosie, Nadya, and Sherene on multiple chapters is a testament to their caring support as well as my respect for each of them. Finally, the camaraderie of Asli Bali from the moment she joined the UCLA community has been integral to my making it through graduate school. Whether it was taking me out to dinner, lending me her car, strategizing the job market, or countless other instances, our friendship is perhaps the best surprise of my time in Los Angeles.

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## INTRODUCTION

According to articles, speeches, and flyers published during the decade after independence (1946), Lebanese activists and politicians routinely debated the issue of the proper relationship between the state and the economy. Was the state to be the primary engine of development? Or would it be the instrument for generating the flow of resources within an economy in which the private sector remained the dominant actor? Would the development of the Lebanese economy be based on primary (raw materials), secondary (manufacturing), or tertiary (service) activities? These questions, and others, formed the heart of the debate about the future of state-market relations in Lebanon.

Resolving these questions was not simply an intellectual exercise, but rather part of a larger social conflict at the heart of Lebanese society. After independence, the struggle of anti-colonialism gave way to the struggle of development. Competition to define the nature of state-market relations was at the core of these conflicts. The stakes were nothing less than the (re)organization of the politics and economic of Lebanon, the (re)definition of the role of its various social groups, and access to resources and control over the rents associated with state and market formation. Consequently, these struggles featured the mobilization and participation of various elite and popular groups. They played out in parliamentary debates and party meetings, through newspapers and political leaflets, and occasionally on the streets.

This dissertation attempts to widen the inquiry into the history of Lebanon by identifying more closely the nature of state institutions and forms of collective action around their creation in post-colonial Lebanon. The period between 1946 and 1955 was a

key era in state formation, economic development, and popular mobilization. Yet little is known about the ways in which possibilities for institution building and struggles around such a process informed patterns of collective mobilization. There are no studies of conflicts over the political economy of this period. There is therefore much to learn about how and why collective forms of mobilization were organized around the institutions of the private market as well as the state. What was the relative role played by global, regional, and local forces in creating Lebanon's political economy of state institutions? How did different social actors understand and pursue their interests in the emerging political economy? Which policies and institutions did elite and popular groups mobilize around? What alliances and conflicts characterized those different mobilizations? How were these struggles mirrored in changing patterns of Lebanon's state-market relations and the transformation of its economic institutions?

Conflict around the organization of a state's political economy was, of course, not unique to Lebanon during the decades under study. The period of decolonization featured the emergence of similar struggles across the Middle East and beyond. What marks Lebanon's history as unique is the attendant organization of state-market relations. Although Middle Eastern states experienced a diversity of conditions by the time of independence, including variations in the colonial experience,<sup>1</sup> the social composition of

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<sup>1</sup> For a comparative perspective on the colonial experience of Middle Eastern states, see, for example, Nadine Meouchy and Peter Sluglett (eds.), *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives* (Boston: Brill, 2004). In particular, see Peter Sluglett's essay entitled "Les mandats / The Mandates: Some Reflections on the Nature of the British Presence in Iraq (1918-1932) and the French Presence in Syria (1914-1946)," pp. 103-128. Alternatively, in the same volume, see Abdallah Hanna, "The Attitude of the French Mandatory Authorities Towards Land Ownership in Syria," pp. 457-476; Michael Fischbach, "The British Land Program and State-Societal Cooperation in Transjordan," pp. 477-496

nationalist movements,<sup>2</sup> as well as the specific political arrangements and economic conditions that existed at independence,<sup>3</sup> the vast majority of their political economies coalesced around a model of state-market relations underpinned by statist and populist principles. These generally included post-independence constitutions that codified interventionist and redistributive principles; agrarian reforms to redress inequalities in the rural economy; nationalizations of industry, banking, and trade, producing a dramatic expansion in the scale of the public sector; corporatist systems of interest representation; import substitution industrialization; and state-provided social services, including education, health care, food subsidies and other benefits.<sup>4</sup> This was the case in states with regimes ushered in by means of military coups (e.g., Egypt, Iraq, and Syria) and those with regimes that maintained their hold on power (e.g., Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia).

In the case of Lebanon, the political economy was organized around an outward-oriented market economy in which the service sector was dominant. In this respect, Lebanon represents an analytic puzzle. Its political economy was organized around non-populist and non-statist principles at a time when the ordering of the global economy and dominant norms in newly independent states favored opposite principles. My dissertation seeks to account for this unique state building trajectory. It specifically looks for an

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<sup>2</sup> For analyses of the origins and dynamics and different nationalist movements across the Middle East, see, James Janikowski and Israel Gershoni (eds.), *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Roger Owen and Sevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economics in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> See Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 114-141; Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 173-204.

explanation for the organization of Lebanon's political economy in the very struggles that sought to shape the institutions and policies that defined it. These struggles were influenced by the normative and institutional legacies of the Ottoman Empire and the French mandate. However, the specific state building trajectory of Lebanon and its attendant economic development was ultimately defined by the strategies of elite and popular groups and by contingent events. It is these contexts, contingencies, and strategies that form the basis of this dissertation's area of inquiry.

### **Literature Review**

My research agenda is animated by the goals of historicizing the organization of Lebanon's political economy and moving beyond the conventional focus on the confessional nature of Lebanese politics. Consequently, my dissertation engages with both the historiography of modern Lebanon and the interdisciplinary scholarship on the political economy of development.

#### *The Historiography of Modern Lebanon*

The bulk of the historiography of modern Lebanon has focused on either the late Ottoman period (1839-1920) or that of the civil war (1975-1990). Scholarship on the late Ottoman period has focused on the integration of the region into the world economy, the extension of the Ottoman state's reach into the daily lives of its subjects, and the outbreak of sectarian violence.<sup>5</sup> Scholarship on the civil war has focused on the collapse of the Lebanese state, the emergence of militias as the primary political, economic and social

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see, respectively, Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Lebanon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

institutions, and varied forms of foreign intervention.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the last decade of historical research has been characterized by a rise in the level of interest in the French mandate period (1920-1946). Works on this period have addressed the processes by which national identity was produced and social groups were mobilized within the framework of French colonial administration.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, scholars have paid little attention to the period of 1946-1975 in general, and that of the first decade of independence in particular. This is especially striking in light of the fact that the decade of the 1950s was a particularly pivotal one in Lebanese history—as it was for much of the Middle East—and that the 1960s was considered something of a “golden age” (although, in fact, it was a period in which prosperity was counterbalanced by extreme poverty and high levels of oppositional mobilization). One reason for this gap in the historiography has to do with the dearth of written sources from the first decade of independence. This is largely a result of the devastating effects of the fifteen-year civil war (1975-1990). While concerted efforts have been made to collect and archive historical documents, much was lost due to the destruction during the war. Given that the Ottoman (later Turkish) and French authorities preserved the majority of their records, the periods of the late Ottoman Empire and the French mandate provide much more promising avenues for research and analysis.

A more important factor in explaining the gap in the historiography of modern

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<sup>6</sup> For examples, see, respectively, Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York: Atheneum, 1990); Elizabeth Picard, “The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon,” in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, edited by Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000): pp. 292-322; Rashid Khalidi, “Problems of Foreign Intervention in Lebanon,” *American-Arab Affairs* (1983-1984), pp. 24-30.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

Lebanon has to do with how scholars have conceptualized the early decades of Lebanese independence vis-à-vis the *longue durée* of the history of Lebanon. When juxtaposed to the violent incidents of the mid-nineteenth century and those of the civil war (1975-1990), the lack of prolonged violent outbreak and concomitant political stability of the period between 1946 and 1975 has been considered by some scholars as the exception to the rule that is the modern history of Lebanon.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, other scholars project back into the period of early independence the dynamics of the fifteen-year civil war. Many of these scholars have implicitly or explicitly foreshadowed the civil war in their histories of pre-war Lebanon.<sup>9</sup> Their analyses are framed within a *telos* of civil war whereby everything prior to 1975 becomes “pre-war.”

#### *Sectarianism, Nationalism, and the State*

What little research has been conducted on the early post-independence period has mainly been concerned with specific personalities, movements, and events.<sup>10</sup> Such studies provide important insights into their respective subjects of inquiry. Nevertheless, these studies represent traditional political histories that either ignore the social and cultural dynamics associated with their subjects or assume a static social and cultural context.<sup>11</sup> Despite their different foci, the majority of literature produced on the first

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985); Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Farid al-Khazen, *Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Kamal Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War: Lebanon, 1958-1976* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> For example, see, respectively, Caroline Attié, *Struggle in the Levant: Lebanon in the 1950s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Adel Beshara, *Lebanon: Politics of Frustration – The Failed Coup of 1961* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005); Irene L. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Eyal Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence* (London, I.B Tauris, 2000).

decade of independence falls into one of two schools of analysis vis-à-vis their understanding of the politics of the period.

The first line of analysis takes the sect as its central unit of analysis. For scholars following this line of analysis, the history of Lebanon is the history of different sects (i.e., Druze, Greek Orthodox, Maronite, Shi'i, and Sunni) struggling with one another for political power, economic resources, and international legitimacy within a given political configuration.<sup>12</sup> This framework is applied to the Ottoman, French mandate, and post-colonial periods. Scholars writing within this framework consider the sectarian identities of individuals and movements as primary and fixed such that the sect is narrated as the fundamental historical agent. These scholars suggest a binary relationship between sectarian identity and the nation-state in which Lebanese citizens privilege the former; or the latter does not really exist at all.

The second framework of analysis assumes that the primary cleavage that animates the history of Lebanon during the decades of early independence is a struggle between the forces of Lebanese nationalism and those of Arab nationalism.<sup>13</sup> Each of these nationalist orientations is assumed to be a function of a particular sectarian identity. More specifically, the assumption is that a Lebanese Christian is more likely to be oriented toward a more exclusive conception of the Lebanese nation; one that is set apart from the broader Arabo-Islamic history and more closely aligned with the West. The

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Albert Hourani, *Political Society in Lebanon: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Center for Lebanese Studies, 1989); Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Youssef Chaitiani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon: The Decline of Arab Nationalism and the Triumph of the State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Clovis Maksoud, "Lebanon and Arab Nationalism," in *Politics in Lebanon*, edited by Leonard Binder (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966).

counterpart to this is that a Lebanese Muslim is more likely to be oriented toward a more expansive conception of the Lebanese nation, one that is part of the broader Arabo-Islamic history of the region and more closely aligned with the Arab nationalist foreign policy orientation. This framework of analysis is applied to the colonial and post-colonial periods. The competition between Lebanese nationalists and Arab nationalists, the narrative argues, is implicated in all aspects of Lebanese politics including conflicts over foreign relations, internal politics, and economic policies.

Both frameworks of analysis are deeply problematic and are specific manifestations of larger assumptions about nationalism and the state in the Middle East. In particular, much of the scholarship on post-colonial Lebanon views it as the example *par excellence* of the alleged artificiality of the Middle Eastern state; the main thrust of which is that the Middle Eastern state is not enmeshed in the processes and structures of society. For many scholars, the relationship between the identity of the state and that of the society it governs has continued to be an important theme, both explicitly and implicitly. More specifically, for them, the Middle East state system is defined by a “divergence of identity and state.”<sup>14</sup> As a consequence of such assumptions, “‘society-centered’ approaches” have dominated the study of politics in the Middle East, including Lebanon, while the assumed prominence of “tribalism, sectarianism, regionalism, primordial sentiments, and ascriptive identities in Middle Eastern politics [has] contributed to the view that the state is little more than an arena of socially engendered

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<sup>14</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch, *The International Relations of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 54. See in particular his chapter entitled “Identity and Sovereignty in the Regional System,” pp. 54-72, which forms the basis of much of his analysis of international and domestic politics among Middle Eastern states.

conflict or an instrument of family, sect, or class domination.”<sup>15</sup> While the earliest manifestations of such an assumption can be seen in Orientalist writings, it also constitutes part of the analyses of many scholars who view themselves as writing against Orientalism.<sup>16</sup> As will be discussed immediately below, such an assumption has been challenged by a different set of scholars working from a global comparative perspective on questions focused on the political sociability of the region’s populations.

The problem with making the sect the central unit of analysis is that it is based on an essentialist conception of identity and a fixed idea of political community. The majority of the historiography of Lebanon has emphasized the sectarian markers of individuals and groups throughout Lebanese history without interrogating the ways in which the meaning of these markers was constantly changing in relation to a range of processes. Recently, historians and other scholars have begun to offer correctives to the ahistorical understanding of sectarianism in Lebanon by demonstrating how sectarianism is a modern phenomenon, while suggesting ways in which it is constitutive of both nationalism and the state in Lebanon.<sup>17</sup>

Assumptions about nationalism that divide the population of Lebanon into Arab nationalists and Lebanese nationalists are, like those that privilege sect, rooted in

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<sup>15</sup> See Lisa Anderson, “The State in the Middle East and North Africa,” *Comparative Politics* (Oct. 1987): pp. 1-11.

<sup>16</sup> Sami Zubaida highlights and critiques the existence of this assumption, which he argues is shared by both Orientalists (i.e., Bertrand Badie) and Dependency scholars (i.e., Paul Vielle). See Sami Zubaida, “The Nation State in the Middle East,” in *Islam, the People, and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East*, idem (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993): pp. 121-182,

<sup>17</sup> Michael Gilson, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996); Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000); Fawwaz Trabulsi, *A History of Lebanon* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007).

essentialist and teleological conceptions of identity. Over the past two decades, a number of scholars have demonstrated how a variety of groups, both elite and non-elite, have struggled to define the nation to which they understood themselves as belonging.<sup>18</sup> These scholars have also highlighted combinations of coercive and consensual processes that caused the majority of the states' populations to internalize specific national identities, which articulated with their respective state boundaries. Thus some scholars have argued against interpreting schemes for Arab unification as manifestations of an inherently Arab political identity on the part of its advocates. They argue, instead, that such schemes are better understood as functions of the level of state consolidation.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, political coalitions, deprived of domestic resources (institutional, fiscal, and symbolic), turned to unification with other states to bolster their legitimacy and/or overcome collective action dilemmas.<sup>20</sup>

Recent scholarship on the Middle East has thus pointed to the enormous 'success' of Middle Eastern populations' internalization of the nation-state model as well as the current boundaries of the existing state system. In part, this is because "the nation state has [become] a 'compulsory' model" for organizing political community.<sup>21</sup> Even more so, this 'success' is the result of a variety of processes throughout the nineteenth and

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of the Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Israel Gershoni, "Rethinking the Formation of Arab Nationalism in the Middle East, 1920-1945: Old and New Narratives," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle*, edited by James Janikowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 3-25; Fred Halliday, "The Formation of Yemeni Nationalism: Initial Reflections," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle*, edited by James Janikowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 26-41; Fred Halliday, "The Nationalism Debate and the Middle East," *Middle Eastern Lectures* 3 (1999): pp. 23-48.

<sup>21</sup> Zubaida, "The Nation State," p. 121.

early twentieth centuries that brought into being what Sami Zubaida has termed a “modern political field . . . closely involved in the constitution and the functioning of [which] Benedict Anderson has called ‘the possibility of imagining the nation’ as a community, and the conditions of that possibility.”<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, “communal and ethnic divisions are constructed and conceived in terms of that field and its topology; in Anderson’s terms they become part of the imagined community.”<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault makes a similar argument when he claims that the modern state is a form of social organization defined by a new constellation of power relations: “rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted ‘above’ society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of.”<sup>24</sup> In such conditions, which manifested across the world by the early twentieth century, “the state is not simply one of the forms or specific situations of the exercise of power—even if it is the most important—but that in a certain way all other forms of power relations must refer to it.”<sup>25</sup>

This dissertation builds on the insights discussed above by exploring the ways in which various social actors were invested in the project of Lebanese state formation. It seeks to provide a social and cultural history of the 1946-1975 period by examining the struggles to organize the political economy, an issue that was at the center of political debates, economic policies, social mobilizations, and cultural mediations. The struggles to organize the political economy of Lebanon provide an excellent vantage point from

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<sup>22</sup> Zubaida, “The Nation State,” p. 146.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” p. 791.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 793.

which to highlight non-sectarian forms of social agency and a more dynamic conception of Lebanese nationalism.

*The Political Economy of State Building*

In addition to filling a void in the historiography of modern Lebanon, my project will also enhance our understanding of broader processes of state and market formation. Although political economy has been the focus of recent studies on state building in the Middle East,<sup>26</sup> there have been very few historical studies that examine the social, cultural, and institutional terrain of the political economy of post-colonial Lebanon. What little research has been conducted is primarily concerned with categorizing and evaluating the macroeconomic performance of the Lebanese economy.<sup>27</sup> Such studies provide important insights into the nature of the Lebanese economy: the relationship between the private and public sectors, its sectoral composition, the regulatory regimes that governed them, as well as patterns of capital formation and employment. These studies contrast the Lebanese economy to that of other Middle Eastern and late developing states in terms of both the growth rates achieved (much higher for Lebanon)

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Henry Clement and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Giacomo Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State* (London: Routledge, 1990); Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Toufic Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire* (New York: Brill, 2004); Carolyn L. Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: The Rise of An Open Economy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998); Georges Hakim, "The Economic Basis of the Lebanese Polity," in *Politics in Lebanon*, edited by Leonard Binder (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1966); Charles Issawi, "Economic Development and Political Liberalism in Lebanon," *Middle East Journal* (Summer 1964): pp. 69-83; Roger Owen, "The Economic History of Lebanon 1943-1974: Its Salient Features," *Toward A Viable Lebanon*, edited by Halim Barakat (Washington DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1988); Samir Makdisi, *Financial Policy and Economic Growth: The Lebanese Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

and the nature of economic development (private sector-led in the case of Lebanon as opposed to the state-led model in other countries).

Nevertheless, these studies fail to address the central problem of Lebanon vis-à-vis other late developing countries. The political economy of Lebanon was uniquely organized (i.e., non-statist and non-populist) as compared to other Middle Eastern states in spite of a shared institutional and normative legacy. Furthermore, the divergent organization of Lebanon's political economy was consolidated in a global and regional context (shaped both by material and discursive forces) that favored statist and populist forms of organizing state-market relations. Such a line of inquiry is not meant to assume a scripted trajectory of state and market formation. Rather, it is a response to the deafening silence surrounding the political economy of Lebanon in the broader literature on the political economy of late developing states. This silence is clearly a function of the fact that the majority of scholarly works on the political economy of development have been written within a comparative perspective, and that—for the period in question (the early decades of the post-World War Two period)—the majority of late developing states coalesced around a political economy model that placed the state at the center of economic development. I believe that a historical analysis of Lebanon's political economy during the first decade of post-independence is vital precisely because of its divergence from the Middle Eastern norm.

Within the works that address the political economy of Lebanon, there are two competing narratives. One set of scholars argues that the Lebanese state is the product of a power-sharing compromise between notables of different sects and therefore was never

meant to stand above society let alone intervene in the economy.<sup>28</sup> They implicitly suggest that Lebanon's outward-oriented service economy results from a minimalist state with no interventionist powers. For these scholars, the organization of Lebanon's political economy is simply the function of the absence of any real state institutions. Alternatively, another set of scholars takes more seriously the existence of Lebanese state institutions and their roles in organizing the economy, even if those institutions simply provided the administrative and legal framework for the liberalized movement of goods and capital both within and across Lebanon's borders.<sup>29</sup> For these scholars, the trajectory of state-market relations in Lebanon is the product of decision-making by a politico-economic elite.

My project challenges these interpretations by drawing on insights from the literature on the comparative study of the political economy of state building, not withstanding its silence on Lebanon. I plan to show how the creation of institutions and conflicts over the shape and function of those institutions were central features of Lebanon's state building history. As many scholars have shown, the organization of any national economy, irrespective of the balance between market forces and state planning within it, requires the construction of an institutional framework to regulate the actions of various economic actors (e.g., producers, importers, and workers).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, these

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Toufic Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire* (New York: Brill, 2004); Carolyn L. Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: The Rise of An Open Economy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> See Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, "The Myths of the Market and the Common History of Late Developers," *Politics and Society* (September 1993): pp. 245-274.

scholars have shown that the making economic policy and the building of economic institutions are highly conflictual processes involving competing social actors.<sup>31</sup> Rather than overemphasizing the unity and role of economic elites in policy formation, my project demonstrates how, in the case of Lebanon, struggles over the organization of a state's political economy were characterized by shifting alliances and conflicts both within elite groups (i.e, business groups) as well as between elite and popular groups (e.g., cross-class coalitions).

The research of Elizabeth Thompson and Youssef Chaitiani form the starting point of my research with respect to the literature on Lebanon.<sup>32</sup> Contrary to top-down arguments about the organization of political economies, Thompson highlights how elite and popular mobilization was central to the trajectory of Lebanon's political economy under French rule. Chaitiani provides an insightful analysis into the early independence struggles around the fate of the Syrian-Lebanese Customs Union established during the French mandate. His work on these struggles, which culminated in the abolition of the union in 1950, is one of the only works that focuses on the post-colonial shaping of Lebanon's economy. While Thompson and Chaitiani's contributions are important ones, their analyses nevertheless leave unexplained the post-colonial trajectory of Lebanon's state-market relations and the politics that underpinned them. Despite her argument that there was an ongoing struggle to define the relationship between the state and the

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Steven Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria: Institutions and Social Conflict 1946-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of the Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Youssef Chaitiani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon: The Decline of Arab Nationalism and the Triumph of the State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

economy, Thompson does little to explain Lebanon's early independence retreat from the populist political economy that took shape in mandate Lebanon.<sup>33</sup> Chaitiani's analysis focuses on an event that, while constitutive of the consolidation of an independent Lebanese national economy, does not shed light on how Lebanon's political economy was subsequently organized in accordance with an outward-oriented service economy. My project aims to push further the type of research both these scholars have produced by exploring the struggles to organize Lebanon's political economy between 1946 and 1955.

### **On Methodology**

This dissertation project seeks to widen the inquiry into economics and politics in Lebanon beyond the confines of sectarianism as an analytical framework and beyond conceptions of social groups as sharply articulated populations whose interactions occur as scripted processes. The model of collective action that I utilize centers on rival coalitions whose institutional form varied depending on whether they were elite- or popular-based groups. Economic elites organized around a model of collective action often described as business groups. These are families or other communally linked investors with holdings that span primary, secondary, and tertiary economic sectors. In other words, they are a combination of big landlords, bankers, and manufacturers. Such business groups, while containing a majority of families from one sect, cut across sects

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<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that Thompson's work contains specific references to the post-colonial transformation of the Lebanese economy. She argues that the divergence between the political economies of Lebanon and Syria was a function of the overwhelmingly larger presence of private organizations and institutions in Lebanon as opposed to Syria. However, this is an underdeveloped and isolated argument on Thompson's part. Even more so, the correlation between private institutions and Lebanon's outward-oriented service economy ignores the fact that the organization of its political economy continued to be a focus of social mobilizations and business conflicts, which were central in determining the nature of state-market relations.

and often found themselves competing with business groups of a similar sectarian composition. Alternatively, popular groups organized around models of collective action often captured by the union and popular committee models. These models featured individuals and groups from similar regions or economic sectors organizing along specific and contingent interest-based models of collective action. I trace the strategies of both these types of groups in their struggle to shape the nature of institutional arrangements and capture the benefits thereof.

Yet such mobilizations were not void of context. They occurred at a particular local and regional juncture defined by decolonization and the expanding scope and reach of state bureaucracies. Consequently such contemporary contexts are as important as the historical legacies that preceded them. No where is this clearer than in the case of Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut, the electricity provide for Beirut during the period under consideration. Thus the dissertation will take as a specific case study the history of this company, the public utility it provided, and the politics that undergirded and were engendered by such dynamics.

### **Sources**

The ability to conduct research on Lebanon is constrained by the reality of significant gaps in local written sources of the post-independence period. This was the starting point for any inquiry into this subject of this dissertation. In attempting to compensate for this fact, I have relied on broad array of institutional repositories in the hopes of piecing together the archival evidence necessary to both construct and document the arguments of this dissertation.

The Lebanese National Archives in Beirut furnished the bulk of the official records. These mostly included the collection of presidential, cabinet, parliamentary, and ministerial announcements as well as varied government announcements regularly published as *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*. Unfortunately, no specific ministerial records from the period under consideration were made available during my time in local national archive. Nevertheless, it was through the pages of *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* that I first became aware of the sheer volume of decrees governing almost every aspect of daily political, economic, social, cultural, family, and personal life. Viewing the annual volumes side by side, couple with the compiled and bounded index of decrees rendered void any doubt that there was a primary role for public institutions in the trajectory of state and market formation in post-colonial Lebanon. It was through *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* that I first became aware of the various fields of state institutional management, and how these fields multiplied in the wake of independence and early post-colonialism.

However, laws alone would not really tell us much more than what the timing, form, and content of specific institutional arrangements. Therefore, in addition to examining the legal edifice I also delved into the discourses, rationalizations, and mobilizations that underpinned these institutional arrangements. I also explored the counter-discourses, critiques, and oppositional mobilizations these arrangements engendered. For these dynamics, I turned to the Nami Jafet Library at the American University of Beirut. The array of newspaper and magazine collections, development reports, and historical encyclopedias provided much of nuance that *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* rendered invisible. This latter set of sources brought to life the dividing the

conflicts engendered by the processes of post-colonial institution building and reflective of them.

In addition, British and US repositories were important in complementing the local sources identified in Lebanon and corroborating many of the facts. This dissertation has avoided the use of diplomatic records for the instrumental purposes of highlighting local sources and challenging the trend of using British, French, and US source material to narrate the early history of post-colonial Lebanon. Nevertheless, the number of Lebanese primary sources available in such repositories constantly surprised me. These sources could not be found in Lebanon, at least not through a search of the catalogues of various local repositories.

Finally, a limited number of oral histories were important in supplementing the written documentation, if not helping me read through them with a different perspective. Those individuals that lived through the first decade of post-independence and were alive during my fieldwork were far and few in between. This is especially so of those with concrete recollections of the period. Nevertheless, those few interviews I did conduct provided important windows into how some people experienced the processes described in this dissertation. In doing so, they highlighted the ways in which individuals experience historical processes in much more contradictory ways than the written sources indicated.

While many of the official sources Nevertheless, I will ground my research in primary sources available from the period under study (1946-1975). I am particularly interested in using a variety of local primary sources in order to reconstruct the social conflict that took place in Lebanon over the organization of the country's political

economy. Such an approach will include government documents, those of various political parties and factions, press coverage from the period under study, as well as oral history interviews. In addition, I will draw on French and U.S. consular archives.

I will examine the collection of government documents held at the Lebanese National Archives (LNA), which include presidential speeches, parliamentary debates, and laws enacted, as well as studies, reports, and memos of the various government ministries. I will also make use of the documents of different political parties, labor unions, and women's organizations, including the comprehensive collection of their publications held at the American University of Beirut's (AUB) Nami Jafet Memorial Library. For additional documentation such as memoranda, talking points, press releases, and leaflets, I will examine several party and private archives. In terms of press coverage, I will engage with the impressive holdings of local newspapers and magazines of the Bibliothèque Orientale at the Université Saint-Joseph (USJ). Oral histories will be important to supplement the written documentation and to provide critical insight into the peculiarities of the social conflicts of the time. I will therefore conduct interviews with a number of former government officials, businessmen, and political activists. Finally, I will consult French Embassy and U.S. State Department records on Lebanese economic development. Such an array of repositories and sources will require twelve months of research.

### **Plan of the Dissertation**

The chapters of this dissertation are organized according to chronology and theme. Within that structure, I have attempted to maintain the chronological order and thematic

integrity of each section. However, there will naturally be some overlap between sections as well as chapters.

Chapter one outlines the establishment of modern Lebanon as a network of bureaucratic practices and the basis of a national identity. It narrates the macro-processes of state formation and economic development during the French mandate, highlighting those critical legacies and junctures that would be relevant to the unfolding of the country's postcolonial history from 1946 through 1955, and which is the main focus of this dissertation. While the chapter draws heavily on the secondary literature, it also incorporates my own rereading of key events and processes during the colonial period.

Chapter two critically interrogates the assumption that post-independence Lebanon was characterized by a minimalist configuration of state institutions. It outlines the political economy of Lebanon during the decade of early post-independence. More substantively, it provides the institutional context for the period under consideration, highlighting the significant transformations in both the scope and reach of state institutions.

Chapter three introduces the specific case study of Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut. It discusses the detailed Ottoman and colonial history of the company, the provision of electricity within Beirut, and the mobilizations around such dynamics. The discussion builds on the preceding discussion of state formation, economic development, elite conflict, and popular mobilization through a micro-history of the company.

Chapter four picks up the story of the Beirut Electricity Company on the eve of independence. It explores how the context French evacuation and post-colonial politics changed the contours of the struggle over the electricity company for both elites and

popular groups. The history of post-colonial struggles over the company and its eventual nationalization in 1954 challenges many of exceptionalist and deterministic assumptions of state and market formation in Lebanon. It also provides a different vantage point from which to explore collective mobilizations and their associated dynamics.

This dissertation ends with an assessment of the overall findings of the dissertation. In particular, it discusses how they challenge our current understanding of the politics and economics of Lebanon during the period (and in general), as well as new questions it opens up for further research.

## INTRODUCTION

According to articles, speeches, and flyers published during the decade after independence (1946), Lebanese activists and politicians routinely debated the issue of the proper relationship between the state and the economy. Was the state to be the primary engine of development? Or would it be the instrument for generating the flow of resources within an economy in which the private sector remained the dominant actor? Would the development of the Lebanese economy be based on primary (raw materials), secondary (manufacturing), or tertiary (service) activities? These questions, and others, formed the heart of the debate about the future of state-market relations in Lebanon.

Resolving these questions was not simply an intellectual exercise, but rather part of a larger social conflict at the heart of Lebanese society. After independence, the struggle of anti-colonialism gave way to the struggle of development. Competition to define the nature of state-market relations was at the core of these conflicts. The stakes were nothing less than the (re)organization of the politics and economic of Lebanon, the (re)definition of the role of its various social groups, and access to resources and control over the rents associated with state and market formation. Consequently, these struggles featured the mobilization and participation of various elite and popular groups. They played out in parliamentary debates and party meetings, through newspapers and political leaflets, and occasionally on the streets.

This dissertation attempts to widen the inquiry into the history of Lebanon by identifying more closely the nature of state institutions and forms of collective action around their creation in post-colonial Lebanon. The period between 1946 and 1955 was a

key era in state formation, economic development, and popular mobilization. Yet little is known about the ways in which possibilities for institution building and struggles around such a process informed patterns of collective mobilization. There are no studies of conflicts over the political economy of this period. There is therefore much to learn about how and why collective forms of mobilization were organized around the institutions of the private market as well as the state. What was the relative role played by global, regional, and local forces in creating Lebanon's political economy of state institutions? How did different social actors understand and pursue their interests in the emerging political economy? Which policies and institutions did elite and popular groups mobilize around? What alliances and conflicts characterized those different mobilizations? How were these struggles mirrored in changing patterns of Lebanon's state-market relations and the transformation of its economic institutions?

Conflict around the organization of a state's political economy was, of course, not unique to Lebanon during the decades under study. The period of decolonization featured the emergence of similar struggles across the Middle East and beyond. What marks Lebanon's history as unique is the attendant organization of state-market relations. Although Middle Eastern states experienced a diversity of conditions by the time of independence, including variations in the colonial experience,<sup>1</sup> the social composition of

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<sup>1</sup> For a comparative perspective on the colonial experience of Middle Eastern states, see, for example, Nadine Meouchy and Peter Sluglett (eds.), *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives* (Boston: Brill, 2004). In particular, see Peter Sluglett's essay entitled "Les mandats / The Mandates: Some Reflections on the Nature of the British Presence in Iraq (1918-1932) and the French Presence in Syria (1914-1946)," pp. 103-128. Alternatively, in the same volume, see Abdallah Hanna, "The Attitude of the French Mandatory Authorities Towards Land Ownership in Syria," pp. 457-476; Michael Fischbach, "The British Land Program and State-Societal Cooperation in Transjordan," pp. 477-496

nationalist movements,<sup>2</sup> as well as the specific political arrangements and economic conditions that existed at independence,<sup>3</sup> the vast majority of their political economies coalesced around a model of state-market relations underpinned by statist and populist principles. These generally included post-independence constitutions that codified interventionist and redistributive principles; agrarian reforms to redress inequalities in the rural economy; nationalizations of industry, banking, and trade, producing a dramatic expansion in the scale of the public sector; corporatist systems of interest representation; import substitution industrialization; and state-provided social services, including education, health care, food subsidies and other benefits.<sup>4</sup> This was the case in states with regimes ushered in by means of military coups (e.g., Egypt, Iraq, and Syria) and those with regimes that maintained their hold on power (e.g., Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia).

In the case of Lebanon, the political economy was organized around an outward-oriented market economy in which the service sector was dominant. In this respect, Lebanon represents an analytic puzzle. Its political economy was organized around non-populist and non-statist principles at a time when the ordering of the global economy and dominant norms in newly independent states favored opposite principles. My dissertation seeks to account for this unique state building trajectory. It specifically looks for an

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<sup>2</sup> For analyses of the origins and dynamics and different nationalist movements across the Middle East, see, James Janikowski and Israel Gershoni (eds.), *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Roger Owen and Sevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economics in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> See Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 114-141; Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 173-204.

explanation for the organization of Lebanon's political economy in the very struggles that sought to shape the institutions and policies that defined it. These struggles were influenced by the normative and institutional legacies of the Ottoman Empire and the French mandate. However, the specific state building trajectory of Lebanon and its attendant economic development was ultimately defined by the strategies of elite and popular groups and by contingent events. It is these contexts, contingencies, and strategies that form the basis of this dissertation's area of inquiry.

### **Literature Review**

My research agenda is animated by the goals of historicizing the organization of Lebanon's political economy and moving beyond the conventional focus on the confessional nature of Lebanese politics. Consequently, my dissertation engages with both the historiography of modern Lebanon and the interdisciplinary scholarship on the political economy of development.

#### *The Historiography of Modern Lebanon*

The bulk of the historiography of modern Lebanon has focused on either the late Ottoman period (1839-1920) or that of the civil war (1975-1990). Scholarship on the late Ottoman period has focused on the integration of the region into the world economy, the extension of the Ottoman state's reach into the daily lives of its subjects, and the outbreak of sectarian violence.<sup>5</sup> Scholarship on the civil war has focused on the collapse of the Lebanese state, the emergence of militias as the primary political, economic and social

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see, respectively, Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Lebanon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

institutions, and varied forms of foreign intervention.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the last decade of historical research has been characterized by a rise in the level of interest in the French mandate period (1920-1946). Works on this period have addressed the processes by which national identity was produced and social groups were mobilized within the framework of French colonial administration.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, scholars have paid little attention to the period of 1946-1975 in general, and that of the first decade of independence in particular. This is especially striking in light of the fact that the decade of the 1950s was a particularly pivotal one in Lebanese history—as it was for much of the Middle East—and that the 1960s was considered something of a “golden age” (although, in fact, it was a period in which prosperity was counterbalanced by extreme poverty and high levels of oppositional mobilization). One reason for this gap in the historiography has to do with the dearth of written sources from the first decade of independence. This is largely a result of the devastating effects of the fifteen-year civil war (1975-1990). While concerted efforts have been made to collect and archive historical documents, much was lost due to the destruction during the war. Given that the Ottoman (later Turkish) and French authorities preserved the majority of their records, the periods of the late Ottoman Empire and the French mandate provide much more promising avenues for research and analysis.

A more important factor in explaining the gap in the historiography of modern

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<sup>6</sup> For examples, see, respectively, Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York: Atheneum, 1990); Elizabeth Picard, “The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon,” in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, edited by Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000): pp. 292-322; Rashid Khalidi, “Problems of Foreign Intervention in Lebanon,” *American-Arab Affairs* (1983-1984), pp. 24-30.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

Lebanon has to do with how scholars have conceptualized the early decades of Lebanese independence vis-à-vis the *longue durée* of the history of Lebanon. When juxtaposed to the violent incidents of the mid-nineteenth century and those of the civil war (1975-1990), the lack of prolonged violent outbreak and concomitant political stability of the period between 1946 and 1975 has been considered by some scholars as the exception to the rule that is the modern history of Lebanon.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, other scholars project back into the period of early independence the dynamics of the fifteen-year civil war. Many of these scholars have implicitly or explicitly foreshadowed the civil war in their histories of pre-war Lebanon.<sup>9</sup> Their analyses are framed within a *telos* of civil war whereby everything prior to 1975 becomes “pre-war.”

#### *Sectarianism, Nationalism, and the State*

What little research has been conducted on the early post-independence period has mainly been concerned with specific personalities, movements, and events.<sup>10</sup> Such studies provide important insights into their respective subjects of inquiry. Nevertheless, these studies represent traditional political histories that either ignore the social and cultural dynamics associated with their subjects or assume a static social and cultural context.<sup>11</sup> Despite their different foci, the majority of literature produced on the first

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985); Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Farid al-Khazen, *Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Kamal Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War: Lebanon, 1958-1976* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> For example, see, respectively, Caroline Attié, *Struggle in the Levant: Lebanon in the 1950s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Adel Beshara, *Lebanon: Politics of Frustration – The Failed Coup of 1961* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005); Irene L. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Eyal Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence* (London, I.B Tauris, 2000).

decade of independence falls into one of two schools of analysis vis-à-vis their understanding of the politics of the period.

The first line of analysis takes the sect as its central unit of analysis. For scholars following this line of analysis, the history of Lebanon is the history of different sects (i.e., Druze, Greek Orthodox, Maronite, Shi'i, and Sunni) struggling with one another for political power, economic resources, and international legitimacy within a given political configuration.<sup>12</sup> This framework is applied to the Ottoman, French mandate, and post-colonial periods. Scholars writing within this framework consider the sectarian identities of individuals and movements as primary and fixed such that the sect is narrated as the fundamental historical agent. These scholars suggest a binary relationship between sectarian identity and the nation-state in which Lebanese citizens privilege the former; or the latter does not really exist at all.

The second framework of analysis assumes that the primary cleavage that animates the history of Lebanon during the decades of early independence is a struggle between the forces of Lebanese nationalism and those of Arab nationalism.<sup>13</sup> Each of these nationalist orientations is assumed to be a function of a particular sectarian identity. More specifically, the assumption is that a Lebanese Christian is more likely to be oriented toward a more exclusive conception of the Lebanese nation; one that is set apart from the broader Arabo-Islamic history and more closely aligned with the West. The

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Albert Hourani, *Political Society in Lebanon: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Center for Lebanese Studies, 1989); Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Youssef Chaitiani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon: The Decline of Arab Nationalism and the Triumph of the State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Clovis Maksoud, "Lebanon and Arab Nationalism," in *Politics in Lebanon*, edited by Leonard Binder (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966).

counterpart to this is that a Lebanese Muslim is more likely to be oriented toward a more expansive conception of the Lebanese nation, one that is part of the broader Arabo-Islamic history of the region and more closely aligned with the Arab nationalist foreign policy orientation. This framework of analysis is applied to the colonial and post-colonial periods. The competition between Lebanese nationalists and Arab nationalists, the narrative argues, is implicated in all aspects of Lebanese politics including conflicts over foreign relations, internal politics, and economic policies.

Both frameworks of analysis are deeply problematic and are specific manifestations of larger assumptions about nationalism and the state in the Middle East. In particular, much of the scholarship on post-colonial Lebanon views it as the example *par excellence* of the alleged artificiality of the Middle Eastern state; the main thrust of which is that the Middle Eastern state is not enmeshed in the processes and structures of society. For many scholars, the relationship between the identity of the state and that of the society it governs has continued to be an important theme, both explicitly and implicitly. More specifically, for them, the Middle East state system is defined by a “divergence of identity and state.”<sup>14</sup> As a consequence of such assumptions, “‘society-centered’ approaches” have dominated the study of politics in the Middle East, including Lebanon, while the assumed prominence of “tribalism, sectarianism, regionalism, primordial sentiments, and ascriptive identities in Middle Eastern politics [has] contributed to the view that the state is little more than an arena of socially engendered

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<sup>14</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch, *The International Relations of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 54. See in particular his chapter entitled “Identity and Sovereignty in the Regional System,” pp. 54-72, which forms the basis of much of his analysis of international and domestic politics among Middle Eastern states.

conflict or an instrument of family, sect, or class domination.”<sup>15</sup> While the earliest manifestations of such an assumption can be seen in Orientalist writings, it also constitutes part of the analyses of many scholars who view themselves as writing against Orientalism.<sup>16</sup> As will be discussed immediately below, such an assumption has been challenged by a different set of scholars working from a global comparative perspective on questions focused on the political sociability of the region’s populations.

The problem with making the sect the central unit of analysis is that it is based on an essentialist conception of identity and a fixed idea of political community. The majority of the historiography of Lebanon has emphasized the sectarian markers of individuals and groups throughout Lebanese history without interrogating the ways in which the meaning of these markers was constantly changing in relation to a range of processes. Recently, historians and other scholars have begun to offer correctives to the ahistorical understanding of sectarianism in Lebanon by demonstrating how sectarianism is a modern phenomenon, while suggesting ways in which it is constitutive of both nationalism and the state in Lebanon.<sup>17</sup>

Assumptions about nationalism that divide the population of Lebanon into Arab nationalists and Lebanese nationalists are, like those that privilege sect, rooted in

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<sup>15</sup> See Lisa Anderson, “The State in the Middle East and North Africa,” *Comparative Politics* (Oct. 1987): pp. 1-11.

<sup>16</sup> Sami Zubaida highlights and critiques the existence of this assumption, which he argues is shared by both Orientalists (i.e., Bertrand Badie) and Dependency scholars (i.e., Paul Vielle). See Sami Zubaida, “The Nation State in the Middle East,” in *Islam, the People, and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East*, idem (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993): pp. 121-182,

<sup>17</sup> Michael Gilson, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996); Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000); Fawwaz Trabulsi, *A History of Lebanon* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007).

essentialist and teleological conceptions of identity. Over the past two decades, a number of scholars have demonstrated how a variety of groups, both elite and non-elite, have struggled to define the nation to which they understood themselves as belonging.<sup>18</sup> These scholars have also highlighted combinations of coercive and consensual processes that caused the majority of the states' populations to internalize specific national identities, which articulated with their respective state boundaries. Thus some scholars have argued against interpreting schemes for Arab unification as manifestations of an inherently Arab political identity on the part of its advocates. They argue, instead, that such schemes are better understood as functions of the level of state consolidation.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, political coalitions, deprived of domestic resources (institutional, fiscal, and symbolic), turned to unification with other states to bolster their legitimacy and/or overcome collective action dilemmas.<sup>20</sup>

Recent scholarship on the Middle East has thus pointed to the enormous 'success' of Middle Eastern populations' internalization of the nation-state model as well as the current boundaries of the existing state system. In part, this is because "the nation state has [become] a 'compulsory' model" for organizing political community.<sup>21</sup> Even more so, this 'success' is the result of a variety of processes throughout the nineteenth and

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of the Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Israel Gershoni, "Rethinking the Formation of Arab Nationalism in the Middle East, 1920-1945: Old and New Narratives," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle*, edited by James Janikowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 3-25; Fred Halliday, "The Formation of Yemeni Nationalism: Initial Reflections," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle*, edited by James Janikowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 26-41; Fred Halliday, "The Nationalism Debate and the Middle East," *Middle Eastern Lectures* 3 (1999): pp. 23-48.

<sup>21</sup> Zubaida, "The Nation State," p. 121.

early twentieth centuries that brought into being what Sami Zubaida has termed a “modern political field . . . closely involved in the constitution and the functioning of [which] Benedict Anderson has called ‘the possibility of imagining the nation’ as a community, and the conditions of that possibility.”<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, “communal and ethnic divisions are constructed and conceived in terms of that field and its topology; in Anderson’s terms they become part of the imagined community.”<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault makes a similar argument when he claims that the modern state is a form of social organization defined by a new constellation of power relations: “rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted ‘above’ society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of.”<sup>24</sup> In such conditions, which manifested across the world by the early twentieth century, “the state is not simply one of the forms or specific situations of the exercise of power—even if it is the most important—but that in a certain way all other forms of power relations must refer to it.”<sup>25</sup>

This dissertation builds on the insights discussed above by exploring the ways in which various social actors were invested in the project of Lebanese state formation. It seeks to provide a social and cultural history of the 1946-1975 period by examining the struggles to organize the political economy, an issue that was at the center of political debates, economic policies, social mobilizations, and cultural mediations. The struggles to organize the political economy of Lebanon provide an excellent vantage point from

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<sup>22</sup> Zubaida, “The Nation State,” p. 146.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” p. 791.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 793.

which to highlight non-sectarian forms of social agency and a more dynamic conception of Lebanese nationalism.

*The Political Economy of State Building*

In addition to filling a void in the historiography of modern Lebanon, my project will also enhance our understanding of broader processes of state and market formation. Although political economy has been the focus of recent studies on state building in the Middle East,<sup>26</sup> there have been very few historical studies that examine the social, cultural, and institutional terrain of the political economy of post-colonial Lebanon. What little research has been conducted is primarily concerned with categorizing and evaluating the macroeconomic performance of the Lebanese economy.<sup>27</sup> Such studies provide important insights into the nature of the Lebanese economy: the relationship between the private and public sectors, its sectoral composition, the regulatory regimes that governed them, as well as patterns of capital formation and employment. These studies contrast the Lebanese economy to that of other Middle Eastern and late developing states in terms of both the growth rates achieved (much higher for Lebanon)

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Henry Clement and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Giacomo Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State* (London: Routledge, 1990); Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Toufic Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire* (New York: Brill, 2004); Carolyn L. Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: The Rise of An Open Economy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998); Georges Hakim, "The Economic Basis of the Lebanese Polity," in *Politics in Lebanon*, edited by Leonard Binder (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1966); Charles Issawi, "Economic Development and Political Liberalism in Lebanon," *Middle East Journal* (Summer 1964): pp. 69-83; Roger Owen, "The Economic History of Lebanon 1943-1974: Its Salient Features," *Toward A Viable Lebanon*, edited by Halim Barakat (Washington DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1988); Samir Makdisi, *Financial Policy and Economic Growth: The Lebanese Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

and the nature of economic development (private sector-led in the case of Lebanon as opposed to the state-led model in other countries).

Nevertheless, these studies fail to address the central problem of Lebanon vis-à-vis other late developing countries. The political economy of Lebanon was uniquely organized (i.e., non-statist and non-populist) as compared to other Middle Eastern states in spite of a shared institutional and normative legacy. Furthermore, the divergent organization of Lebanon's political economy was consolidated in a global and regional context (shaped both by material and discursive forces) that favored statist and populist forms of organizing state-market relations. Such a line of inquiry is not meant to assume a scripted trajectory of state and market formation. Rather, it is a response to the deafening silence surrounding the political economy of Lebanon in the broader literature on the political economy of late developing states. This silence is clearly a function of the fact that the majority of scholarly works on the political economy of development have been written within a comparative perspective, and that—for the period in question (the early decades of the post-World War Two period)—the majority of late developing states coalesced around a political economy model that placed the state at the center of economic development. I believe that a historical analysis of Lebanon's political economy during the first decade of post-independence is vital precisely because of its divergence from the Middle Eastern norm.

Within the works that address the political economy of Lebanon, there are two competing narratives. One set of scholars argues that the Lebanese state is the product of a power-sharing compromise between notables of different sects and therefore was never

meant to stand above society let alone intervene in the economy.<sup>28</sup> They implicitly suggest that Lebanon's outward-oriented service economy results from a minimalist state with no interventionist powers. For these scholars, the organization of Lebanon's political economy is simply the function of the absence of any real state institutions. Alternatively, another set of scholars takes more seriously the existence of Lebanese state institutions and their roles in organizing the economy, even if those institutions simply provided the administrative and legal framework for the liberalized movement of goods and capital both within and across Lebanon's borders.<sup>29</sup> For these scholars, the trajectory of state-market relations in Lebanon is the product of decision-making by a politico-economic elite.

My project challenges these interpretations by drawing on insights from the literature on the comparative study of the political economy of state building, not withstanding its silence on Lebanon. I plan to show how the creation of institutions and conflicts over the shape and function of those institutions were central features of Lebanon's state building history. As many scholars have shown, the organization of any national economy, irrespective of the balance between market forces and state planning within it, requires the construction of an institutional framework to regulate the actions of various economic actors (e.g., producers, importers, and workers).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, these

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Toufic Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire* (New York: Brill, 2004); Carolyn L. Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: The Rise of An Open Economy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> See Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, "The Myths of the Market and the Common History of Late Developers," *Politics and Society* (September 1993): pp. 245-274.

scholars have shown that the making economic policy and the building of economic institutions are highly conflictual processes involving competing social actors.<sup>31</sup> Rather than overemphasizing the unity and role of economic elites in policy formation, my project demonstrates how, in the case of Lebanon, struggles over the organization of a state's political economy were characterized by shifting alliances and conflicts both within elite groups (i.e, business groups) as well as between elite and popular groups (e.g., cross-class coalitions).

The research of Elizabeth Thompson and Youssef Chaitiani form the starting point of my research with respect to the literature on Lebanon.<sup>32</sup> Contrary to top-down arguments about the organization of political economies, Thompson highlights how elite and popular mobilization was central to the trajectory of Lebanon's political economy under French rule. Chaitiani provides an insightful analysis into the early independence struggles around the fate of the Syrian-Lebanese Customs Union established during the French mandate. His work on these struggles, which culminated in the abolition of the union in 1950, is one of the only works that focuses on the post-colonial shaping of Lebanon's economy. While Thompson and Chaitiani's contributions are important ones, their analyses nevertheless leave unexplained the post-colonial trajectory of Lebanon's state-market relations and the politics that underpinned them. Despite her argument that there was an ongoing struggle to define the relationship between the state and the

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Steven Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria: Institutions and Social Conflict 1946-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of the Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Youssef Chaitiani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon: The Decline of Arab Nationalism and the Triumph of the State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

economy, Thompson does little to explain Lebanon's early independence retreat from the populist political economy that took shape in mandate Lebanon.<sup>33</sup> Chaitiani's analysis focuses on an event that, while constitutive of the consolidation of an independent Lebanese national economy, does not shed light on how Lebanon's political economy was subsequently organized in accordance with an outward-oriented service economy. My project aims to push further the type of research both these scholars have produced by exploring the struggles to organize Lebanon's political economy between 1946 and 1955.

### **On Methodology**

This dissertation project seeks to widen the inquiry into economics and politics in Lebanon beyond the confines of sectarianism as an analytical framework and beyond conceptions of social groups as sharply articulated populations whose interactions occur as scripted processes. The model of collective action that I utilize centers on rival coalitions whose institutional form varied depending on whether they were elite- or popular-based groups. Economic elites organized around a model of collective action often described as business groups. These are families or other communally linked investors with holdings that span primary, secondary, and tertiary economic sectors. In other words, they are a combination of big landlords, bankers, and manufacturers. Such business groups, while containing a majority of families from one sect, cut across sects

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<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that Thompson's work contains specific references to the post-colonial transformation of the Lebanese economy. She argues that the divergence between the political economies of Lebanon and Syria was a function of the overwhelmingly larger presence of private organizations and institutions in Lebanon as opposed to Syria. However, this is an underdeveloped and isolated argument on Thompson's part. Even more so, the correlation between private institutions and Lebanon's outward-oriented service economy ignores the fact that the organization of its political economy continued to be a focus of social mobilizations and business conflicts, which were central in determining the nature of state-market relations.

and often found themselves competing with business groups of a similar sectarian composition. Alternatively, popular groups organized around models of collective action often captured by the union and popular committee models. These models featured individuals and groups from similar regions or economic sectors organizing along specific and contingent interest-based models of collective action. I trace the strategies of both these types of groups in their struggle to shape the nature of institutional arrangements and capture the benefits thereof.

Yet such mobilizations were not void of context. They occurred at a particular local and regional juncture defined by decolonization and the expanding scope and reach of state bureaucracies. Consequently such contemporary contexts are as important as the historical legacies that preceded them. No where is this clearer than in the case of Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut, the electricity provide for Beirut during the period under consideration. Thus the dissertation will take as a specific case study the history of this company, the public utility it provided, and the politics that undergirded and were engendered by such dynamics.

### **Sources**

The ability to conduct research on Lebanon is constrained by the reality of significant gaps in local written sources of the post-independence period. This was the starting point for any inquiry into this subject of this dissertation. In attempting to compensate for this fact, I have relied on broad array of institutional repositories in the hopes of piecing together the archival evidence necessary to both construct and document the arguments of this dissertation.

The Lebanese National Archives in Beirut furnished the bulk of the official records. These mostly included the collection of presidential, cabinet, parliamentary, and ministerial announcements as well as varied government announcements regularly published as *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*. Unfortunately, no specific ministerial records from the period under consideration were made available during my time in local national archive. Nevertheless, it was through the pages of *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* that I first became aware of the sheer volume of decrees governing almost every aspect of daily political, economic, social, cultural, family, and personal life. Viewing the annual volumes side by side, couple with the compiled and bounded index of decrees rendered void any doubt that there was a primary role for public institutions in the trajectory of state and market formation in post-colonial Lebanon. It was through *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* that I first became aware of the various fields of state institutional management, and how these fields multiplied in the wake of independence and early post-colonialism.

However, laws alone would not really tell us much more than what the timing, form, and content of specific institutional arrangements. Therefore, in addition to examining the legal edifice I also delved into the discourses, rationalizations, and mobilizations that underpinned these institutional arrangements. I also explored the counter-discourses, critiques, and oppositional mobilizations these arrangements engendered. For these dynamics, I turned to the Nami Jafet Library at the American University of Beirut. The array of newspaper and magazine collections, development reports, and historical encyclopedias provided much of nuance that *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* rendered invisible. This latter set of sources brought to life the dividing the

conflicts engendered by the processes of post-colonial institution building and reflective of them.

In addition, British and US repositories were important in complementing the local sources identified in Lebanon and corroborating many of the facts. This dissertation has avoided the use of diplomatic records for the instrumental purposes of highlighting local sources and challenging the trend of using British, French, and US source material to narrate the early history of post-colonial Lebanon. Nevertheless, the number of Lebanese primary sources available in such repositories constantly surprised me. These sources could not be found in Lebanon, at least not through a search of the catalogues of various local repositories.

Finally, a limited number of oral histories were important in supplementing the written documentation, if not helping me read through them with a different perspective. Those individuals that lived through the first decade of post-independence and were alive during my fieldwork were far and few in between. This is especially so of those with concrete recollections of the period. Nevertheless, those few interviews I did conduct provided important windows into how some people experienced the processes described in this dissertation. In doing so, they highlighted the ways in which individuals experience historical processes in much more contradictory ways than the written sources indicated.

While many of the official sources Nevertheless, I will ground my research in primary sources available from the period under study (1946-1975). I am particularly interested in using a variety of local primary sources in order to reconstruct the social conflict that took place in Lebanon over the organization of the country's political

economy. Such an approach will include government documents, those of various political parties and factions, press coverage from the period under study, as well as oral history interviews. In addition, I will draw on French and U.S. consular archives.

I will examine the collection of government documents held at the Lebanese National Archives (LNA), which include presidential speeches, parliamentary debates, and laws enacted, as well as studies, reports, and memos of the various government ministries. I will also make use of the documents of different political parties, labor unions, and women's organizations, including the comprehensive collection of their publications held at the American University of Beirut's (AUB) Nami Jafet Memorial Library. For additional documentation such as memoranda, talking points, press releases, and leaflets, I will examine several party and private archives. In terms of press coverage, I will engage with the impressive holdings of local newspapers and magazines of the Bibliothèque Orientale at the Université Saint-Joseph (USJ). Oral histories will be important to supplement the written documentation and to provide critical insight into the peculiarities of the social conflicts of the time. I will therefore conduct interviews with a number of former government officials, businessmen, and political activists. Finally, I will consult French Embassy and U.S. State Department records on Lebanese economic development. Such an array of repositories and sources will require twelve months of research.

### **Plan of the Dissertation**

The chapters of this dissertation are organized according to chronology and theme. Within that structure, I have attempted to maintain the chronological order and thematic

integrity of each section. However, there will naturally be some overlap between sections as well as chapters.

Chapter one outlines the establishment of modern Lebanon as a network of bureaucratic practices and the basis of a national identity. It narrates the macro-processes of state formation and economic development during the French mandate, highlighting those critical legacies and junctures that would be relevant to the unfolding of the country's postcolonial history from 1946 through 1955, and which is the main focus of this dissertation. While the chapter draws heavily on the secondary literature, it also incorporates my own rereading of key events and processes during the colonial period.

Chapter two critically interrogates the assumption that post-independence Lebanon was characterized by a minimalist configuration of state institutions. It outlines the political economy of Lebanon during the decade of early post-independence. More substantively, it provides the institutional context for the period under consideration, highlighting the significant transformations in both the scope and reach of state institutions.

Chapter three introduces the specific case study of Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut. It discusses the detailed Ottoman and colonial history of the company, the provision of electricity within Beirut, and the mobilizations around such dynamics. The discussion builds on the preceding discussion of state formation, economic development, elite conflict, and popular mobilization through a micro-history of the company.

Chapter four picks up the story of the Beirut Electricity Company on the eve of independence. It explores how the context French evacuation and post-colonial politics changed the contours of the struggle over the electricity company for both elites and

popular groups. The history of post-colonial struggles over the company and its eventual nationalization in 1954 challenges many of exceptionalist and deterministic assumptions of state and market formation in Lebanon. It also provides a different vantage point from which to explore collective mobilizations and their associated dynamics.

This dissertation ends with an assessment of the overall findings of the dissertation. In particular, it discusses how they challenge our current understanding of the politics and economics of Lebanon during the period (and in general), as well as new questions it opens up for further research.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **The Formation of Lebanon: Ottoman and Colonial Legacies**

#### **Introduction**

The present chapter outlines the establishment of modern Lebanon as both a national identity as well as a network of bureaucratic practices. It therefore narrates and analyzes the macro-processes of state formation and economic development during the French mandate, highlighting the critical legacies and junctures through which the country's postcolonial history from 1946 through 1955 unfolded. These legacies and junctures are the main focus of this dissertation. By providing a frame of reference for the significant actors, events, and processes that constituted Lebanon's colonial history, this chapter traces political and economic narrative from 1920 through 1946. In doing so, it highlights important changes in the organization of both state and market in the first half of the twentieth century, locating and contextualizing the dissertation's main focus, which is the institutional transformations that underpinned the political economy of post-colonial Lebanon.

The political, economic, and social history of colonial Lebanon is the subject of a diverse corpus of historical and other types of scholarly works.<sup>1</sup> A summary of the broad

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<sup>1</sup> The starting point for much of historiography of colonial Lebanon is Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958). Authors have since further developed the narrative of colonial Lebanon in a number of directions. For a political history, see Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State under the Mandate* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Idem., *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood, 1926-1939* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997). For a social and cultural history, see Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). Other authors have sought to disaggregate the colonial of history of Lebanon, offering more a detailed-oriented and site-specific examination of state formation and identity construction. See, for example, Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

contours of the trajectory of state and market formation is necessary here for two reasons. First, it provides the broader context for Ottoman and colonial legacies that shaped particular institutional arrangements, which subsequent chapters analyze. Second, it presents characteristics of Lebanon's political economy. This chapter therefore highlights the dynamics of the establishment of modern Lebanon, the colonial state, the colonial economy, and the struggle for independence.

### **The Formation of the Lebanese State**

In his survey of the history of the Middle East, historian James L. Gelvin asserts that “World War I was the single most important *political* event” of the modern period.<sup>2</sup> The experiences and outcomes of the war brought about “a new political order in the region, one that has lasted to this very day.”<sup>3</sup> It was in this context that Lebanon was established as one of the many successor states of the Ottoman Empire after its defeat and dismemberment. Prior to World War I, the territories that would make up post-Ottoman Lebanon—like those of other states created as part of the post-war settlement—were administratively, politically, economically, and culturally part of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>4</sup> This is true even in the case of the

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<sup>2</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 182. Emphasis original.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The Ottoman Empire began to incorporate the Levant into its territorial domains in the sixteenth century. While this incorporation initially took shape as conquest and occupation, like much of the rest of the empire the processes eventually gave way to political, economic, and cultural integration of the region. The precise administrative status of the territories that made up Ottoman Bilad al-Sham (as the Levant was referred to) varied over time and geography. Furthermore, much of the historiography of Ottoman Lebanon has overwhelmingly focused on Mount Lebanon to the exclusion of other territories that would constitute the state of Lebanon. Scholars have recently given these areas increased attention, though the discrepancy in pages written and narratives constructed remain large. On the early modern incorporation of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, see Jane Hatheway, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (London, Pearson Longman, 2008). The following is a list of works on the modern period and the nature of Ottoman rule in the

special organizational status of the Ottoman province of Mount Lebanon.<sup>5</sup> To insist on the significance of Ottoman legacies is not to deny the elite lobbying efforts for independence from Ottoman rule by Mount Lebanon's inhabitants and diaspora.<sup>6</sup> Rather, it is to argue that both the experience and the collapse of the Ottoman imperial framework were the conditions of possibility for a sustained and broad-based national imagining of an independent state of Lebanon.

Prior to 1920, the overwhelming majority of Ottoman subjects—including those inhabiting the areas that came to constitute the territorial state of Lebanon—did not self-

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territories that would make up modern Lebanon. On Mount Lebanon, see Carole Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Engin Deniz Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Scholarship on other areas tends to focus on Beirut. See, for example, Leila Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> The point of departure for the special administrative status of Ottoman Mount Lebanon is the 1840 expulsion by a joint Ottoman-European force of Mehmet Ali's troops from Bilad al-Sham. In response to ensuing local violence over the control of land and social hierarchies that undergirded such control, the Ottoman authorities—under pressure from European powers—reorganized Mount Lebanon into a dual district (*qaymaqamiyya*), one in the north under a Maronite district governor and one in the south under a Druze district governor. The powers of the governors and the rights of the local population were articulated through a series of negotiations and decrees between 1845 and 1850. The most notable of these was the establishment an advisory council for each governor, whose members were selected from the local population in accordance with a principle of sectarian representation. However, subsequent local violence coupled with the maneuvering of European powers resulted in the reorganization of Ottoman Mount Lebanon's administrative status between 1861 and 1864. It was then the Mount Lebanon was the status of an autonomous province (*mutasarrifiyya*). Key to this brief history is the contingent nature of such reorganization, rather than the Lebanese nationalist trope of describing the process as one of nationalist arrival. Both the episodes of the dual district and autonomous provincial administration of Mount Lebanon were entirely subsumed within the Ottoman framework, and part of a broader process of Ottoman institutional engineering in the context of European imperialism, Ottoman defensive developmentalism, and the strategic maneuvering of local groups to better their position vis-à-vis both. On these dynamics, see Akarli, *The Long Peace*; Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*; Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*.

<sup>6</sup> On elite lobbying efforts among segments of Ottoman Mount Lebanon's population and its diaspora for independence from Ottoman rule and context within which such efforts unfolded, see Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*.

identify Lebanese nation in the nation-state sense of the term.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the conditions of possibility for the local population to think and operate in terms of categories associated with the nation-state only began to emerge during the late nineteenth century. This dynamic was the result of two interconnected processes that had far reaching consequences. The first of these was the integration and peripheralization of Ottoman territories into the capitalist world economy. The expansion of commercial relations was fundamental to the transformation of market-place economies to market economies.<sup>8</sup> The second process was the centralization and strengthening of Ottoman governance.<sup>9</sup> State elites in the empire drew on European statecraft models to bring their governing practices in line with that of the modern nation-state. Both processes were uneven. Thus, while an increasing number of individuals began to contemplate their lives and the world around them in terms associated with modern system of nation states, the majority of the population continued to experience the world in non-modern terms. This, however, would soon change.

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<sup>7</sup> To argue that the population did self-identify as “Lebanese” in the national sense of the term would require making two problematic assumptions. First, that the nation-state model of political sociability predates not only the state of Lebanon but the nineteenth-century transformations that many scholars now consider to be the condition of possibility for local populations to “imagine” themselves—to borrow Benedict Anderson’s term—as members of a nation in the nationalist and nation-state sense of the term. The second assumption is that Lebanese nationalism was the default or privileged nationalism of the population, when in fact scholars have shown that different movements competed over the precise national imaginings and their associated practices in the aftermath of Ottoman collapse. Both assumptions necessary for the idea that the local population identified as “Lebanese” simply do not hold in the face of recent scholarship on nationalism, the Ottoman Empire and its Arab provinces, and state formation in the Levant. For a parallel argument with respect to Arab nationalism in Ottoman and post-Ottoman Syria, see James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). For a geographically broader and discussion of nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, see Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 208-216. For a critical appraisal of the political identities in existence during the late Ottoman period and their relationship to the post-Ottoman Lebanese nationalism, see Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*; Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*.

<sup>8</sup> See Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> See Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 71-86.

The end of World War I featured British and French military occupation of the Levant, and a concomitant political collapse and territorial dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Competing movements across the Levant, as elsewhere, subsequently struggled to define the nature of the post-Ottoman framework.<sup>10</sup> The success or failure of these movements in realizing their visions was contingent upon a range of factors. These included the degree to which such movements institutionalized themselves, the financial and other resources at their disposal, and the degree to which foreign powers supported them. Successful movements projected their existence backward into time, claiming that their nation—defined as it was by certain common characteristics and a special relationship to a particularly territory—preceded the collapse of the empire and manifested itself throughout time.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Historian Elizabeth Thompson describes this dynamic as a “political crisis of paternity” such that there was no agreement among the local population regarding who or what would replace Ottoman rule. She identifies at least four relevant groups that actively mobilized to construct a new political framework in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the empire: Amir Faysal and his bid for an Arab kingdom, urban notables of cities like Damascus, Beirut, and Tripoli who tried to variously form their own government, urban populists that claimed popular sovereignty, and a coalition of Christians and Muslims on Mount Lebanon’s Administrative Council who had called for an enlarged Mount Lebanon. Thompson, pp. 40-41. For a detailed analysis of such competition in the case of the Faysali kingdom, see Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, pp. 141-286.

<sup>11</sup> This is of course the case with all nationalist movements. For Lebanon in particular, nationalist revisionism cast the Ottoman past as one of Turkish colonialism and occupation. Thus, school textbooks in Lebanon posit the creation of Lebanon in 1920 as the material consolidation of a pre-existing nation that was suppressed by the Turks. This trope was common to virtually all nationalist movements in the Arab Middle East as they vied to define and construct the post-Ottoman order. Nevertheless, subsequent to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and before the proclamation of the state of Lebanon, local groups vied over the definition of the national identity of the local population and thus the precise national borders that the post-Ottoman state should reflect. The fact that one movement won over the others and proceeded to instantiate its nationalism through subsequent institutional configurations does not make Lebanon as a nation-state any more or less real than any of its competitors would have been. For an elaboration of the premise of this last point, see Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 208-216. For the example par excellence of the Ottoman servitude trope, see George Antonious, *The Arab Awakening* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), pp. 1-242, originally published in 1938. For an analysis of anti-Ottoman tropes in the Egyptian nationalist case, see Gabriel Piterberg, “The Tropes of Stagnation and Awakening in Nationalist Historical Consciousness: The Egyptian Case” in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, edited by Israel Gershoni and James Janikowski (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 42-62.

If the dismemberment of the Ottoman state was the condition of possibility for the material and imaginative production of Lebanon, it was the League of Nations' mandate system that established its outermost limits. Entente peace negotiators established the mandate system as a compromise solution between the United States, Britain, and France.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, British and French wartime deployments and operations resulted in the military occupation of the Levant more than eighteen months before the San Remo Conference of April 1920.<sup>13</sup> The particular balance of power and division of labor between Britain and France had already taken shape by 24 October 1918,<sup>14</sup> with the establishment of the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA).<sup>15</sup> Both the French and British governments had very little interest in abandoning their new colonial possessions.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the US government sought an end to the pre-World War I system of imperial

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<sup>12</sup> Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>13</sup> The Allied Supreme Council held the San Remo Conference from 19 April to 26 April of 1920. However, as Thompson notes, "Entente and Arab troops entered Damascus on October 1, 1918, and Beirut one week later. By month's end they had occupied Aleppo and Tripoli and signed an armistice with the Ottomans." See Thomson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 39.

<sup>14</sup> According to Thompson, "Military governors were appointed to the various districts, with the French occupying the coast and the British-backed government of King Faysal in the Syrian hinterland. When the war ended on November 11, the military government issued a formal proclamation promising liberation and national governments chosen by the indigenous peoples." Thompson, *Colonial Citizen*, p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> On the entry of British troops and the division of the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire between British and French administrative areas, see David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Owl Books, 1989), pp. 332-347; Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> For a rendering of the long-term interests of France in the Ottoman Levant, including those of a strategic, economic, and cultural nature, see William I. Shorrock, *French Imperialism in the Middle East: The Failure of Policy in Syria and Lebanon, 1900-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976). For British interests and considerations during the 1918-1920 period, see John Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East, 1916-19* (New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999).

trading preferences that had limited the markets available to US businesses.<sup>17</sup> There was also the matter of entente promises of self-determination, which local actors deployed in their struggles to reconfigure post-war political and economic arrangements.<sup>18</sup> The compromise amidst all these dynamics was the mandate system, a type of colonial control that promised eventual independence and provided equal trade access for all League of Nations members.<sup>19</sup> Thus, on 25 April 1920, the League of Nations sanctioned British occupation of the territories that would become Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, as well as French occupation of the areas that would become Lebanon and Syria.<sup>20</sup>

An important element of the mandate system was that colonial powers were effectively free to divide or combine the territories under their control as they saw fit. In the French-ceded territories, the transition from OETA to French Mandate control during the first half of 1920 was followed by the administrative reorganization of the area into Greater Lebanon, the Alawite State, the State of Aleppo, and the State of Damascus.<sup>21</sup> The French then created the administrative entity of Jabal al-Druze in 1921, combined the Alawite State and the State of Aleppo into the State of Syria in 1924, and finally grouped all of its mandate

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<sup>17</sup> See Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 5-42; Susan Pederson, "The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Argument," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32 (October-December 2006): pp. 560-82.

<sup>18</sup> For a general discussion of these promises and their local reverberations as manifested in what some scholars have termed "The Wilsonian Moment," see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> See, in particular, Article 22 in League of Nations, *The Covenant of the League of Nations* (n. p.: World Peace Foundation, 1920).

<sup>20</sup> League of Nations, "The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon," *The American Journal of International Law* 17, no. 3, Supplement: Official Documents (July 1923): pp. 177-182.

<sup>21</sup> On the initial division of French Mandate into the different states, see Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under the French Mandate*, pp. 109-147.

territories, with the exception of Greater Lebanon, into a single Syrian state between 1930 and 1939.<sup>22</sup>

Such patterns of administrative reorganization are the broader context within which the state of Lebanon took shape. The French declared a distinct administrative unit called the State of Greater Lebanon on 1 September 1920.<sup>23</sup> They accomplished this by annexing the formerly Ottoman areas of Tripoli, the Biqa‘ Valley, and Jabal ‘Amil to what was effectively the Ottoman provinces of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. It would not be until 1926 that a constitutional proclamation would consecrate Lebanon as distinct from Syria. The creation of Lebanon as a state, however, was never a forgone conclusion on the part of the French colonial authorities or the local population. Both the particular contours of Greater Lebanon’s political geography and the permanent commitment to it as a separate political entity were the result of various dynamic factors. These included shifting on-the-ground French military capacities, diverse local mobilizations and conflicting lobbying efforts, and strategic considerations of French and Lebanese actors.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, the forces undergirding the creation of Greater Lebanon paralleled the repeated reorganization of the “Syrian” territories under French rule and the separation of Transjordan from Palestine under British rule.<sup>25</sup> Absent the institutionalization of specific practices, the administrative delineation of Greater Lebanon would have been nothing but a representation with little basis in the everyday

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<sup>22</sup> On the subsequent reorganization of the French Mandate into the two states of Syria and Lebanon, see Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate*, pp. 148-214.

<sup>23</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizen*, pp. 39-43.

<sup>24</sup> For a political history of these dynamics and the ultimate outcome of the French establishment of Greater Lebanon, see Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, pp. 38-96.

<sup>25</sup> On the British separation of Transjordan from Palestine, see Tariq Moraiwed Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 55-71.

experiences of the population it covered. These practices were varied in nature. For descriptive purposes, we can think of them as being divided into juridical-political practices and socio-economic practices.

### **The Colonial State**

French mandatory rule was anchored in three pillars: the army, the bureaucracy, and mediating elites.<sup>26</sup> The French military played a central role in defeating Ottoman soldiers and securing French-controlled territory. This army also served as the primary pillar of French rule in the face of recurring local armed revolts. The exact size and internal division of the French military force in Lebanon and Syria is subject to speculation.<sup>27</sup> However, it is clear that the military forces collectively formed the Army of the Levant, which was comprised of the locally recruited Special Troops of the Levant,<sup>28</sup> infantry and cavalry drawn from French North Africa, infantry and artillery drawn from French West Africa, the Foreign Legion, as well as the French colonial soldiers. The French High Commission divided the Special Troops into Lebanese and Syrian units, with members being recruited from their respective regions and deployed therein. In addition, the French High Commission

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<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Thompson provides what is to date the most thorough rendering of the nature of the colonial state in Lebanon, and this tripartite division is based on her analysis. See, in particular, Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 39-90 and 229-246.

<sup>27</sup> This is the case not so much because of a lack of archival records, but because of minimal historical interest into the specific nature of the French Army of the Levant.

<sup>28</sup> The French High Commission originally organized this force as the Syrian Legion in the immediate aftermath of the League of Nation's awarding of the mandate to France in 1920. However, the French High Commission reorganized the force into the Special Troops of the Levant in the aftermath of the Syrian Revolt. These changes are reflected in the French government's discussion of military forces as part of their annual reports to the League of Nations. See République française, Ministère des affaires étrangères, *Rapport à la Société des nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban*, 15 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1925-1939), hence forth cited as *Rapport à la Société*.

commanded the locally recruited gendarmerie and police.<sup>29</sup> The share of locally recruited personnel (whether in the Special Troops of the Levant, the gendarmerie, or the police) increased throughout the colonial period. However, French personnel dominated the officer corps—if not in numbers then in seniority.<sup>30</sup>

The civilian bureaucracy was also an important element of French rule. Though it initially grew out of the expediencies of military occupation and war relief, the French developed the colonial bureaucracy into an efficient and centralized administration.<sup>31</sup> At the top of the mandate system was the French High Commission, which represented both the French government in Lebanon (and Syria) as well as oversaw the governing of the French Mandate states. Each of the major civilian and military French departments reported directly to the French High Commission through an administrative coordinating office known as the Secretary General. The high commissioner appointed a French “advisor” to head each department. The French military departments included the armed forces, intelligence services, and the police. The French civilian departments were organized around diplomacy, internal affairs, health, education, public works, communications, finance, customs, and economics. The French High Commission grouped those French departments working exclusively in Lebanon under the rubric of the Direction of the Lebanese Republic.

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<sup>29</sup> The French High Commission deployed and organized the personnel of these security forces in accordance with state boundaries and through corresponding administrations. See relevant section each issue of *Rapport à la Société*.

<sup>30</sup> See discussions on military, gendarmerie, and police forces in *Rapport à la Société*, wherein the French government identifies the precise numbers of such forces and the division between French and local personnel among the rank and file.

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 58.

An important component of the bureaucracy was the set of local/national departments specific to each state. These departments formed the institutional nucleus of what would later be reorganized into state ministries and thus the public institutions that constituted the core of the post-colonial Lebanese bureaucracy. This local bureaucracy (one for each of the states created within the French Mandate) was distinct from the French bureaucracy yet subservient to it. The Lebanese departments did not always mirror those directly under the Secretary General of the French High Commission. They nevertheless were attached to at least one of them, in addition to reporting directly to other administrative divisions within the Direction of the Lebanese Republic.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, it was the Lebanese departments that managed many of the localized bureaucratic practices, such as census taking, organizing political participation, and standardizing and collecting taxes. Also important was the approval of Lebanese authority—however coerced it might have been—for the implementation of policies and the conclusion of treaties and contracts.

A final pillar of French rule was the set of variously defined mediating elites that both buttressed French power but also sought to shape it in ways that were to their benefit. These elites included French missionaries, foreign concessionary companies, local religious clergy, and various local businessmen and landlords.<sup>33</sup> Constrained in personnel and finances as a result of the destruction wrought on France during World War I, the French High Commission turned to these elites in various ways to fill both the manpower and resource

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<sup>32</sup> It is here that the overlapping webs of control are most clear. In addition to reporting to its designated French department, each local department also reported to either a Chief of Control or Chiefs of Post, which were the representatives of French colonial central authority in each of the major and secondary urban areas, respectively. The French High Commission constantly reorganized these lines of authority, depending on the relative importance of local departments and their scope of functions. See *Rapport à la Société*.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 50-66.

gaps.<sup>34</sup> However, the French High Commission tightly orchestrated such control, which was unevenly divided among French and Lebanese parties. In doing so, French policies contributed to the formation of a distinctly Lebanese elite and the latter's internal hierarchical organization.

This elite was an amalgam of Ottoman-era notables, businessmen, and politicians from the territories that now constituted Lebanon. The totality of French policies contributed to a fundamental reorganization of the sectarian, regional, and familial composition of local elites. Some families in the new state maintained their relative political or economic status of the Ottoman period, others experienced a precipitous decline in their status. Furthermore, French colonial policies created opportunities for the consolidation of new financial and political resources among other families that had previously been of lesser elite status or non-elites altogether.

Part of the trajectory of colonial state formation in Lebanon was a series of experiments in participatory government. The precise representative nature of the resultant governing bodies fluctuated and was itself a contentious issue. A major turning point in these participatory institutional arrangements was the proclamation of a Lebanese constitution in 1926.<sup>35</sup> This document and its attendant institutional configurations consecrated and

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<sup>34</sup> As evidence of the material shortages on the French administrative side, it is worth considering that between 1920 and 1924 (i.e., the first four years of the French Mandate) the civilian budget for Syria was cut from 185 million francs to 8 million francs and the military budget from 560 million francs to 210 million francs. During the same period, the number of French troops stationed in Lebanon and Syria was reduced from seventy thousand to twenty thousand soldiers. See Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, p. 104, fn 11.

<sup>35</sup> The context within which the French High Commission proclaimed the 1926 constitution highlights important dynamics of state and market formation in the colonial period. The constitutional proclamation came in the aftermath of a mass anti-colonial rebellion that had begun in 1925. Primarily based in areas outside of Greater Lebanon, the Syrian Revolt brought to the fore fundamental questions about the relationship between France and the local population, the relationship between the different mandatory states, and the relationship between different segments of the population within a single state. In many ways, the constitutional

intensified three dynamics: the expansion of political participation; the redefinition of the ties that bounded persons to one another; and the territorial encaging of social practices within the territorial framework of Lebanon.

The constitutional provisions were not drawn on a *tabula rasa*, even if the document marked a new threshold in the process of institution building and political socialization in Lebanon. The constitution drew from and expanded on earlier Ottoman and French colonial experiments in the context of representative governance. On the one hand, the constitution established a parliamentary government that was primarily elected by universal male suffrage,<sup>36</sup> but dominated by the French High Commission.<sup>37</sup> The latter could dismiss parliament, annul laws, and even suspend the constitution.<sup>38</sup> Such powers helped to secure French control over representative institutions, and were a more elaborate and efficient form

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proclamation and the processes it underpinned were specifically designed to appease local demands concerning the nature of the Lebanese state, both its internal organization and external relations. The constitution also served as a signal to the international community, primarily the League of Nations, that the Syrian Revolt was nothing more than a minor disturbance and that France was fulfilling its mission to prepare the population for eventual independence. After all, the entire alleged purpose of the mandate system was to prepare the local population for the strenuous conditions of the modern world. Representative institutions and a constitution demonstrated that France was supposedly dutifully just that. For the text of the constitution, see “Constitution of the Lebanese Republic” in League of Nations, *Organic Law for Syria and the Lebanon* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1930), pp. 3-13, henceforth “Constitution of the Lebanese Republic.” For an awareness of this international concern on the part of the French High Commission and attempt to speak directly to it, see *Rapport à la Société* (1927), pp. 11-40, 43-44.

<sup>36</sup> Initially, the constitution established a bicameral legislature where the lower house was elected and the upper house was appointed. However, a constitutional amendment on 17 October 1927 re-organized the legislature into a single assembly known since as the Chamber of Deputies, which combined elected and appointed deputies. See relevant articles in the second and third chapters of “Constitution of the Lebanese Republic.”

<sup>37</sup> According to the constitution, the French High Commission was the ultimate sovereign in that it was invested with ultimate authority in, for example, treaty-making power. The constitution also subjected the decisions of the Lebanese government to the rights and responsibilities enumerated in the Mandate Charter. Furthermore, Lebanon was denied independent foreign representation as it was limited to the right to assign an attaché in French missions. See “Part V. — Provisions relation to the Mandatory Power and the League of Nations” in “Constitution of the Lebanese Republic.”

<sup>38</sup> The French High Commission suspended the Lebanese constitution twice during the Mandate, once between May 1932 and January 1934, and then again between September 1939 and September 1943.

of managing participatory governance that the French High Commission sought to construct between 1920 and 1925.<sup>39</sup> These representative institutions drew from the models of the Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon, the Municipal Council of Beirut, and the Provincial Council of Beirut.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the constitution also created the office of the president of the republic, elected by the parliament.<sup>41</sup> The constitution effectively limited presidential powers to the appointment of a prime minister and severely weakened the presidency. Such dynamics echoed the institutional configurations of the late French Third Republic.<sup>42</sup> Finally, the constitution institutionalized political sectarianism, stipulating “equitable” confessional representation at the cabinet and civil service levels.<sup>43</sup> The

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<sup>39</sup> Having dissolved both Ottoman-era institutions of the Provincial Council of Beirut and the Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon by the fall of 1920, the French High Commission created the Administrative Council of Greater Lebanon on 22 September 1920. This first post-Ottoman council was comprised of seventeen appointed members, drawn from across the newly created Greater Lebanon. The French High Commission then replaced this appointed council with the Representative Council of Greater Lebanon in March 1922. The Representative Council differed from the Administrative Council in that the former was elected for a period of four years by general male suffrage in two stages. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the new council was stripped of much of its predecessor’s legislative power and effectively reduced to an advisory board. In contrast, the new laws empowered a governor (in addition to the high commissioner) to initiate legislation, decree a budget, and adjourn or dissolve the Representative Council. In January 1925, the French High Commission instituted the practice of having the Representative Council elect the governor, though it left open the possibility that the elected governor be either French or Lebanese. Six months later, the French High Commission held elections for a second Representative Council. It was this election that featured the early consolidation of a new political elite drawn from Greater Lebanon. Thirteen of the former thirty council members were re-elected, representing the first of a series of significant rates of return across election cycles in Lebanon. Furthermore, this second council featured the expansion of Sunni competition for membership, which now included ‘Umar Da’uq, ‘Umar Bayhum and Khayr al-Din ‘Adra—each of which were important Sunni notables from Beirut and Tripoli. See Zamir, pp. 141-146.

<sup>40</sup> On the Ottoman provincial and administrative councils of Beirut, see, respectively, Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, pp. 55-83 and 138-162.

<sup>41</sup> See relevant articles in the second and fourth chapters of “Constitution of the Lebanese Republic.”

<sup>42</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> The sectarian distribution of seats within the legislature was not specifically established, except in the sense that the constitution justified the prerogative of appointing members of the legislature on the basis of ensuring a certain type of confessional representation therein. It would be the specific laws governing each election cycle that stipulated the precise confessional allotment of each electoral district. Consequently, the drafting and decreeing of such laws were especially contentious throughout the colonial period.

institutionalization of this principle also drew on late Ottoman and early colonial precedents.<sup>44</sup> It nevertheless reflected a new calculus of elite demands in the wake of the Syrian Revolt that the French High Commission was all too willing to accommodate.<sup>45</sup> While the constitutional system would be subject to some modifications by the eve of independence, the above-described dynamics would continue to impinge on the nature of both institution building and political mobilization throughout the late colonial period and that of early independence.

The political regime of the Republic of Lebanon was not juridically limited to the 1926 constitution. Rather, the system was based on an edifice of legal practices that governed almost every aspect of life.<sup>46</sup> This legal regime was a combination of Ottoman-era laws, colonial era decrees preceding the constitution, and those regulations issued on the basis of the constitution. In fact, while all post-constitution decrees would begin with a clause recognizing the constitution as the ultimate legal reference, often there were other clauses recognizing decrees and legal arrangements that predated both the constitution and the

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<sup>44</sup> The Administrative Council of Greater Lebanon was based on the principle of confessional representation (specifically, six Maronites, three Greek Orthodox, one Greek Catholic, four Sunnis, two Shi'is, and one Druze). The successor to that institution, the Representative Council of Greater Lebanon, had a sectarian composition based on the 1921 census of Greater Lebanon. Totalling thirty members, the new council was comprised of ten Maronites, four Greek Orthodox, two Greek Catholics, six Sunnis, five Shi'is, two Druze, and one other minority.

<sup>45</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 50-57; Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest*, pp. 28-44.

<sup>46</sup> Contrary to misconceptions about the colonial period, the archival record is replete with various types of decrees by the French High Commission, the state government, and even local municipalities that sought to regulate almost every aspect of life in colonial Lebanon. See, for example, *Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-al-Matiqa al-Gharbiyya: Min 24 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1918 – 31 Ab Sanat 1920* (Bayrut: Matba'at al-Adab, 1924); *Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnan al-Kabir: Min Awwal Aylul Sanat 1920 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal 1922* (Bayrut: Matba'at al-Adab, 1925); *Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnan al-Kabir: Min Awwal Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1923 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal 1925* (Bayrut: Matba'at al-Adab, 1927); *Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnan al-Kabir: Min Awwal Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1926 – 23 Ayar 1926* (Bayrut: Matba'at al-Adab, 1927); and *Majmu'at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, vol. 1-10*.

collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Thus the legal framework of Lebanon (and Syria) was neither wholly based on from the Ottoman system nor newly invented. It was an amalgam of legal categories, institutions, and practices that drew on multiple sources of authority (i.e., Ottoman, Faysali, French, and the Mandate Charter). This went beyond drawing on the sectarian allotment of parliamentary seats first established in Ottoman elections. For example, the colonial legal amalgam included the 1909 Ottoman Law of Associations, which was recognized as governing the formation and conduct of voluntary associational groups for much of the colonial period.<sup>47</sup> Women’s groups, labor unions, and other interest associations used this law to organize themselves as they mobilized to shape the colonial political economy. Such an amalgamation was fundamental to the reorganization of everyday practices within the framework of the new state. It facilitated such a process by selectively incorporating and creating institutional arrangements. Through population censuses, the transfer of certain Ottoman-era rights deemed valid, and other practices, the colonial state produced the very identity it claimed to have been established to reflect.

Yet the political regime of Lebanon simultaneously reflected a fundamentally reconfigured relationship between the individual and the collective, the local and the foreign, the public and the private, and—finally—the population and the state. This went beyond the complex issue of the production and instantiation of a general category of the Lebanese citizen. It also included the production of reconfigured categories of citizenship along sectarian, gender, and class lines.

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<sup>47</sup> Ottoman authorities promulgated the 1909 Law of Associations in the hopes of monitoring and controlling the expanding number of voluntary associations. Ottoman citizens began organizing such groups under the right of association guaranteed by the 1908 Ottoman constitution. See “Cemiyetler Kanunu,” *Düstur* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1911): pp. 604-608. I would like to recognize Murat Yıldız for bringing the context and details of this law to my attention, in addition to providing me with the citation and translation.

Legal practices were an important element in the production of sectarianism. Nowhere is this clearer than in the realm of personal status courts, which fundamentally reshaped and reinforced “sectarian norms, boundaries, and identification.”<sup>48</sup> This is an important point insofar as most approaches to personal status issues in particular and sectarian mobilization in general view them as an entrenched phenomenon, which carried over from Ottoman times and that the Mandate authorities failed to confront and thus were forced to accommodate.<sup>49</sup> However, more critical scholarship has demonstrated how the French High Commission, local elites, and religious authorities through various strategic calculations produced realms of sectarian practice in terms of political representation and personal status autonomy.<sup>50</sup> It was during the French Mandate that the personal status system took its most comprehensive form and religious elites of officially recognized sects exercised communal autonomy in matters of marriage, divorce, annulment, inheritance, and adoption. This dynamic fundamentally shaped the sectarian differentiation of Lebanese citizens.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate*; Pierre Rondot, *Les institutions politiques du Liban; des communautés traditionnelles à l'état modern* (Paris: Institute d'études de L'Orient contmeporain, 1947).

<sup>50</sup> For an analysis on the modernity of sectarian identity and mobilization, see Makdasi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*. For a discussion of the strategic logics under girding the French High Commission's institutionalization of political sectarianism, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 44-46, 50-51, and 152-53. For an analysis of how political sectarianism was a dynamic produce both from above and below, while unevenly incorporating various segments of the population in colonial Lebanon, see Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*.

<sup>51</sup> It is worth stressing that French policy vis-à-vis personal status issues represented a reversal with respect to the late Ottoman trend of circumscribing the autonomy of religious elites in matters of personal status. Furthermore, as anthropologist Maya Mikdashi demonstrates, personal status court practices are more productive of sectarian identities than they are reflective of them. On the nature and autonomy of personal status courts in the late Ottoman period as compared to the French colonial period, see David Grafton, *The Christians of Lebanon: Political Rights in Islamic Law* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2003). On personal status courts as productive rather than reflective of sectarian identity, see Maya Mikdashi, “Religious Conversion and Da‘wa Secularism: Two Practices of Citizenship in Lebanon” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2014).

Law was also central to the differentiation of Lebanese citizenship along gendered lines. The Mandate Charter prohibited discrimination based on religion, race, or language, but not gender.<sup>52</sup> During the colonial period, members of the French High Commission and local elites significantly expanded electoral participation while maintaining its exclusive application to male citizens.<sup>53</sup> Equally important to the question of women's suffrage, the constitution and other institutional arrangements guaranteed the autonomy of religious officials in adjudicating matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the personal status system provided an even further layer of gender differentiation—both between women and men within a given sect, as well as between women across sects.

Class differences also figured prominently within the new politico-legal system that constituted Lebanon. This went beyond the French awarding of “large tracts of Ottoman imperial lands to tribal shaykhs, village chiefs, and landlords in the plains of Lebanon,”<sup>55</sup> as well as the new land tenure regime promulgated through a combination of a cadastral survey, land registry, and land code.<sup>56</sup> It included the power to legally recognize certain corporate interests while denying others. The Commercial Code recognized foreign and local business

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<sup>52</sup> League of Nations, “The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon.”

<sup>53</sup> The constitution and attendant electoral laws lowered the voting age to twenty-one years and removed the property requirement that had been in effect during the Ottoman period. See Article 21 of “Constitution of the Lebanese Republic.” On Ottoman elections, see Hasan Kayali, “Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27 (1995): pp. 265-286.

<sup>54</sup> See Article 9 of “Constitution of the Lebanese Republic.”

<sup>55</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 54.

<sup>56</sup> See “Qarar Raqam 186 al-Mu’arrakh fi 15 Adhar Sanat 1926 bi-Sha’n A’mal al-Tahtid wa-al-Tahrir li-al-‘Iqarat wa-al-Amlak,” “Qarar Raqam 188 al-Mu’arrakh fi 15 Adhar Sanat 1926 bi-Sha’n Insha’ al-Sijil al-‘Iqari,” and “al-Qarar Raqam 3339 al-Mu’arrakh fi 12 Tishrin al-Thani Sanat 1930 bi-Wad’ Nizam li-al-Mulkiyya al-‘Iqariyya wa-li-al-Huquq al-‘ayniyya li-al-Amwal Ghayr al-Manqula (Qanun al-Mulkiyya al-‘Iqariyya)” and their amendments in Amin Shahwar, *Majmu’at al-Nusus al-Qanuniyya al-Khassa bi-al-Tashri’ al-‘Iqari wa-bi-Nizam al-Mulkiyya al-‘Iqariyya fi Surya wa-Lubnan* (Bayrut: n.p., 1946).

interests both individually and collectively.<sup>57</sup> However, the lack of a labor code meant that the Ottoman Law of Associations continued to subsume labor interests within the broader rubric of voluntary associations.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, labor was a legally invisible collective interest.<sup>59</sup>

The efficiency of the new political regime, both as a system of rule and as a productive project, was uneven across time and space. It nevertheless resulted in a fundamentally new set of relations and practices that produced two interrelated effects. The first of these was the instantiation of Lebanon as a national identity. The second effect was the valorization of state institutions as a focus of elite and popular mobilizations. Toward the end of the mandate period, elite and popular groups alike operated in terms of a political system and national economy organized by Lebanon's territorial boundaries.<sup>60</sup>

Concomitant with the instantiation of the Lebanese state and the valorization of its institutions, the local bureaucracy continually expanded. This latter dynamic further integrated the daily lives of the local population within the state institutional sphere of influence. These "Lebanese institutions" thereby formed the nucleus around which elites and popular groups would pursue late colonial and post-independence institution building, state

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<sup>57</sup> Businesses were categorized into foreign and local, as well as further degrees of differentiation therein such as joint-stock companies versus family enterprises.

<sup>58</sup> Consequently, in the eyes of the law, labor groups were no different than literary groups in terms of rights and responsibilities.

<sup>59</sup> This is most evident in the makeup of state-sponsored committees, advisory boards, and other formal channels for the expression of particularist interests in the processes of economic policy making.

<sup>60</sup> In this sense, whatever competition existed to define the post-Ottoman political identity and geographic organization of the local population ended during the 1930s. While the foreign policies of Lebanon and its foreign policy and the international organization of the state were the subject of much controversy, the socio-political fact of Lebanon was not. The process leading of this dynamic in terms of elite integration and negotiation vis-à-vis state institutions is well documented in Firro, *Inventing Lebanon*.

formation, and economic development. Thus, shortly after the promulgation of the 1926 constitution, the Lebanese government issued Directive No. 5, of 31 May 1926, which established the various ministries of the republic and defined their functions.<sup>61</sup> These ministries included those of justice, internal affairs, finance, education, health, agriculture, and public works. The directive incorporated departments created prior to the constitution into these newly created ministries. Subsequent years would feature the creation of additional ministries. However, the various French advisors and departments continued to function, as well as supervise the workings of the local institutions.

### **Colonial Economy**

Three principles undergirded French economic policy in Lebanon (and Syria) during the colonial period. The first of these was economic stabilization. Soon after the establishment of the Mandate, the French High Commission expended great efforts to stabilize the economy of the newly defined territory of Lebanon. Such efforts were not merely the function of the externally imposed nature of mandate rule. Economic conditions in the immediate post-World War I period featured fiscal and monetary instability. This instability was the result of the devastation of the war, the inflated cost of basic goods, and the existence of multiple and overlapping currencies.<sup>62</sup> Within such a context, the exigencies of stabilizing food supplies

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<sup>61</sup> See “Marsum Raqam 5, Tarikh 31 Ayar 1926, bi-Tanzim Wizarat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya wa-Ta‘yin Ikhtisasataha” republished in *Wizarat al-‘Adliyya, al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, Majmu‘at al-Qawanin* (Bayrut: Matba‘at al-Jumhuriyya al-Jadida, 1948).

<sup>62</sup> Wartime destruction and famine emerged as key elements in the anti-Ottoman tropes of Lebanese and other nationalist movements. This is despite the fact that much of the suffering was due to the Entente blockade of the Ottoman Empire rather than any policy of persecution on the part of the latter. In Mount Lebanon alone, estimates place the number of dead at approximately twenty-five percent of the population. On the famine, see Linda Schilcher, “Famine in Syria, 1915-1918,” in *Problems of the Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*, edited by John P. Spagnolo and Albert Hourani (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996). On food prices and shortages in the immediate aftermath of the war, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 19-23, 58-63.

and public services, in addition to prices, took center stage.<sup>63</sup> In fact, stabilization would continue to be a principle well beyond the immediate postwar context. The French High Commission regulated the supply and pricing of basic goods throughout the colonial period. The second principle undergirding French economic policy in the Levant was self-sufficiency: state expenditures were to be covered by locally generated revenue. In fact, with the exception of continuing military subsidies, the Mandate effectively paid for itself and “budgets remained balanced even during the depression years and World War II.”<sup>64</sup> A final principle undergirding French economic policy was financial and in-kind inducements to local elites for cooperation. This dynamic took the following forms: subsidizing religious schools and charities; awarding Ottoman imperial lands; making available credit and access to equipment; and buttressing elite violence as they sought to discipline unruly segments of the population.

Such principles of economic policy making had their organizational expression in specific institutional arrangements. The first important aspect of economic organization during the colonial period was monetary and customs unification across the French Mandate in the Levant. Beginning in 1920, the French High Commission introduced the Syrian-Lebanese lira (LLS) and implemented various policies to establish said currency as the sole legal tender.<sup>65</sup> This policy came in the aftermath of the introduction of several “new”

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<sup>63</sup> This is most evidenced by the predominance of currency, price, and supply controls during the period between 1918 and 1922.

<sup>64</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 63.

<sup>65</sup> A legal tender is a currency that is accepted as payment for public dues. One Syrian-Lebanese lira (LLS) was sub-divided into one hundred Syrian-Lebanese piasters (PLS). Silver coins in denominations of ten, twenty-five, and fifty Syrian-Lebanese piasters were circulated as part of the currency regime. This new currency system was premised on one legal currency (the franc-pegged Syrian-Lebanese lira (LLS), where one lira was equal to twenty French francs), one reserve currency (the Turkish gold lira), and three exchange currencies (paper

currencies during World War I and the OETA administration.<sup>66</sup> The French High Commission's decision to render the Syrian-Lebanese lira sole legal tender while pegging it to the French franc both centralized and enhanced French fiscal capacity in the Mandate.<sup>67</sup> However, this new currency subjected the local population to a host of new issues related to fluctuations in the value of the French franc.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the introduction of a new currency system solicited a diverse array of local opposition. Nevertheless, the French High Commission was able to institutionalize the dominance of this new currency regime between

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Syrian-Lebanese liras, Turkish gold liras, and the residual Ottoman coin of meciidiye). For a contemporary account of these dynamics, see Sa'id B. Himadeh, *Monetary and Banking System of Syria* (Beirut: American University, 1935), pp. 61-72.

<sup>66</sup> The Ottoman lira (both gold coin and paper note) as well as the French franc and British pound (both in gold coin) were already in circulation prior to the end of World War I. The Ottoman lira had been the official currency of the Ottoman Empire since 1844. The associated currency system was primarily based on metal coins of various denominations and subdivisions, where one lira was equivalent to five meciidiye or one hundred kuruş. There was also the denomination of the para, where one kuruş equaled forty para. In 1912, the Ottoman government went off the gold standard by introducing paper notes in various denominations of the lira and kuruş. It was the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, established in 1881 as the European instrument for addressing Ottoman bankruptcy and ensuring loan repayments to European powers, which was primarily responsible for the introduction of the British pound and French franc as gold coins. The British-French occupation of Ottoman territory beginning in 1918 introduced the Sterling-backed Egyptian pound to the already existing currency market. For a general overview of Ottoman monetary policy, see Sevkett Pamuk, "Money in the Ottoman Empire, 1326-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, edited by Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 947-986. For an overview how Ottoman monetary policy manifested locally before and during World War I in the areas included in the post-Ottoman, see Himadeh, *Monetary and Banking System*, pp. 24-49. For the introduction of the Egyptian pound and the broader set of monetary policies during the joint British-French occupation, see Himadeh, *Monetary and Banking System*, pp. 50-60.

<sup>67</sup> This policy enabled the French government to pay its army expenditures in a local currency representing the French franc, thus strengthening the monetary position of the French High Commission in two related ways. On the one hand, the policy eliminated the necessity of purchasing Egyptian paper notes or Turkish gold money for making expenditure payments. On the other hand, the Egyptian currency it received in exchange for Syrian-Lebanese currency helped to increase French foreign exchange reserves (vis-à-vis the international market) given that the Egyptian currency was pegged to the Sterling pound.

<sup>68</sup> Successive devaluations of the French franc resulted in a significant lack of confidence in the Syrian-Lebanese lira, not to mention both major obstacles to international purchasing power and the desire of locally-operating foreign concessionary companies to increase rates for utilities and other services. For a contemporary account of these dynamics, see Himadeh, *Monetary and Banking System*, pp. 73-93.

1926 and 1929.<sup>69</sup> In addition to monetary union, the French High Commission established a customs union throughout its territories in the Levant. A single customs regime thus grouped the Republic of Lebanon and the different Syrian states. Goods entering the French Mandate in the Levant were subject to the same tariff legislation irrespective of their point of entry. Furthermore, there were no customs barriers between the various states.<sup>70</sup> The existence of a monetary and customs union did not mean that all economic practices were territorially oriented across both states. Despite such union, both the French High Commission and the local bureaucracy organized the majority of economic activities within the framework of individual states. These included the standardization and collection of direct taxes, the registration of businesses, business chambers, and various associations, the securing of credit, and the disbursement of rations.

A second important aspect of the economic organization of colonial Lebanon was the use of monopolies and concessions to establish centralized control over key aspects of the economy. On the one hand, the French High Commission defined various services as being concerned with the public good, thereby justifying the monopolization of those services. On the other hand, in many cases the French High Commission contracted out said services to

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<sup>69</sup> This was the function of two processes. The government of each of the various states that constituted the French Mandate in the Levant sanctioned the new legal currency in 1924. Prior to that date, the Syrian-Lebanese lira had functioned exclusively on the basis of a decree by the French High Commission. Furthermore, the French franc began to increase in value starting in the fall of 1926, eventually stabilizing by means of the gold standard. For a contemporary account, see Himadeh, *Monetary and Banking System*, pp. 94-96.

<sup>70</sup> Such a customs union presented two immediate challenges to policy making: the differential tariff needs of the individual states vis-à-vis their respective agricultural, manufacturing, and trade sectors, and the distribution of tariff revenues among the individual states. Both these issues represented flash points of contention among the emerging state elites throughout the colonial period and up through the dissolution of the customs union in 1950, almost four years into the post-independence period. A subsequent chapter will more thoroughly discuss these dynamics.

private business.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps the most important example of this dynamic is Banque de Syrie et du Grand Liban (BSL).<sup>72</sup> The French High Commission (in 1919) and later the local governments (in 1924) contracted the BSL to be the bank of issue for the Syrian-Lebanese lira.<sup>73</sup> The French High Commission also granted public utility concessions to various companies.<sup>74</sup> These utilities included those of electricity generation and distribution, port

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<sup>71</sup> The contracting out of public utility services was subject to the 1924 concessions law. See “Qarar Raqam 251 bi-Tarikh 20 Adhar 1924: Bi-Taḥdid al-Imtiyazat fī al-Ittiḥad al-Suri wa-fī Lubnan al-Kabir” in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnan al-Kabir: Awwal Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1934 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1935* (Bayrut: Matba‘at al-Adab, 1927), pp. 482-483.

<sup>72</sup> The Banque de Syrie (later renamed Banque de Syrie et du Grand Liban) was a private French corporation established to take over the offices and privileges of the Ottoman Bank in the territories that would later form the French mandate in the Levant. Upon the bank’s founding in 1919, the board of directors initially set its capital at ten million French francs, raising it to 25,500,000 French francs the following year. The BSL’s capital was divided into 51,000 shares of five hundred French francs each. Forty thousand shares were open for subscription, with the Ottoman Bank owning the remaining eleven thousand shares. A board of directors comprised of sixteen members managed the bank, four of whom were required to be “native.” French law and the bank’s articles of incorporation governed the bank, and the board of directors was virtually independent in its policy decisions. Board members were entitled to twelve percent of whatever remained of the annual profits of the bank after the request transfer to the general reserves, shareholders, and special reserves and funds. See Himadeh, *Monetary and Banking System*, pp. 137-163.

<sup>73</sup> The French High Commission conferred this right on the Banque de Syrie in the same decree with which the High Commission introduced the Syrian-Lebanese lira. A January 1924 agreement between the bank on the one hand, and the government of Greater Lebanon, the Syrian Federation, and Jabal al-Druze on the other hand, converted the French High Commissioner’s decree into a government contract which confirmed the status of the Syrian-Lebanese currency as the sole legal tender, sanctioned the franc exchange standard, and provided the bank with the exclusive privilege of issuing notes for a period of fifteen years beginning on 1 April 1924. The contract also established the Banque de Syrie as the official bank (i.e., holder of balances) of the governments comprising the French mandate. Consequently, the bank was renamed Banque de Syrie et du Grand Liban (BSL). See “Ittiḥaq Tarikh 23 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1924 Bayn Hukumat Surya wa-Lubnan wa-Jabal al-Druz wa-bayn Bank Surya wa-Lubnan” in *Wizarat al-‘Adliyya, al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, al-Majmu‘a al-Haditha li-al-Qawanin al-Lubnaniyya* (Bayrut: Maktaba Sadir, 1954).

<sup>74</sup> The French High Commission drew on private investors to operate public services that the state could not—or would not—manage directly. That the majority of those private investors were based in France provided the High Commissioner and his superiors in Paris with the opportunity to cultivate important support from within the French political establishment. However, concessions also provided the high commission and local governments with the opportunity to cultivate relationships with local entrepreneurs as well. For a detailed discussion of the role of concessions within the overall developmental trajectory of the French Mandate in the Levant, see Simon Jackson, Simon M. W. Jackson, “Mandatory Development: The Political Economy of the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon, 1915-1939” (PhD diss., New York University, 2009), pp. 200-323.

development and management, and railway exploitation.<sup>75</sup> Finally, the French High Commission held monopolies in the trade of specific goods such as tobacco, salt, and gunpowder—granting concessions for the management of some while directly controlling others.<sup>76</sup> The use of monopolies and concessions for what were effectively developmental purposes had two key effects. First, the governing of services such as those of currency issue and public utilities were subject to the logics of private profit maximization. A further effect is that this system empowered government officials (through state institutions) to privilege certain groups over others.

The third important aspect of the economic organization of Lebanon is that of the fiscal budgets. The Mandate was comprised of three basic budgets, which reflected the tripartite (i.e., French, Mandate, and Lebanese) bureaucratic organization of colonial Lebanon, not to mention its fiscal priorities of stability, self-sufficiency, and cooptation. These budgets were technically independent of one another. However, the French High Commission supervised and enabled the coordination of all three budgets and the strategic transfer of funds among them. The three budgets were those of the Common Interests, the Republic of Lebanon, and the French High Commission.

The French High Commission established the Common Interests as a distinct bureaucracy in 1928 to facilitate the centralized management of previously autonomous administrative units whose services spanned the entirety of the French Mandate in the

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<sup>75</sup> See, for example, “Qarar Raqam 145 Sadir fi 11 Huzayran Sanat 1925: Bi-Sha’n Insha’ wa-Istithmar Khutut al-Quwwa al-Kahruba’iyya Dhat al-Tawattur al-‘Ali” and “Qarar Raqam 15 Sadir bi-Tarikh 15 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1925: Bi-Wad’ Ittifaq tTa’dil al-Sukuk al-Imtiyaziyya li-Sharikat al-Marfa’ wa-al-Arsifa wa-al-Mustwada’at fi Bayrut Muda’ al-Tanfidh” in *al-Qawanin al-Haditha*.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, “Qarar ‘Adad 16/LR Sadir fi 30 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1935: Yata’allaq bi-Ihtikar al-Tabgh wa-al-Tunbak” in Wizarat al-‘Adliyya, al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Majmu’at al-Qawanin* (Bayrut: Matba’at al-Jumhurriya al-Jadida, 1948).

Levant.<sup>77</sup> The Common Interests included those departments, bureaus, and other administrative units that managed customs, quarantines, economic services, monopolies, concessions, relations with the BSL, and a host of other activities. The Common Interests budget drew the overwhelming share of its revenue from trade tariffs. What little income certain economic services, monopolies, concessions, and the BSL generated for the Common Interests budget generally did not exceed seven percent and in very rare instances peaked at fifteen percent.<sup>78</sup> On the expenditure side, the Common Interests budget covered the salaries and other administrative costs of all units that managed Common Interests.<sup>79</sup> In addition, this budget covered the cost of the Special Troops of the Levant and the servicing of the Ottoman Public Debt. The Common Interests budget almost always had a surplus. The French High Commission annually distributed a portion of this surplus among the local bureaucracies of each of the states that made up the French Mandate.<sup>80</sup> Whatever amount was left from the surplus was either carried over to the next fiscal year or transferred to a reserve account within the Common Interests.

After the Common Interests budget came the budget of the Republic of Lebanon.<sup>81</sup> The revenue transfers from the Common Interests budget provided significant revenue to the state budget. Direct and indirect taxes also comprised important sources of revenue, while

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<sup>77</sup> See *Rapport à la Société* (1928), pp. 105-108 and 155-158.

<sup>78</sup> See relevant sections of *Rapport à la Société*.

<sup>79</sup> Administrative costs were limited to the functioning of Common Interests units, and thus did not cover the administrative costs of companies with concessions monitored by the Common Interests.

<sup>80</sup> The total amount transferred and the respective portions of the various states were a contentious issue.

<sup>81</sup> Each local bureaucracy of the states organized within the French Mandate in the Levant had a state budget. While that of Lebanon was relatively consistent, the constant reorganization of the Syrian states complicated the issue of budgets for other parts of the French Mandate.

public enterprises and public domain did so to a much smaller extent.<sup>82</sup> On the expenditure side, the state budget covered localized activities and their associated institutions, primarily those of security, administration, economic development, and social welfare.

The third and final budget was that of the French High Commission. This budget funded the commissions' bureaucracy as well as the remaining units of the Army of the Levant.<sup>83</sup> In addition, there are indications of direct contributions to local charities whose activities were centered on education and health.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, even those ostensibly private endeavors in the field of social welfare were implicated in the broader budgetary dynamics of the Mandate. It appears that revenues from the treasury of the French government covered most of the expenses of the French High Commission. This tripartite division of fiscal budgets (French, Mandate, and Lebanese) would prove to be important in the post-colonial period as the institutional legacies of this budgetary division shaped how state elites consolidated these budgets into one state budget.

### *The Political Economy of Colonial Lebanon*

Scholars have engaged in vigorous debates over the nature of the colonial economy in Lebanon, with many imputing certain motives for specific policies.<sup>85</sup> Other scholars have

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<sup>82</sup> Direct taxes included those of buildings, land, animal, and tamattu'. Indirect taxes include those related to tobacco, benzene, salt, alcohol, and stamps. For a contemporary account, see George Hakim, "Fiscal System," in *Economic Organization of Syria*, edited by Sa'id B. Himadeh (Beirut: The American Press, 1936), pp. 333-402.

<sup>83</sup> The remaining units included those not grouped under the rubric of the Special Troops of the Levant. While the precise configuration of these troops varied across time, it was invariably comprised of a mixture of soldiers drawn from the French Foreign Legion, the colonial army, and French North African and West African troops.

<sup>84</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 54.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Marwan Buheiry, *Beirut's Role in the Political Economy of the French Mandate: 1919-1939* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1987).

debated the precise structure of the economy in terms of sectoral composition.<sup>86</sup> Yet, these analyses have tended to ignore key difficulties in making such assessments. On the one hand, the de jure monetary and customs union renders extremely difficult the making of specific assessments of “the economy” in Lebanon as opposed to that in Syria. This is especially the case because economic statistics for the period primarily treated both states as a single economic unit. On the other hand, while the French High Commission decreed certain policies, the Common Interests and individual state bureaucracies decreed others. Consequently, it is very difficult to link particular motives to specific policies, let alone outcomes. There is as of yet no scholarly endeavor to produce an empirically grounded and detailed analysis of the nature of the colonial economy in Lebanon.

One can thus take stock of political economy more productively by teasing out broad patterns of relations rather than a reified model of economy. This methodological maneuver allows us to appreciate significant changes throughout the colonial period, without descending into deterministic arguments about later trajectories of state and market formation. Historian Elizabeth Thompson’s concept of a “colonial civic order” provides a useful framework for such an undertaking.<sup>87</sup> She defines a civic order as the arena of interaction between various social forces and the concomitant production of a constellation of institutions and norms. Thompson identifies the French High Commission and local elites as two such forces, with popular groups and movements as a third set of actors. The varied

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<sup>86</sup> Carolyn Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), pp. 17-34.

<sup>87</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Civic Order*, pp. 16-17. Thompson borrows the concept of civic order from Isser Woloch, who “used it in his analysis of the reorganization of the French state’s institutional links with society in the Napoleonic era.” See Elizabeth Thompson, “The Climax and Crisis of the Colonial Welfare State in Syria and Lebanon during World War II,” in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, edited by Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 62 fn 7.

dislocations of World War I, the creation of the new state, and the depression era expanded mass politics to unprecedented levels. Women's groups, labor activists, and Islamic populists mobilized and made claims on both the French High Commission and local elites. The origins of this process lay in the late Ottoman period. However, the colonial period featured the intensification of the unraveling of parochial loyalties or their incorporation within a much more complex matrix of vertical and horizontal relations. Thus popular groups of various kinds were significant, if structurally disadvantaged, actors within the civic order.

For Thompson, the colonial civic order was not a static set of relations, but one subjected to shifting dynamics. In the 1920s, military repression and state patronage defined the colonial civic order. However, in the 1930s it was political and social rights that formed its pillars. Key dynamics associated with the depression era transformed the three-way bargaining process between the French High Commission, local elites, and popular groups so as to produce the colonial welfare state. Establishing "basic social rights to health, education, and job security" was central to this welfare model, as was the pattern of funding these rights through mediating elites. Nevertheless, the corollary to this shift in the civic order was the significant expansion in the size and scope of the state bureaucracy. In turn, such bureaucratic expansion both reflected and facilitated a broader process at work: the valorization of the state. The political regime that the French High Commission constructed became a crucial resource for the reproduction of the power of local elites.<sup>88</sup> In addition, the

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<sup>88</sup> Local elites during the colonial period were not necessarily identical to those members that constituted the Ottoman-era elites in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and elsewhere. The practices and policies of the colonial period restructured the composite elements of the local elite and subsequently provided the means for their reproduction as such. For an enlightening case study of this process, see the discussion of the Beirut Sunni elite, see Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State 1840-1984* (Ithaca: Ithaca Press, 1986), pp. 45-96.

system of rule proved highly useful for the purposes of integrating elites and popular groups from across the political geography of the Republic of Lebanon.<sup>89</sup> Finally, the political regime helped channel struggles away from the tactics of revolt and insurgency and into the institutional contours of the new bureaucracy. The combined effect of these various manifestations valorized the state and instantiated Lebanon as a nation-state in people's everyday practices. Thus, the instantiation of Lebanon as a political sociability and as a nexus of institutional arrangements were inextricably linked.

By the eve of World War II there was a near-complete integration of the local population into the Lebanese nation-state as both a bureaucracy and identity. This process, began as early as 1920, was without a doubt uneven, but became near totalizing by 1939. The dynamics of the depression era were a key impetus for the consolidation of this process. Thus, even as opposition to French rule increased, Lebanon as an implicit premise for independence became ubiquitous. As calls for independence escalated and included broader segments of people, the stakes were about who would control Lebanon, rather than whether it should continue to be the basis of political and economic activities.

### **World War II and Independence**

World War II was a key moment in the intensification of the processes that characterized state and market formation in colonial Lebanon. Central to this intensification were opportunities for the emergence of new alliances, balances of power, and new institutional arrangements. The Allied invasion of Lebanon and Syria in 1941 to overthrow

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<sup>89</sup> See Weiss for a discussion of how the system of personal status courts and the concomitant recognition of the Ja'fari Shari'a Court helped integrate the Shi'i population of Jabal 'Amil into the bureaucratic and daily practices of the Lebanese state.

the Vichy colonial government was the key turning point.<sup>90</sup> The subsequent stationing of British troops in Lebanon and the incorporation of the Middle East into the Allied war effort severely undermined French autonomy in the management of the Mandate. One effect of this loss of autonomy was the subjection of the movement of goods, capital, and people to the control of the Middle East Supply Centre (MESC).<sup>91</sup> Such economic management would have important consequences for the development of state institutional capacities and repertoires. However, it also involved a significant investment by both British and US governments in the local affairs of Lebanon.

The dynamics of World War II also facilitated the transition from Mandate rule to independent state, and the reorganization of the political field. Oscillating control between the Axis and the Allies as well as the concomitant attempts to win the hearts and minds of the population was an opportunity for social forces in Lebanon to renegotiate the terms of the Mandate. The primacy of stability combined with a host of other strategic considerations led US and British policies to converge on granting Lebanon independence.<sup>92</sup> This convergence was particularly coherent in the face of growing anti-colonial mobilization that risked disrupting the Allied war effort. The struggle for independence spanned from 1941 through 1946, and featured the rise of the Constitutional Bloc as the preeminent political coalition;

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<sup>90</sup> For an analysis of Vichy rule in Lebanon and the series of events that led to the Allied invasion and occupation of Lebanon, see Albert H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 230-240; Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Syria and Lebanon* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1957), pp. 62-65.

<sup>91</sup> For a general history, see Martin W. Wilmington, "The Middle East Supply Centre: A Reappraisal," *Middle East Journal* (Spring 1952).

<sup>92</sup> On this convergences, see "Franco-British Conflict Regarding Proposed French Proclamation to Lebanon. Telegram from US Consul to US Secretary of State, 9 November 1941" and "Question of US Recognition of Lebanon. Telegram from US Secretary of State, 13 November 1941," republished in Walter L. Browne (ed.), *The Political History of Lebanon, 1920-1950, Vol. II: Documents on French Mandate and World War II, 1936-1943* (Salisbury: Documentary Publications, 1977), pp. 260-263.

the further institutionalization of political sectarianism; and the mobilization of popular sectors.<sup>93</sup>

On the one hand, the Constitutional Bloc emerged from the independence struggle as the dominant political coalition after years of competition with its rival, the National Bloc. Key in this outcome was the US-UK support for the Constitutional Bloc and the latter's long-standing more-critical view toward French rule.<sup>94</sup> There is much to be said about the small margins of victory in the 1943 parliamentary and presidential elections that produced the ascension of Bishara al-Khuri and his Constitutional Bloc.<sup>95</sup> However, the National Bloc's subsequent costly mistakes—namely its support for the 1943 French repression of Bishara al-Khuri, his cabinet, and supporters in parliament—resulted in the near complete political marginalization of key members of the National Bloc.<sup>96</sup> The Constitutional Bloc thus claimed the political dividends of gaining recognition for the independence of Lebanon in 1943 and negotiating the withdrawal of all foreign troops by the end of 1946. It was not until the 1951 parliamentary elections that the National Party would regain enough credibility to stand as a legitimate political group in the eyes of the public.

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<sup>93</sup> While resistance to French colonial rule was a constant feature of the mandate period, it was during this interval that local actors formed a broad anti-colonial coalition representing multiple centers of power among both elite and popular groups. Prior to this juncture, the dominant issue was that of constitutional rule and French attempts to subvert it. However, beginning in 1941—and in part spurred on by promises of independence on the part of British and French powers—full independence replaced previous accommodationist discourses of national politics.

<sup>94</sup> See “Upcoming Elections. Telegram from US Consul to US Secretary of State, 16 August 1943” and “US Policy Towards Lebanese Government. Telegram from State Department to US Consul, 22 August 1943,” republished in Browne (ed.), *The Political History of Lebanon*, vol. II, pp. 404-408.

<sup>95</sup> For a detailed account of the elections results, see Eyal Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 44-56.

<sup>96</sup> It would not be until the early 1950s that the key members of the National Bloc would regain enough footing to competitively run for elections and oppose the Bishara al-Khuri regime.

On the other hand, the negotiations over the rules governing the 1943 parliamentary elections, and the efforts of the Constitutional Bloc to consolidate its victories in the aftermath of those elections, consecrated the sectarian distribution of parliamentary seats and government offices in Lebanon. Deliberations over the 1943 election law were fraught with struggles over districting, seat allotments, and confessional distribution.<sup>97</sup> It was in this context that political elites reached a compromise agreement that fixed the ratio of Christian to Muslim parliamentarians at six to five.<sup>98</sup> This ratio would continue to govern parliamentary elections until the post-civil war reformulation of the Lebanese political system.<sup>99</sup> After the 1943 elections, al-Khuri sought to consolidate his presidential electoral victory through a political pact with one of the Sunni community's most popular leaders—Riyad al-Sulh—whom he appointed as prime minister. The National Pact—as the agreement came to be known—stipulated that while the president of the republic would be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister would be a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament would be a Shi'i Muslim. This pact formed the basis of the long-term confessional division of the three most important political offices in the Lebanese government.

A third and final dynamic of the World War II period is the ubiquity of mass mobilizations. During the war, the frequency of marches, protests, and strikes increased tremendously. This was a result of both the economic dislocation of the war as well as the

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<sup>97</sup> See *al-Nahar* issues covering the period between 15 June 1943 and 1 August 1943.

<sup>98</sup> See “Mulhaq bi-Qanun al-Intikhabat: al-Qarar ‘Adad 3112 al-Sadir fi 31 Tamuz Sanat 1943” in *Mujamu‘at al-Qawanin*.

<sup>99</sup> As part of the post-civil war settlement, the confessional distribution of parliamentary seats was modified to an equal ratio between Christians and Muslims. For this and other reformulations of the political system in the aftermath of the 1975-1990 civil war, see chapter entitled “The Political Settlement of the Second Republic” in Reinoud Leenders, *Spoils of Truce: Corruption and State-Building in Postwar Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 122-163.

heightened political polarization along local, national, and international lines. Some of the most poignant examples of these mass mobilizations centered on the supply and price of certain basic commodities—most notably bread.<sup>100</sup> However, such mobilizations were not restricted to consumer issues. Popular mobilizations were key to the disruptive national protests that tipped the balance in favor of independence, both on the political and military fronts. Various groups organized mass protests at two particular junctures. The first of these was in opposition to the French High Commission's arrest of al-Khuri, his prime minister al-Sulh, and other members of the cabinet after they amended the constitution to remove all references to the mandate.<sup>101</sup> The second juncture of mass protests was to demand the full evacuation of foreign troops.<sup>102</sup> Such a degree of mobilization would prove important in the early post-colonial period as the first two independence regimes worked to consolidate their rule.

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<sup>100</sup> See Thompson, "The Climax and Crisis of the Colonial Welfare State," pp. 76-78.

<sup>101</sup> More specifically, the constitution was amended (with some clauses being removed and others being amended) so that all references to the mandate and the League of Nations were eliminated, and Lebanon was instead described as "a sovereign state" (Articles 1, 52, 90-95, and 102). Furthermore, French was no longer listed as an official language on par with Arabic (Article 2). For the text of these constitutional amendments, see "Qanun Dusturi bi-Ta'dil Ba'd al-Mawad min al-Dustur al-Lubnani" ["Constitutional Law: Amending Some Articles of the Constitution"], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 4106 (10 November 1943), pp. 11501. For details of these arrests, what precipitated them, and the eleven days of protest that followed, see Michael Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 44-46; Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 247-253. For contemporary analyses, see Majid Khadduri, "The Franco-Lebanese Dispute and the Crisis of November 1943," *American Journal of International Law* 38 (October 1944): pp. 601-620; "The Crisis in the Lebanon: A Note on French-Lebanese Relations," *Bulletin of International News* 20 (27 November 1943): pp. 1039-1045. For accounts written in the years shortly thereafter, see Albert H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, pp. 279-288; Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Syria and Lebanon*, pp. 74-79.

<sup>102</sup> For a general discussion of the events and dynamics that led to the general strike and its eventual outcome, see Ziadeh, pp. 79-92. For a contemporary account, but one that ends in 1945, see Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, pp. 288-307.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the broad contours of state and market formation in Lebanon during the colonial period. In doing so, it has highlighted key institutional arrangements and repertoires, as well as their effects on the modes of identification among elite and popular groups. Such dynamics constituted important legacies for state and market formation in the period after independence. However, they did not determine the nature of such a trajectory. As this dissertation demonstrates, the range of possibilities for the political and economic organization of everyday life included a range of distinct options. The following chapters trace these distinct options.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Beyond Lebanese Exceptionalism: Institution Building and Political Organization in Early Independence Period**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the political economy of Lebanon during the decade after independence. It narrates and analyzes the broad contours of economic development, institution building, and political organization within a comparative historical perspective. Much of the academic literature and popular discourse on Lebanon identifies the consolidation of the post-colonial political economy in the decades after World War II as exceptional. Scholars locate this exceptionality as true both in the Middle East and the broader late developing world. This chapter identifies the histories, premises, and literatures underlying the discourse of exceptionalism. By identifying dynamics and processes that scholars have overlooked, it challenges exceptionalist framings. It is hence a rereading of the archival record as well as the historiographic corpus.

First, the chapter highlights the broad contours of Lebanon's post-colonial political economy and attendant representations of state institutions' role. A specific focus on the period between 1946 and 1955 offers important insights into processes and dynamics of state and market formation that scholars have either taken for granted or ignored. I thus argue for a particular disaggregation of the post-independence history of Lebanon in order to challenge two chronological framings that have dominated historical writing on Lebanon. The first is the periodization of post-colonial Lebanese history according to central "political events," such as the presidential transitions of 1952 and 1958. In addition, standard economic

histories blur the distinction between different phases of economic development. These histories narrate the 1946-1975 period as one of a continuous and static set of dynamics.

While recognizing the importance of later developments for the organization of the political economy of Lebanon, this dissertation emphasizes the first decade of independence as a critical juncture for institution building. It was a period of significant contingency during which state elites established particular institutional arrangements. On the one hand, the reconfiguration of the political economy of Lebanon between 1946 and 1955 was reflected in important transformations in the composition and functions of state institutions. These changes would have durable consequences for the long-term trajectory of post-independence state and market formation. More specifically, the consolidation of particular institutional arrangements during the early independence period set important constraints on later attempts (particularly during the 1960s) at restructuring political participation and economic development, which scholars largely point to as the defining period of institution building. On the other hand, important local, regional, and global dynamics scholars consider ubiquitous throughout the 1946-1975 period were not necessarily at work in the early independence period. The consolidation of new institutional arrangements restructured the nature of social conflict in Lebanon. This fact, coupled with the shifting regional and global dynamics of the second half of the 1950s, necessitates a re-periodization of post-colonial Lebanese history. Absent the spectacular types of conflicts and events that have come to dominate the historiographic interests, the 1946-1955 period was nevertheless one of significant institution building, mass mobilization, and economic transformation.

Second, the chapter provides the institutional context for the period under consideration. Other chapters focus on specific institutional transformations that helped

define the nature of the Lebanese political economy and the struggles that undergirded them. Here, I give an overview of how the years between 1946 and 1955 featured a broader range of institutional shifts. Thus the period did not represent a halt in the qualitative expansion of state institutions as scholars have insisted. Rather, the period featured significant transformations in both the scope and reach of state institutions.

The final part of this chapter highlights the degree of non-elite mobilization throughout the early independence period. Subsequent chapters identify the role of specific forms of political mobilization in relation to particular institutional consolidation. However, it is important to recognize that such mobilizations took place within a broader context of mass mobilization. In the wake of independence, existing organizations adapted themselves while new organizations announced themselves. Combined, these associational networks sought to be equal partners in the process of institutional transformation and thus secure more equitable incorporation of their constituencies. At issue in their mobilizations was the nature of the relationship between different groups within the country, and the role of institutions in articulating those relationships.

### **The Merchant Republic**

As the French colonial enterprise completed its withdrawal from Lebanon and local state officials sought to consolidate the country's independence, contemporary observers optimistically looked to the future. Despite the elite factionalism of the Mandate period and the fluctuations of the anti-colonial struggle, the Constitutional Bloc in 1946 had a clear mandate to govern.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the broader constellation of elites accepted the new status

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<sup>1</sup> Several speeches and documents issued by the president and his prime minister provide a sense of how broad of a mandate they viewed themselves as having. For one example see the cabinet programs during the first two years of independence in Yusif Qazma Khuri, *al-Bayanat al-Wizariyya al-Lubnaniyya wa-Munaqashati?ha fi*

quo and adjusted their mobilizations to the reality of an independent Lebanon.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, and despite the contentious nature of state formation in the colonial period, representative institutions in Lebanon attained a certain measure of legitimacy in the wake of independence. While some point to the National Pact as the expression of that legitimacy, a more indicative dynamic is the increasing voter participation and electoral competition in parliamentary elections throughout the period.<sup>3</sup>

Economic prospects also appeared favorable. Lebanon's private sector greatly benefited from World War II, accumulating resources that would drive economic growth over the next decade.<sup>4</sup> Wartime rationing drove up prices on basic commodities, enriching landlords and merchants.<sup>5</sup> British (and French) forces based in Lebanon during the war provided an important source of capital infusion into the economy after years of depression-

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*Majlis al-Nuwwab 1926-1984, al-Mujalla al-Awwal* (Bayrut: Mu'assasat al-Dirasat al-Lubnaniyya, 1968), pp. 167-185. For another example, see the following book published in 1947 which was referred to by several contemporary writers as a snapshot view al-Khuri's self-understanding of his mandate: *Jumhuriyyat Lubnan, Lubnan fi 'Ahd al-Istiqlal* (Bayrut: Dar al-Ahad, 1947). Finally, see the relevant speeches by al-Khuri, in particular "Yawm al-Dima' al-'Aziza wa-Wathiqat al-Istiqlal" (22 November 1946), "al-Jala'" (1 January 1947), "Haqa'iq wa-Zikrayat" (3 February 1947), in Bishara al-Khuri, *Majmu'at Khutab: Aylul 1943 – Kanun al-Awwal 1951* (Bayrut: al-Dar al-Lubnaniyya li-al-Nashr al-Jami'i, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that aside from specific and limited policy differences, the first year of independence featured very little formal opposition to President Bishara al-Khuri or his Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh.

<sup>3</sup> Local media reported the following national voter participation figures for parliamentary elections in the 1943, 1947, 1951, and 1953: 129628, 167943, 199389, and 389932. These figures represented, respectively, the following percentages of the total voting age population: 26.4 percent, 29.7 percent, 38.5 percent, and sixty percent. It is worth noting that women were able to vote in parliamentary elections for the first time during the 1953 elections, though they are counted in the voting-age population from which the percentages are calculated. On these figures, see Michael Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 222-223.

<sup>4</sup> See A. R. Prest, *War Economics of Primary Producing Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), pp. 221-240.

<sup>5</sup> See Martin W. Wilmington, "The Middle East Supply Centre: A Reappraisal," *Middle East Journal* (Spring 1952): pp. 144-166. It is also worth noting that state officials recognized this dynamic and therefore implemented a wartime tax. On this tax, see "Marsum Ishtira'i Raqam 245NI Tarikh 6 Tishrin al-Thani Sanat 1942: Mukmal bi-al-Marsum al-Ishtira'i 257 fi 24 Tishrin al-Thani Sanat 1942" in *Majmu'at al-Qawanin*.

era stagnation.<sup>6</sup> Forced domestic savings, as a result of wartime prohibitions on imports, added to the investment capacity of Lebanon's private sector.<sup>7</sup> Economists and consultants in Lebanon agreed that the government had a number of development strategies it could choose to pursue.<sup>8</sup> However, these "experts" diverged on the question of which model to champion and the justifications for such a choice.

### *The Problem of Development*

Transitions from colonial rule to independence typically open up a host of questions related to the political economy of a country.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, state elites are liberated from certain decision-making constraints related to direct colonial rule. On the other hand, the political capital accrued from delivering independence empowers elites to reform key aspects of state policy, reorganize institutions, and embark on a new development model. Economic development models are the ideal-type aggregates of different sets of strategies and policies designed to generate wealth in a given economy.<sup>10</sup> While not necessarily the immediate and

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<sup>6</sup> Precise estimates vary, however Carolyn Gates claims that "allied expenditures in the Levant from 1941 to 1945 produced a large rise in sterling and French franc balances, amounting to some [five hundred million Syrian-Lebanese liras]." Carolyn Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> The total deposits (combing both demand deposits and time deposits) in major banks is estimated at approximately 26,531 Lebanese liras for 1939 and 225,827 Lebanese liras for 1945. See "Table A4: Deposits and loans of principle banks, 1939-1952" in Gates, *The Merchant Republic*, p. 181.

<sup>8</sup> See Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir 'An al-Tatawwur al-'Iqtisadi fi Lubnan [Report on the Economic Development of Lebanon]* (Bayrut: Wizarat al-Iqtisad al-Watani, 1948); Gabriel Menassa, *al-Tasmim al-insha'i li-al-iqtisad al-Lubnani wa-islah al-dawla* (Bayrut: Manshurat Jam'iyat al-Iqtisad al-Siyasi al-Lubnaniyya, 1948).

<sup>9</sup> Several studies address this very question in other contexts. See, for example, Steven Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria: Institutions and Social Conflict, 1946-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> On development models and their attendant assumptions and implications, see Jorge Larraín, *Theories of Development: Capitalism, Colonialism and Dependency* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991); Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick, *Theories of Development: Contentions, Arguments, Alternatives* (New York: Guildford Press, 2009).

largest recipients of the generated wealth, state officials are nevertheless confronted with the need to ensure the existence and relative success of such a process. Failure to do so deprives those officials of the fiscal means to maintain the existing system of rule, not to mention the social alliances that underpin that system.

However, capital accumulation strategies are not neutral. The choice of which model to pursue is subject to an array of constraints. On the one hand, both local resource endowments and the nature of the global economy render some objectives easier to accomplish than others. For example, a manufacturing-centric model requires the availability of low-cost inputs (e.g., raw materials and power supply), financial credits for both short- and long-term investments, and strategic positioning vis-à-vis the international supply of competing finished goods. On the other hand, there are varying implications of class conflict and social alliances particular to each set of strategies. Keeping with the previous example, a manufacturing-based model depends on the availability of a local market sufficient in size to consume the finished goods, which in turn might necessitate a degree of rural reform to help expand the number of potential consumers.<sup>11</sup>

There are several key indicators for the type of development model obtaining in a given country. The first of these indicators is the sectoral division within an economy. Economic sectors are typically divided into three broad categories: agriculture, manufacturing, and services. The contribution of each sector to the total amount of goods produced and capital accumulated in a given national economy highlights important

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For a discussion of development models as implemented in the post-colonial Middle East, see Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> The exception to this is an export-oriented manufacturing model, which is dependent on a foreign market for the finished goods.

developmental dynamics. For example, some sectors are more labor intensive than others, therefore affecting the nature of employment.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, some sectors provide higher wages than others, therefore affecting living standards of those employed.<sup>13</sup> A second indicator of a development model is the degree of wealth redistribution in the country. Thus beyond the sectoral shares of capital accumulation, there is the question of how capital is redistributed within and across sectors. Examples of wealth redistribution mechanisms include taxes, minimum wages and employment benefits, and public benefits such as subsidized costs of living and education. However, sectoral divisions and mechanisms for wealth redistribution within a national economy are not naturally occurring phenomena. Rather, they involve government policies that manage both the constraints on capital accumulation and the degree of wealth redistribution. Thus, state policies are a third and final indicator of what development model best captures the local political economy. More specifically, state policies are at the heart of development models.

In post-colonial Lebanon, the political economy of the country coalesced around a model that scholars have described as open, laissez-faire, and service-based.<sup>14</sup> By 1954, the sectoral distribution for national income generation featured the trade sector accounting for nearly thirty percent, with agriculture and industry accounting for nineteen and twelve

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<sup>12</sup> The agricultural and manufacturing sectors are more labor intensive than those of trade, finance, and tourism.

<sup>13</sup> For example, labor wages earned in the manufacturing sector are typically significantly higher than those earned in the agricultural sector.

<sup>14</sup> For various descriptions of this model, see Albert Y. Badre, "The National Income of Lebanon," *Middle East Economic Papers* (1956): pp. 1-37; Toufic K. Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-faire* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Gates, *The Merchant Republic*; Yusif A. Sayigh, "Lebanon: Special Economic Problems Arising from a Special Structure," *Middle East Economic Papers* (1957): pp. 60-88; Yusif 'Abdalla Sayigh and Muhammad 'Attallah, *Nadhra Thaniyya fi al-Iqtisad al-Lubnani* (Bayrut: Manshurat Dar al-Tali'a, 1966).

percent, respectively.<sup>15</sup> Taking all sectors into account and grouping them into primary, secondary, tertiary, and government, the sectoral shares for 1954 are nineteen, sixteen, fifty-eight, and seven percent, respectively. Between 1948 and 1955, annual national economic growth rates ranged between seven and twelve percent. In addition, the annual growth in per capita income for the period ranged between six and ten percent.

Such a political economy and the development model that underpins it contrast with the overwhelming majority of late developing countries,<sup>16</sup> whose political economies coalesced around one of three different development models: agricultural exports,<sup>17</sup> import-substitution industrialization,<sup>18</sup> and export-oriented industrialization.<sup>19</sup> This contrast has led

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<sup>15</sup> See United Nations, *Statistics of National Income and Expenditure*, Statistical Papers, Series H, No. 9 (New York: May 1956).

<sup>16</sup> See David Waldner, *State Building and Late Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Drawing on notions of comparative advantage in the international system, this agro-export model is premised on “the notion of maximizing the exploitation of agricultural land and labor with the purpose of producing cash crops for sale on the international market . . . The process is meant to facilitate capital accumulation through a more efficient utilization of resources in an economy characterized by a high percentage of rural inhabitants, and consequently too small a local market to support local manufacturing . . . Both the profits and foreign currency generated through crop exports enables the local economy both to pay for imports as well as to consider expanding the productive base of the economy (by either increasing agricultural productivity or investing in manufacturing) . . . Such a development model thus involves minimal structural transformation as it relies on pre-existing patterns of population distribution and land tenure.” However, the model involves several risks beyond “the simple association of cash crops with colonial rule.” On the one hand, “reliance on the international market subjects local economies to price fluctuations. Consequently, local producers are at the mercy of the international market.” On the other hand, “agricultural exports are subject to declining terms of trade vis-à-vis manufactured imports. This means that over time, there is a tendency for each individual unit of agricultural export to progressively purchase fewer manufactured goods.” See Richards and Waterbury, *The Political Economy of the Middle East*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>18</sup> Seeking to “avoid the volatility” associated with agricultural export-based development, the ISI model is premised on the creation of a local market that supports national manufacturing industries. This is typically accomplished through three key policies. First, “a social reform program that improves the living standards of workers and peasants thus facilitating the expansion of a local market for manufactured goods.” Second, “a variety of trade controls intended to protect local manufacturers from foreign competition.” Finally, financial support such as credit and subsidies for local manufacturers so as to enable industrial expansion and employment generation.” ISI involves significant “structural transformation, and was typical of countries whose state elites sought both autonomy from the international market as well as the political incorporation of popular groups such as workers and peasants.” See Richards and Waterbury, *The Political Economy of the Middle East*, pp. 25-27.

many scholars and observers to exceptionalize economic development in Lebanon during the post-colonial period.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, Lebanon featured an open economy that sought integration into the global market. This openness contrasts with the organization of closed economies that sought relative autonomy from the international economy. On the other hand, the international orientation of Lebanon's open economy was based on the service sector. This emphasis on services contrasts with the strategy of generating wealth through the privileging of the productive sectors. Furthermore, that the economic development model in post-colonial Lebanon produced relatively high growth rates and attendant per capita income has significantly contributed to the exceptionalist narrative of the political economy of Lebanon.

### *The Exceptional State*

As in other exceptionalist narratives, the story of post-colonial economic development in Lebanon is typically told in terms of, and measured against, a classic trajectory. In the case of Lebanon, scholars draw on two such classic trajectories. The first trajectory many describe as Western capitalism. Therein, bourgeois ascendance facilitated

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<sup>19</sup> Also known as EOI, this model is simultaneously premised on the notion of comparative advantage and the primacy of manufacturing over agriculture vis-à-vis terms of trade. Put differently, "the development process is meant to earn foreign currency without sacrificing the economic and social benefits ascribed to industrialization." However, such a strategy "requires a particular degree of industrialization to have already occurred (typically having been secured through ISI) as well as the capacity to reduce manufacturing costs so as to compete with international competitors." More importantly, the transition from ISI to EOI development models requires the unraveling of tariff protection and consumer subsidies. This in turn "solicits an immediate reaction on the part of ISI manufacturers who lose important sources of rents as well as local consumers who confront dramatic increases in prices." See Richards and Waterbury, *The Political Economy of the Middle East*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>20</sup> This exceptionalism has manifested in two forms. On the one hand, some scholars engage in focused studies of Lebanon, thus highlighting the divergences in economic development vis-à-vis other countries. On the other hand, much of the literature on the comparative study of development during the early post-World War II period ignores the Lebanese case. For studies focusing on Lebanon, see Gaspard, *The Political Economy of Lebanon*; Gates, *The Merchant Republic*. For comparative studies that effectively exclude substantive engagement with Lebanon, see Richards and Waterbury, *The Political Economy of the Middle East*.

capitalism and with it industrialization. The second classic trajectory can be described as Third World capitalism. Therein, the failure of an industrial bourgeoisie to ascend to power necessitated the development of state capacities that facilitated capitalist and industrial transformation. The difference between these two classic trajectories lies in the constraints on industrial transformation and the mechanisms for overcoming those constraints. The crucial divergence, as formulated in discussions of the Lebanese case, is in both the means and the ends of this transformation. In Lebanon, the narrative goes, the industrial bourgeoisie failed to ascend and there was a lack of an alternative path toward industrialization. This lack of industrial transformation was reflected in the absence of the development of state capacities to facilitate such transformation.<sup>21</sup>

The idea of a rudimentary state bureaucracy is a central theme in much of the literature on post-colonial Lebanon. Many scholars argue (or assume) that state-market relations featured minimalist state institutional arrangements that rarely surpassed the functions of securing both property rights and political stability.<sup>22</sup> For some writers, there is no greater proof of the failure of institution building than the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). These scholars view the eruption of mass violence and the attendant sectarian patterns of militia formation as indicative of limited state capacities to incorporate the population and thus replace sectarian identities with civic loyalties.<sup>23</sup> Some scholars explain the failure of institution building as a function of the acute factionalism that is said to characterize

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<sup>21</sup> See, in particular, Arthur E. Mills, "Economic Change in Lebanon," *Middle East Economic Papers* (1956): pp. 75-97.

<sup>22</sup> Gates, *The Merchant Republic*, pp. 80-135; Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 271-290.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Kamal Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War* (Delmar, NY: Caravan, 1976).

Lebanese politics.<sup>24</sup> In such narratives, petty rivalry between politicians and the attendant short life span of successive cabinets mitigated against the possibility of long-term, continuous, and cumulative institution building. Other scholars claim that the alleged failure to develop complex and integrative state institutions reflects a more fundamental issue embedded into the very nature of the Lebanese polity.<sup>25</sup> These scholars argue that the system of political sectarianism in Lebanon precluded the very possibility of the state intervening in society, let alone the economy. This argumentation posits the preservation of sectarian autonomy as a central organizing principle of the political field in Lebanon.

There are important scholarly contributions that have challenged the theoretical assumptions underlying the ostensible failure to develop anything more than the rudimentary bureaucracy inherited from the French mandate era. Yet few have sought to provide a corresponding counter-narrative for state institution building. The problematic assumptions about state institutions in Lebanon have therefore produced a particular historiographic corpus on the topic. What little scholarship focuses on Lebanon's institutional history has for the most part tended to limit its analysis to the system of confessional representation, in particular one of the following topics: the sectarian composition of the parliament,<sup>26</sup> the intra-state struggle between the office of the (Maronite) president and that of the (Sunni) prime minister,<sup>27</sup> and the jurisdictional practices of personal status courts.<sup>28</sup> Those authors that have

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, pp. 148-157.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, pp. 211-261.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262-296.

ventured beyond political sectarianism as a realm of institutional inquiry have invariably focused on either currency-exchange controls or trade-tariffs administration.<sup>29</sup> Thus, even in the cases where scholars inquire into the nature of economic institutions, the tendency is to reinforce the idea of a rudimentary bureaucracy, a limited public sector role in development, and the primacy of private actors and market forces.

At the heart of existing arguments about how state institutions *do not* matter in the political economy of Lebanon is the problematic assumption that state institutions are relevant to some development models and not others. Such notions are rooted in a normative understanding of the developmental role of state institutions. This normative role is found in the particular trajectories of both authoritarian political systems and of industrializing development models.<sup>30</sup> In the political economies of such states, public institutions are said to shoulder the burden of modernization for either political or economic reasons.<sup>31</sup> That Lebanon fits none of these state and market models is thus taken as *prima facie* evidence that the organization of the political economy of Lebanon is a function of non-state forces. On the one hand, scholars repeatedly frame the political institutions of Lebanon in terms of

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). It is worth noting that the more recent studies of the personal status court system in Lebanon have been at the forefront at highlighting that the role of state institutions in the production and management of the very categories identity and practice assumed to external to the state.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Samir A. Makdisi, *Financial Policy and Economic Growth: The Lebanese Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Raymond A. Mallat, *7 Years of Money Meddling in Lebanon 1900-1970: A Guide in Monetary Management for Economic Development in Lebanon* (Beirut: Aleph, 1973).

<sup>30</sup> On authoritarian political systems and the role of state institutions therein, see Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*. On industrializing development models in the Middle East and the role of state institutions therein, see Richards and Waterbury.

<sup>31</sup> For some scholars, the political reasons have to do with managing the destabilizing effects of economic transformation. For other scholars, the economic reasons have to do with unwillingness of the local bourgeoisie to invest in a manner that facilitates economic transformation.

confessional balance.<sup>32</sup> They therefore limit their research agendas to the nature of that balance, almost never considering alternative functions for state institutions. On the other hand, there has also been a dehistoricization of the primacy of the trade sector in Lebanon. This has led scholars to assume a limited economic role for state institutions. In other late developing countries, state institutions shouldered the burden of political and economic transformation. Yet Lebanon's post-colonial political economy is invariably described as naturally occurring. Both the assumed continuity of sectarian balance and that of the absence of economic transformation thus rendered inquiry into state institutions almost moot.

Transcending these normative assumptions about the state opens up important analytical possibilities for the study of post-colonial Lebanon. The issue is not whether state institutions played a part in the story of economic development in Lebanon. Rather, the question is how and which state institutions played a part in the particular type of development model that obtained in Lebanon.<sup>33</sup> Subsequent chapters identify the particular role of post-colonial state institutions in Lebanon's trade sector and electricity infrastructure. These micro-histories tell of a broader phenomenon: the transformation of the state bureaucracy, the expansion of state institutional capacities, and the consolidation of the post-colonial political economy of Lebanon. In this sense, the present chapter posits a macro-history of Lebanon that highlights the extent and significance of post-colonial institutional transformation. To summarize, the construction of an open, laissez-faire, service-based economy was an institution-building project as much as it was a market-centric process.

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<sup>32</sup> Hudson refers to this as traditional pluralism and argues that it is an organizing principle of institutional development in Lebanon. See Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*.

<sup>33</sup> See Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, "The Myths of the Market and the Common History of Late Developers," *Politics & Society* 21 (1993): pp. 245-274.

## Bureaucratic Expansion

The transition from French Mandate to independent state featured a shift in the focus of political life from the anti-colonial struggle to conflicts over the organization of the political economy of Lebanon. Competition to define the trajectory of state institutions was at the core of these conflicts. Some scholars have interpreted the ascension of the Constitutional Bloc from within a collaborative elite milieu of the colonial period, and the accompanying lack of radical transformation of the post-colonial political economy, to indicate fundamental institutional continuity in Lebanon across the colonial and post-colonial divide.<sup>34</sup> This is precisely what scholars such as Carolyn Gates and Elizabeth Thompson argue, even if they differ on the details of such continuity.<sup>35</sup>

Such impressions, however, are deeply misleading. The institutional arrangements of Lebanon faced immediate calls for reorganization. For different reasons and with different aims, bureaucrats, elites, and popular groups advocated for “*bina’ al-dawla*” (state building).<sup>36</sup> They all mobilized to advance their distinctive visions of the future of Lebanon and their place within the country. Historical legacies, shifting strategies, and different mobilizing capacities defined the contours of the conflicts between these groups to impose their contending visions. Some of these conflicts were internal to elites, both their political

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Fawwaz Trabulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pp. 109-127.

<sup>35</sup> For Gates, the early independence period represents a return to the historical trajectory of institutional arrangements that were first in place during the late Ottoman Empire and subsequently disrupted during World War II. For Thompson, the early independence period represents a continuity with late colonial institutional arrangements, that while more intensive vis-à-vis their role in society nevertheless remained constant in the aftermath of independence rather than featuring any type of intensification. See Gates, *The Merchant Republic*; Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Menassa, *al-Tasmim al-insha’i*; Jumhuriyyat Lubnan, *Lubnan fi ‘ahd al-istiqlal*.

and economic components. Other conflicts, however, pitted elite groups against more popular sectors of the population.

Irrespective of which visions were ultimately realized, the resultant bureaucratic arrangements established the terms of subsequent debates about state institutions, economic development, and political participation. As political scientists Robert Bates and Steven Heydemann note, state institutions take on a fluid quality during processes of post-colonial state formation.<sup>37</sup> However, the consolidation of reconfigured institutional arrangements both sets the terms for subsequent debates and limits the capacity for change as that malleability gives way to “stickiness.”<sup>38</sup> Such dynamics are both reflective and productive. As new institutional arrangements are consolidated, they self-reinforce by cultivating a set of “ingrained” expectations and practices among those who must comply with the very rules they seek to change.<sup>39</sup> To this end, the present section seeks to highlight the broad contours of state institutional transformation in the immediate aftermath of independence.

Between 1946 and 1955, two presidents, seventeen cabinets, four parliaments, and hundreds of bureaucrats significantly expanded, strengthened, and centralized state institutions in Lebanon. Two key developments demonstrate these processes: the repeated ministerial reorganization of the state bureaucracy and the changes in the latter’s fiscal

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<sup>37</sup> Robert Bates, “Macropolitical Economy in the Field of Development,” in *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*, edited by James E. Alt and Kenneth A Shepsle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Heydamann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>38</sup> See Giovanni Cappoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen, “The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism,” *World Politics* 59 (April 2007): pp. 341-369; James Mohoney and Kathleen Thelen, “A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change,” in *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, edited by James Mohoney and Kathleen Thelen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> See Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (December 2004): pp. 725-740; Jack Knight, *Institutions and Social Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

power. During the 1946-1955 period, the state bureaucracy practically doubled the number of ministries over the late colonial period. This featured the establishment of ministries of defense, foreign affairs, information, social affairs, and planning. Furthermore, there was a concomitant increase in the state's budgets. Thus, while total ordinary public expenditure was approximately thirty-six million Lebanese lira in 1945, the government spent about 132 million Lebanese lira through the ordinary budget of 1954.<sup>40</sup> This increase in expenditure also featured a shift in the ratio of current to capital expenditures, wherein capital expenditures moved from representing fifteen percent of ordinary expenditures in 1945 to twenty-five percent in 1954.

Such dynamics reflected two primary logics on the part of state elites in Lebanon. The first was the consolidation of the political independence of the country. The second was the centralization of presidential and cabinet authority. Though varyingly contentious among Lebanese citizens, state elites ultimately succeed in achieving both goals. In doing so, they valorized the state as an agent of social management with varying consequences for both political incumbency and economic privilege. Equally important, the combined effect of the process of institutional reconfiguration was the further instantiation of Lebanon as a national identity in the everyday lives of the population.

Accompanying this institutional and fiscal expansion was a dramatic increase in both the number of public sector employees and the range of everyday activities in which the state bureaucracy intervened. Key in this regard was a new emphasis on the professionalization of that bureaucracy. Politicians showed at least a rhetorical interest in introducing meritocratic

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<sup>40</sup> Raja S. Himadeh, *The Fiscal System of Lebanon* (Beirut: Khayyat, 1961), p. 79.

norms into the state apparatus. During the first years of independence, parliament passed public administration and basic personnel laws, drawing on colonial precedents and articulating specific notions of political neutrality, recruitment by merit, and separation of office from officeholder.<sup>41</sup> In addition, various ministries defined more clearly the ranks of public sector employees, their associated benefits, and procedures for their promotion.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, bureaucratic practices remained far removed from the principles set out in the personnel law.<sup>43</sup> However, in some areas the law had significant effects in producing a degree of corporate consciousness. Public sector employees organized themselves into unions, lobbied both their superiors and parliament, and occasionally resorted to strikes or other protest action.

State institutional transformation was not only budgetary and administrative in nature. Rather, it represented a qualitative shift in the scope, reach, capacity, and efficiency of the state bureaucracy. During the first decade of independence, Lebanese bureaucrats established direct links with significantly larger segments of the population, further extending the reach of state institutions both across the geography of Lebanon and deeper into the lives of its

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<sup>41</sup> See “Marsum Ishtira‘i Raqam 12 Sadir bi-Tarikh 5 Kanun al-Thani 1955: Tanzim al-Idara al-‘Amma” and “Marsum Ishtira‘i Raqam 14 Sadir bi-Tarikh 7 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1955: Nizam al-Muwazzafin” in Wizarat al-‘Adliyya, al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *al-Majmu‘a al-Haditha li-al-Qawanin al-Lubnaniyya* (Bayrut: Maktaba Sadir, 1954).

<sup>42</sup> The timing of such policies differed for each ministry. See relevant sections in Wizarat al-‘Adliyya, al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin* (Bayrut: Matba‘at al-Jumhurriya al-Jadida, 1948); *al-Majmu‘a al-Haditha*.

<sup>43</sup> This was reflected in recurring newspaper articles about the issue as manifested in specific instances. However, it was also a fact admitted to by heads of ministries themselves. See, for example, the different speeches of the general directors of each of the ministries as part of a public administration lecture series organized by the American University of Beirut in 1954 and 1955. The speeches were published together in Da‘irat l’Im al-Idara al-‘Amma, al-Jami‘a al-Amrikiyya fi Bayrut, *Dirasat ‘an Hukumat Lubnan: Majmu‘at Muhadarat Alqaha Mudirun ‘Amun fi al-Hukuma al-Lubnaniyya Talbiya li-Da‘wa Da‘irat ‘Ilm al-Idara al-‘Ama fi al-Jami‘a al-Amrikiyya fi Bayrut, 1954-1955* (Bayrut: Matba‘at Dar al-Funun, 1956).

citizens. There were several facets to this qualitative transformation. The first was the incorporation of institutions and functions previously administered by the French High Commission. The second was the extension of bureaucratic reach into existing realms of state intervention. The third facet was the creation of new realms of bureaucratic management.

While the subsequent discussion focuses on the institutional practices that constituted these effects, it is important to note that symbolic representation was equally important. After all, the 1946-1955 period featured the production and arrogation of key symbols and slogans that sought to delineate the boundaries of the Lebanese nation and the specific role of contemporary figures and social groups within that nation. To this end, the post-independence governments erected statutes in urban squares, posted flags on government buildings, installed plaques at historic sites, and rendered much more intimate representations involving passports, identification cards, birth, marriage, and death certificates, and stamps. They declared new national holidays, most notably Independence Day, Evacuation Day, and Labor Day.<sup>44</sup> Government officials sponsored and participated in speeches, plays, print publications, and even demonstrations to mark these holidays and the histories they sought to appropriate. It was during the first decade of independence that officials also facilitated the institutionalization of specific cultural practices that they identified as Lebanese cuisine, Lebanese dance, and Lebanese music.<sup>45</sup> While the elements that went into the making of such

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<sup>44</sup> For a complete listing of official national holidays in effect toward the end of the early independence period, see “Marsum Raqam 6033 Sadir bi-Tarikh 17 Ab Sanat 1954: Ta’yin al-A’yad Allati Tu’attal fiha Dawa’ir al-Hukuma wa-Mu’assasat al-Rasmiyya” in *al-Qawanin al-Haditha*.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Stone has meticulously detailed this process with respect to songs and dances. While his discussion primarily emphasizes the role of cultural producers themselves (in particular the Rahbani brothers), his discussion nevertheless highlights the role of state institutions in funding, sponsoring, and—to some degree—directing this process. See Christopher Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon: The Fairouz and Rahbani Nation* (New York Routledge, 2008), pp. 13-92.

symbolic nation making practices pre-dated the independence period, it was under the presidencies of al-Khuri (1943-1952) and Sham'un (1952-1958) that they were given financial backing and rendered authoritative. Certainly, part of the logic behind such symbolic production was to facilitate tourism in the country but also to bind citizens to one another and to their leaders.

### *The Incorporation of Institutions Previously External to the State Bureaucracy*

In the wake of independence, the Lebanese government began incorporating a number of institutional practices that had previously been the purview of the French High Commission. Such incorporation primarily centered on the common interests and the military apparatus.

As part of the independence negotiations, the French High Commission began transferring the various administrative units of the Common Interests to the Lebanese and Syrian governments.<sup>46</sup> While the commission transferred some entities or functions to joint Syrian-Lebanese control,<sup>47</sup> it transferred others to only one of the two states.<sup>48</sup> The Ministry

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<sup>46</sup> See "Itifiaq Ma'qud fi Dimashq bi-Tarikh 22 Kanun al-Awwal 1943 Bayn Faransa wa-Suriya wa-Lubnan bi-Sha'n Naql Dawar al-Masalih al-Mushtaraka ila al-Dawlatayn" *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* No. 9 (1944), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> The Customs Administration, the monitoring of the Reggie (i.e., the Tobacco monopoly), and the monitoring of Administration of Lighthouses were all transferred to both states. See, respectively, "Brotokol Tarikh 3 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha'n Naql Idarat al-Jamarik al-'Ammah ila Dawlatay Suriya wa-Lubnan" ["Protocol of 3 January 1944 Regarding the Transfer of the General Administration of Customs to the Two States of Syria and Lebanon"], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 9 (1944), p. 5; "Brotokol Tarikh 3 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha'n Naql Muraqabat al-Rigi al-Lubnaniyya al-Suriyya li-al-Tanbagh wa-al-Tunbak ila Dawlatay Suriya wa-Lubnan" ["Protocol of 3 January 1944 Regarding the Transfer of the Tobacco Regie to the Two States of Syria and Lebanon"], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 9 (1944), pp. 5-6; "Brotokol Tarikh 5 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha'n Naql Idarat al-Fanarat ila Dawlatay Suriya wa-Lubnan", *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 9 (1944), p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> See "Brotokol Tarikh 5 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha'n Naql Muraqabat al-Sharikatayn Sahibatay al-Imtiyazat : Kahurba' Bayrut wa-Miyah Bayrut ila Dawlat Lubnan", *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* No. 9 (1944), p. 6; "Marsum 'Adad 766/K Sadir fi 29 Shabat Sanat 1944 bi-Ta'yin al-Wizarat al-Lati 'Ulhiqat biha al-Masalih al-Mushtaraka" in *Majmu'at al-Qawanin*.

of Interior therefore took control of public security and the gunpowder monopoly. It proceeded to expand the gendarmerie and deploy them according to the ministry's own security logics rather than those of the French High Commission. The Ministry of Public Works became responsible for monitoring Lebanon-based concessionary companies, managing the control of automobiles, oils, and rubber, and conducting topographical studies. In addition, the Ministry of National Economy now registered and enforced patents, trademarks, and copyrights, while the Ministry of National Education incorporated the units responsible for the supervision of radio interests, antiques, and foreign institutions.

Initially, the Lebanese and Syrian governments created the Supreme Council for the Common Interests (SCCI).<sup>49</sup> This institution facilitated the incorporation of the Customs Administration, the monitoring of concessionary companies operating in both countries, and the management of the tobacco monopoly—all through the principle of joint Lebanese-Syrian management. However, the dissolution of the customs union in 1950 necessitated the further expansion of different parts of the Lebanese bureaucracy so as to assume direct control of the administrative functions previously supervised by the SCCI. Most notable in this respect was the creation of the Supreme Council for Customs in the Ministry of Finance.<sup>50</sup>

The incorporation of military functions and resources was another element of bureaucratic expansion. In September 1945, the Lebanese government created the Ministry of National Defense to incorporate Lebanese units of the Special Troops of the Levant into

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<sup>49</sup> See “Marsum Ishtira‘i Raqam 1/K Sadir fi 16 Adhar Sanat 1944 bi-Ta‘yin Salahiyat al-Majlis al-A‘la li-al-Masalih al-Mushtaraka” in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin*.

<sup>50</sup> See “Marsum Ishtira‘i Raqam 2 Sadir bi-Tarikh 23 Adhar Sanat 1950: Insha’ Idara Khassa li-al-Dawa’ir al-Jumrukiyya al-Lubnaniyya” and “Marsum Raqam 1560 Sadir bi-Tarikh 3 Nisan Sanat 1950: Tanzim Dawa’ir al-Majlis al-A‘la li-al-Jamarik” in *al-Majmu‘a al-Haditha*.

the state bureaucracy.<sup>51</sup> These troops formed the nucleus of the new national army forces, around which the minister of defense greatly expanded the armed forces. Military incorporation was not limited to personnel, but also included a range of facilities previously under the disposal of French and British troops. The Ministry of Defense therefore took control of a range of military barracks, housing units, and officer clubs.<sup>52</sup> It further developed this institutional foundation through a series of renovation, construction, and expansion projects.<sup>53</sup> Between 1947 and 1951, the ministry renovated the buildings it had taken over, inaugurated a military hospital and military academy,<sup>54</sup> established a flight school as the basis of an air force,<sup>55</sup> procured the country's first two warships as the basis for a navy,<sup>56</sup> and began producing a monthly publication for the members of the armed services.<sup>57</sup>

Such activities necessitated the repeated reorganization of the Ministry of Defense throughout the period.<sup>58</sup> A civilian cabinet minister headed the ministry, which was divided into a general directorate and an armed forces command. The parliament inaugurated a

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<sup>51</sup> See "Marsum Raqam 3860 Sadir bi-Tarikh 4 Aylul 1945: Tahdid Maham Wizarat al-Difa'," *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* No. 37 (1945), pp. 670-672.

<sup>52</sup> By way of example, a partial listing of barracks that span north, central, and southern Lebanon included those of al-Amir Bashir, al-Amir Fakhr al-Din, Bahjam Ghanim, Binyamin Tajir, Burj al-Buhayra, Ilyas Alwun, al-Khiyam, Raymon Hayik Shukri Ghanim, al-Trabulsi, and others. For a comprehensive listing of such installations, see Munir Taqi al-Din, "Wizarat al-Difa' al-Watani" in *Dirasat 'an Hukumat Lubnan*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>53</sup> The Ministry of Defense completed much of this work between 1945 and 1949. See Taqi al-Din, "Wizarat al-Difa' al-Watani," pp. 26-27.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. Also see, *al-Jundi al-Lubnani*.

<sup>58</sup> See "Marsum Ishtira'i raqam 33 Sadir bi-Tarikh 19 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1955: Bi-Tanzim Wizarat al-Difa' al-Watani wa-tahdid Tanun al-Jaysh" and "Marsum Ishtira'I Raqam 34 Sadir bi-Tarikh 19 Kanun al-Thank Sanat 1955: Tanzim al-Waza'if al-Madaniyya fi al-Jaysh" in *al-Majmu'a al-Haditha*.

military penal code, thereby establishing a military court system, defining military crimes, and outlining mechanisms for the implementation of associated rulings.<sup>59</sup> A dramatic increase in the number of military personnel (mostly enlisted army men) accompanied such institutional and infrastructural expansion.<sup>60</sup> In addition, the Ministry of Defense established a range of benefits for members of the armed services in the form of health care, consumer cooperatives, and leisure clubs.<sup>61</sup> The armed forces therefore developed into a significant mechanism for public sector employment and an important means of upward social mobility.

### *Extending the Reach of Existing Institutions*

Institutional transformation was not just a matter of incorporating the diverse array of existing departments and functions within the state bureaucracy. In addition, state officials dramatically extended the reach of these institutional practices. This extension had important consequences for the local population, as is most evident in the fields of social affairs, fiscal policies, and public works.

The early post-colonial period featured continuity with previous fiscal patterns of state investments in education and health.<sup>62</sup> However, beyond merely amplifying earlier policies, the ministries responsible for education and health redefined the role played by state

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<sup>59</sup> See Taqi al-Din, "Wizarat al-Difa' al-Watani," p. 24.

<sup>60</sup> The Ministry of Defense does not seem to have issued any figures during this time, or at least not in any manner that has left a trace in the Lebanese archives. That being said, both ministry itself and oral history interviews with individual who joined the military during this period attest to the transformation of the armed forces as an important and viable option for public sector employment, in particular among segments of the rural areas in northern and eastern Lebanon. See Taqi al-Din, "Wizarat al-Difa' al-Watani," pp. 34-37.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> On this particular point, see Elizabeth Thompson, "The Climax and Crisis of the Colonial Welfare State in Syria and Lebanon during World War II," in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, edited by Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 59-99.

institutions in these fields. The 1946-1955 period therefore featured qualitative developments in state intervention in the education and health of the public. Through extending the bureaucratic networks of public education and public health across the entire geography of Lebanon, state institutions began to more directly affect both the quality of life and the nature of citizens' social mobility. The cumulative effect of these expanded roles was the near-complete overhaul of both the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Health.

Up until the end of the Mandate, public education was limited in terms of both geography and tier.<sup>63</sup> During the early post-colonial period, the Ministry of Education expanded the reach of public primary education into towns and villages that had previously rarely been affected by educational developments in the country.<sup>64</sup> The ministry also inaugurated public secondary schools, eventually complimenting such expansion with the opening of the country's first and only public university in 1951. Furthermore, the ministry continued the work of the mandate by enhancing the existing networks of vocational and technical schools.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, it reformed the differential requirements for the

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<sup>63</sup> Public education during the colonial period was limited to primary education as well as a small number of vocational and technical schools. On education policies during the mandate period, see Nadya Jeanne Sbaiti, "Lessons in History: Education and the Formation of National Society in Beirut, Lebanon, 1920-1960s" (PhD dissertation: Georgetown University, 2008).

<sup>64</sup> As one report put it, "The government educational system, which was started under the Mandate, has shown steady progress under the national regime. From 1946 to 1955 the number of government schools has increased from 248 to 1,080; the percentage of government schools has increased from 20 percent to 60 percent." While the report does not delineate between primary, secondary, and technical public schools, the archival record indicates that such an expansion was overwhelmingly in the area of public primary education. See Ruth F. Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women: Their Activities and Organizations in Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Syria, October 1954 – August 1955* (New York: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, 1956), p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, "Marsum Raqam 7152/K Sadir fi 15 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Yaqdi bi-Fath Madaris Ibtida'iyya Mihaniyya fi Tarabulus wa-Sayda wa-Zahla" and "Marsum Raqam 13962/K Sadir fi 21 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1948: Bi-Ilhaq al-Fir' al-Zira'i fi Madrasat al-Sana'i' wa-al-Funun fi Wizarat al-Zira'a wa-Ja'lah Ma'hadan Rasmiyyan li-al-Ta'lim al-Zira'i", and "Marsum Raqam 1509 Sadir bi-Tarikh 29 Adhar Sanat 1950: Ta'dil al-Marsum Raqam 7152 Tarikh 15 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946 al-Qadi bi-Ihdath al-Madaris and al-

matriculation from primary schools into each of the vocational/technical and secondary schools.<sup>66</sup> This expansion in educational facilities was accompanied by a dramatic increase in public sector teachers and administrations designed to train and monitor them.<sup>67</sup> Thus despite the continued dominance of private primary, secondary, and higher education during the early post-colonial period, between 1946-1955 the Ministry of Education laid the foundations for the shift in the very uneven balance between private and public school enrollments that took place several years later.<sup>68</sup>

The Ministry of Education also increased its control over the private educational field. It established a national curriculum mandating particular configurations of subject and language requirements in both primary and secondary education.<sup>69</sup> The cumulative effect of

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Mihaniyya” in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin*. The Ministry of Education also provided subsidies to private schools to “enable them to add vocational training.” Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, p. 9. As historian Nadya Sbaiti has shown with respect to the mandate period, the particular configurations controlling the flow of students from primary schools into either vocational/technical or secondary schools were central to shaping the production of sectarian and class differences. Deliberations over the degree of difficulty were undergirded by logics of sectarian balance and class reproduction. Sbaiti, “Lessons in History,” pp. 296-300.

<sup>67</sup> See “Marsum Raqam 954 al-Sadir bi-Tarikh 17 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1950: Tahdid Shurut Ta‘yin Mudiri wa-mu‘allimi wa-Khadam al-Madaris al-Masa‘iyya al-Rasmiyya”, “Marsum Raqam 1530 Sadir bi-Tarikh 31 Adhar Sanat 1950: Tasnif Hay‘at al-Tadris fi Dar al-Mu‘allimin wa-al-Mu‘allimat”, and “Qanun Sadir bi-Tarikh 1 Tamuz Sanat 1950: Tanzim Malak al-Hay‘a al-Ta‘limiyya fi al-Ma‘ahid wa-al-Madaris al-Rasmiyya wa-Tahdid Shurut Ikhtiyyar Afradaha” in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin*. In 1955, the Normal and Secondary School was the exclusive public teacher education institution, other than then Lebanese University’s teacher training division.. Based on a three-year course, it had up to 360 students at any one time. See Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> Many historians, including Thompson, have repeatedly pointed to the continuing dominance of private education in terms of the number of schools, teachers, and schools during the early post-colonial period. While such an observation is correct, these scholars have largely overlooked the fact that despite this dynamic, it was during this period that the institutional underpinnings for expanding public education and asserting more control over private education were put into effect by the Ministry of Education. For an example of the over-emphasis on the numerical strength of the private educational field, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>69</sup> See “Marsum Raqam 6998 Sadir fi 1 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Bi-Sha’n Manhaj al-Ta‘lim al-Ibtida’i,” “Marsum Raqam 6999 Sadir fi 1 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Bi-Taahdid Mawad al-Tadris al-Ibtida’i wa-Muddatuh,” and “Marsum Raqam 7001 Sadir fi 1 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Bi-Sha’n Manhaj al-Ta‘lim al-Thanaawi” in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin*.

this curricular reform was the Arabization and Lebanonization of education.<sup>70</sup> Complementing this broader curricular reform project, the ministry required all secondary school students—both public and private—to sit for a three-tiered government-administered examination system<sup>71</sup> and began requiring the Lebanese baccalaureate (or its equivalent) as a condition for Lebanese entry into universities or the liberal professions.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the ministry decreed regulations that made it much more difficult to establish new private schools.<sup>73</sup>

Mirroring developments in the educational field, state officials extended the reach of the Ministry of Health into the rural areas. The policy of replacing health departments and offices (linked to each of the local provincial administrations) with mobile clinical teams in each province (answerable directly to the ministry) most clearly exemplified this process.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> The new national curriculums mandated, among others things, a minimum number of hours for Arabic education. They also brought the entire sphere of private education under more direct scrutiny of the Ministry of Education.

<sup>71</sup> See “Marsum Raqam 7002 Sadir fi 1 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Bi-Sha’n Shurut al-Qubul fi Imtihanat al-Durus al-Ibtida’iyya”, “Marsum Raqam 7003 Sadir fir Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Bi-Sha’n Imtihanant al-Durus al-Ibtida’iyya al-‘Ulya”, and “Marsum Raqam 7004 Sadir fi 1 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Bi-Sha’n Imtihanat al-Bakalurya” in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin*.

<sup>72</sup> The liberal professions were those of law, medicine, and engineering. The centralizing thrust of this requirement was quite transparent to those in the educational field and outside of it. As one report put it, “Of immediate concern to foreign and private schools is the government requirement . . . that all secondary schools in Lebanon, public and private, must present the students of the graduating classes for the first part of the baccalaureate examination; and after that date, no Lebanese person will be allowed to practices professions such as medicine, engineering, law, pharmacy, without the Lebanese baccalaureate. . . . While the need for government unification of education is not questioned, concern is expressed lest unification lest unification in objective come to mean uniformity in method. Private schools must retain their freedom of initiative and higher education, particularly remain free, liberal and open to international influence.” See Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> See “Marsum Raqam 7000 Sadir fi 1 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Nizam Fath al-Madaris al-Khassa” in in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin* and “Marosum 1436 Sadir bi-Tarikh 23 Adhar Sanat 1950: Nizam Fath al-Madaris al-Khassa” in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin*.

<sup>74</sup> See “Marsum ‘Adad 7960/K Tarikh 31 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1947: Bi-Ilgha’ Dawar Sihhat al-Muhafazat wa-Makatib al-Sihha fi al-Aqdiyya al-Isti‘ada ‘Anha bi-Tababa Iqlimiyya Siyyara” in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin*.

In addition, the ministry reformed the laws regulating the licensing and practicing of various medical professions,<sup>75</sup> as well as the trade, storage, and use of medical equipment and pharmaceutical drugs.<sup>76</sup> Such institutional reform further centralized the authority of the Ministry of Health,<sup>77</sup> which also implemented much more vigorous disease prevention programs.<sup>78</sup>

Yet social policies were not the only arenas of bureaucratic extension in this period. More than any other institution, the Ministry of Finance featured a dramatic broadening and deepening of its functions. On the one hand, more direct control of revenue streams such as fees, taxes, and customs greatly expanded the resources at the state bureaucracy's disposal.<sup>79</sup> Limited yet important fiscal reform added additional revenue sources. This included the

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<sup>75</sup> See, for example, "Qanun Sadir fi 26 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Yata'allaq bi-Mumarasat al-Mihan al-Tibbiyya fi Lubnan", "Qanun Sadir fi 31 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1946: Yata'allaq bi-Insha' Naqabatayn li-al-Attiba' fi Lubnan", "Marsum Raqam 9475/K Sadir fi 17 Tamuz Sanat 1947: Bi-Takhsis Dawratayn fi al-Sana li-Imtihan al-Kolokiyum", "Marsum 'Adad 14133/K Sadir fi 14 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1949: Bi-Ta'lif al-Lajna al-Mukaffa bi\_ijra' al-Fahs al-Khas ((al-Kolokiyum))", "Qanun Sadir fi 29 Tishrin al-Thani Sanat 1948: Yakhtas bi-Mumarasat Mihnat Tib al-Asnan", "Marsum Raqam 731 Sadir fi 23 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1949: al-Tarkhis bi-Fath Saydaliyyat Jadida", "Qanun Sadir bi-Tarikh 31 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1950: Muzawat al-Mihnat al-Saydala fi Lubnan", "Qanun Sadir bi-Tarikh 7 Tishrin al-Thani Sanat 1950: Insha' Naqabat al-Sayadilla" in *Majmu'at al-Qawanin*.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, "Marsum Raqam 4774/K Sadir fi 4 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1946: Yata'allaq bi-Tanzim Mukhtabarat Mikaniki al-Asnan", "Marsum Raqam 4771/K Sadir fi 4 Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1946: Yata'allaq bi-Kayfiyyat Tajhiz 'Iyadat Tib al-Asnan fi al-Mudun al-Kabira wa-Qura al-Istiyaf", "Marsum Raqam 4776/K Sadir fi 4 Kanun al-Thank Sanat 1946: Yata'allaq bi-Tanzim Mustawda'at Mawad Tib al-Asnan", "Qanun Sadir fi 18 Shabat Sanat 1947: Yata'allaq bi-al-Saydaliyyat wa-al-Mustawda'at al-Adwiyya", and "Marsum Raqam 9481/K Sadir fir 17 Tamuz Sanat 1947: Bi-Tanzim Istirad al-Ajza' al-Tibbiyya wa-al-Mustahdarat al-Jahiza" in *Majmu'at al-Qawanin*.

<sup>77</sup> See "Marsum Raqam 9103 Sadir fi 30 Nisan Sanat 1955: Nizam Wizarat al-Sihha al-'Amma" in *al-Majmu'a al-Haditha*. Also see speech given by the ministry's director general on 23 March 1955 wherein he discusses the national role and international organization of the ministry republished as Yusuf Bawji, "Wizrat al-Sihha al-'Amma" in *Dirasat 'An Hukumat Lubnan*, pp. 153-176.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, "Marsum Raqam 13988/K Sadir fi 29 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1948: Bi-Fard al-Talqih al-Ijbari Didd al-Jadari" and "Marsum Raqam 14538/K Sadir fi 16 Adhar Sanat 1949: Bi-Sha'n Mukafahat al-Malariya wa-al-Thubab bi-Wasitat al-di-di-ti", "Qanun Sadir bi-Tarkhi 20 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1950: Yata'allaq bi-al-Amrad al-Mu'diya fi Lubnan" in *Majmu'at al-Qawanin*.

<sup>79</sup> This was primarily a function of the transfer of Common Interests to the direct control of Lebanon and Syria.

institution of new direct taxes,<sup>80</sup> the further development of the cadastral survey and land registry,<sup>81</sup> and more efficient identification of state property.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, the Ministry of Finance represented the primary means for bureaucratic centralization across all state ministries given its involvement in their financial affairs.<sup>83</sup> The ordinary budgets of all ministries were subject to the review of the Ministry of Finance. The immense institutional growth of the state bureaucracy often required expenditures in excess of the amounts set by the ordinary ministerial budgets. Both the parliament and the Ministry of Finance approved each and every supplementary and extraordinary expense. The latter was thus able to more directly involve itself in almost every sphere for bureaucratic practice, going so far as to control the financial amounts allocated to various ministries and projects as well as the timing of such allocations.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Most notable in this respect is the inauguration of a new land tax and inheritance tax. On the former, see “Qanun Sadir fi 20 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1951: Daribat al-Aradi”, “Qanun Sadir bi-Tarikh 19 tamuz Sanat 1954: Ta’dil Qanun 20 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1951 al-Muta’alliq bi-Daribat al-Aradi”, and “Marsum Raqam 7695 Sadir fi 27 Shabat Sanat 1952: Tahdid Daqa’iq Tatbiq Qanun 20 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1951 al-Qadi bi-Ihdath Dariba ‘Ala al-Aradi” in *al-Qawanin al-Haditha*. On the latter, see “Qanun Sadir fi 21 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1951: Rusum al-Intiqal ‘Ala al-Tarikat wa-al-Wisaya wa-al-Habbat wa-al-Awqaf” and “Marsum Raqam 7694 Sadir bi-Tarikh 27 Shabat Sanat 1952: Bi-Tahdid Daqa’iq Tatbiq Qanun Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1951 al-Qadi bi-Ihdath Rusum al-Intiqal ‘Ala al-Tarikat wa-al-Wisaya wa-al-Habbat wa-al-Awqaf” in *al-Majmu’a al-Haditha*. The parliament also modified the income tax law. On this latter point, see “Qanun Tarikh 4 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1944: al-Qadi bi-Ihdath Dariba ‘Ala al-Dakhl, al-Mu’addal bi-Qawanin Muwazanat 1945 wa-1946 wa-1948 wa-1949 wa-1950 wa-1951 was-1952” in *al-Qawanin al-Haditha*.

<sup>81</sup> The land survey and registry were established during the early years of the French Mandate. However, by independence less than half of the geographic territory of Lebanon had been surveyed and registered in the new system. This period between 1946 and 1955 featured an acceleration of the process of land surveying and registration.

<sup>82</sup> As part of the broader process of land surveying and registration, the Ministry of Finance dramatically increased its control of land that bureaucrats claimed was either public domain or held the promise of public utility (like water springs) and that the ministry had the right to expropriate in accordance with expropriation laws or grant a concession for access in accordance with the concessions law.

<sup>83</sup> See the 4 April 1955 lecture given by the ministry’s director general on the role of the ministry republished as Jamil Shihab, “Wizarat al-Maliyya” in *Dirasat ‘An Hukumat Lubnan*, pp. 225-246.

<sup>84</sup> This was in fact a regular complaint among top bureaucrats in other ministries. See, for example, Najib Sadaqa, “Wizrat al-Tarbiyya al-Wataniyya wa-al-Funun al-Jamila” in *Dirasat ‘An Hukumat Lubnan*, pp. 1-15,

Second only to the Ministry of Finance in terms of bureaucratic extension was the Ministry of Public Works, which inaugurated ambitious infrastructural development projects, including roads, ports, and other facilities.<sup>85</sup> It was in 1946-1955 that state elites put in place the road network that defined Lebanon's post-colonial geography.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the ministry oversaw the expansion of ports in both Beirut and Tripoli.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the ministry facilitated the planning and construction of the Beirut International Airport.<sup>88</sup> Road networks,

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p. 3. See also an attempt by the minister of finance to address this issue in "Ta'mim Raqam 41: Ila Wizarat al-Dawla Kaffa" in *Majumu'at al-Qawanin*.

<sup>85</sup> According to one development report, "Between 1945 and 1954, inclusive, expenditure through the ordinary budget on 'roads, ports, buildings and other works' amounted to LL 113 million, out of a total of LL 173 million." Put differently, infrastructural development projects constituted 96.5 percent of ordinary budgetary expenditures during the 1945-1954 period. See United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Economic Developments in the Middle East, 1945 to 1954: Supplement to World Economic Report, 1953-54* (New York: United Nations Publications, 1955), henceforth cited as *Economic Developments in the Middle East*. For a description of the process through which such projects are initiated, implemented, and monitored, see Andre Twayni, "Wizarat al-Ashghal al-'Amma" in *Dirasat fi Hukumat Lubnan*, pp. 113-128. On the organization of the Ministry of Public Works, see "Marsum Ishitira'I Raqam 30 Sadir bi-Tarikh 16 Shabat Sanat 1953: Tanzim Wizarat al-Ashghal al -'Amma" and "Marsum Raqam 8552 Sadir bi-Tarikh 8 Adhar Sanat 1955: Tanzim Wizarat al-Ashghal al-'Amma" in *al-Qawanin al-Haditha*.

<sup>86</sup> It was during this time that the Ministry of Public Works expanded or inaugurated the majority of the primary and secondary roads that formed the national road network of post-colonial Lebanon. According to a development report, "In the years 1944 to 1953, inclusive, expenditure from the Development Works Fund on roads was LL 31 million . . . out of a total LL 133 million." This included the extension of roads open to automobile traffic "from 3,209 kilometers in 1943 to 4,046 in 1948 and 5,800 in 1951, and that of asphalted roads from 986 kilometers in 1943 to 1,917 in 1948," with the majority of these projects being implemented between 1946-1951. See *Economic Developments in the Middle East*, pp. 176-177. It was toward the end of this period when the government began implementation of to transform both the south-north coastal road from Naqura to Tripoli and the west-east Lebanese section of the Beirut-Damascus road in highways. See 7 July 1954 and 11 August 1954 issues of *Le Commerce du Levant*.

<sup>87</sup> By 1954, the quantity of goods loaded on to ships at the Beirut port more than tripled the pre-World War II level, whereas the quantity of goods unloaded more than doubled over the same period. Thus more than simply resuming its prewar levels, the Beirut port featured a dramatic expansion in the volume of goods it serviced and a concomitant increase in its capacities. In 1954, the Lebanese government inaugurated an ambitious multi-stage and multi-year plan to further develop the Tripoli port. See *Economic Developments in the Middle East*, 177.

<sup>88</sup> The Beirut (Khalda) airport unofficially opened in 1951. During that year 3,211 planes arrived, carrying 30,330 ordinary passengers and 28,100 transit passengers. Construction was completed in 1954, the year the government officially opened the airport by renaming it the Beirut International Airport). During that year, the airport featured the arrival of 31,358 flights, carrying 125,118 ordinary and 105,156 transit passengers. For these statistics, see *Economic Developments in the Middle East*, p. 166 and p. 177.

port facilities, and airport projects were the conditions of possibility for Lebanon to develop into the tourist destination it did.<sup>89</sup> Infrastructural projects were also intimately related to the expansion of regional, and international commercial interests.<sup>90</sup> Importantly, major shifts in the legal framework of state expropriation of private property undergirded almost all such projects.<sup>91</sup> Various iterations of the Expropriation Code and its attendant processes of public notification, compensation, and appeal pepper the pages of newspapers and government publications throughout the early independence period. By 1955, the state bureaucracy was endowed with many more privileges and prerogatives with respect to the public expropriation of private property.

### *The Creation of New Realms of Bureaucratic Management*

In addition to the incorporation and intensification of existing state functions, the 1946-1955 period featured the development of new arenas for state bureaucratic management. The creation of three new ministries best represents this dynamic: the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Planning. These three institutions reflected the changing contours of the Lebanese political field in the wake of

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<sup>89</sup> To further encourage tourism, the Lebanese government “from 1949 to 1953 reimbursed from 30 to 100 per cent of the return passage of summer visitors from Arab countries.” See *Economic Developments in the Middle East*, pp. 167-168.

<sup>90</sup> For a discussion of these interests, see Irene Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University, 2006), pp. 90-114.

<sup>91</sup> For the original law, see “Marsum Ishtira’i Raqam 45/L Sadir fi 13 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1932: Fi al-Istimlak li-Ajl al-Manf’a al-‘amma” in *Majmu’at al-Qawanin*. For expansions in the power of state institutions with respect to expropriation, see “Qanun Sadir fi 18 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1945: Bi-Sha’n Istimlak al-‘Iqarat li-Maslahat al-Jaysh”, “Qanun Sadir fi 7 Huzayran Sanat 1946: Bi-Ta’lif Lajnat aw Lijan li-Taahid Thaman al-‘Iqarat al-Muqarrar Istimlakaha li-Ajl Tanfidh al-A’mal al-Munawat al-Qiaym Biha bi-Wizarat al-Ashghal al-‘amma”, “Qanun Sadir fi 27 Ayar Sanat 1949: Bi-Ta’dil al-Marsum al-Ishtira’i Raqam 229 Tarikh 10 Tishrin al-Awwal Sanat 1942 al-Muta’alliq bi-Tashri’ al-Istimlak” in *Majmu’at al-Qawanin*.

independence. They also underscore the centrality of state bureaucratic practices to those processes.

State elites established the Ministry of Information in 1949.<sup>92</sup> The antecedents of this ministry are to be found in the Publications Office of the local bureaucracy and the functions of the Press and Broadcast Department of the French High Commission. However, the withdrawal of the French colonial administration, the dramatic popular mobilization that accompanied it, and the desire of state elites to consolidate their rule necessitated the creation of a ministry exclusively devoted to managing the publication and circulation of information in Lebanon. It is no coincidence that such institutional arrangements were consolidated during the very same period that Lebanon emerged as a regional hub for print publications and radio broadcasts.<sup>93</sup> This new ministry drafted the 1952 Publications Law and the 1953 Press Law, which together represented unprecedented degrees of state management of public expression.<sup>94</sup> Counting only non-literary periodicals, as of 1955 the ministry monitored forty-one daily, forty-six weekly, and four monthly newspapers.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the Ministry of Information oversaw the development of radio receiving and broadcasting capabilities in

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<sup>92</sup> The cabinet established the ministry through Directive No. 498 on 2 January 1949. See discussion of its founding by director general of the ministry in a 1955 speech, republished as Halim Abu-‘Izz al-Din, “Wizarat al-Anaba” in *Dirasat ‘An Hukumat Lubnan*, pp. 59-94. p. 61.

<sup>93</sup> It is worth noting that while the 1940s featured the circulation of approximately forty periodicals in Lebanon, the 1950s featured the circulation of approximately 215 periodicals. For a sense of the proliferation of press publications in Lebanon, the centrality of the country to regional publications, and attempts by state institutions to manage these publications, see Yusuf As‘ad Dagher, *Qamus al-Sahafa al-Lubnaniyya: 1885-1974* (Bayrut: Manshurat al-Jami‘a al-Lubnaniyya, 1978), pp. 11-37. On radio broadcasting in Lebanon, see Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon*, pp. 43-48.

<sup>94</sup> See discussion of the provisions of both laws in Halim Abu-‘Izz al-Din, “Wizarat al-Anaba’,” pp. 67-79. Political histories of the period, not to mention the press archive, is replete with references to the suspension of newspapers, the imprisonment of writers and editors, and the banning of books.

<sup>95</sup> See the listing in Halim Abu-‘Izz al-Din, “Wizarat al-Anaba’,” pp. 75-76.

Lebanon. It was during this period that radios proliferated as middle class consumer products and the government inaugurated a public radio communication strategy.<sup>96</sup> As part of this broader engagement with cultural production and political control, the ministry contained within it a Propaganda Department. This department prepared much of the content of official statements released in the form of press releases, public statements, and radio broadcasts.<sup>97</sup> The department was also the primary means by which the government managed the registration and monitoring of foreign news agencies operating in Lebanon. The creation and development of the Ministry of Information highlights the ways in which institution building is tied to information management. Thus one of the dynamics that conventional narratives of the early independence period ignore is how state officials laid the foundations for information management at a time of immense cultural production and social mobilization.

Few areas better illustrate the dynamics of emerging realms of bureaucratic management than the incorporation of organized labor. Historians have rightly noted the dual nature of the Labor Code inaugurated in 1946.<sup>98</sup> On the one hand, the code recognized labor as a specific interest group for the first time, while also expanding upon the labor rights that the movement had secured throughout the late colonial period. These new rights included that of forming workers-only unions, going on strike, a forty-eight-hour workweek, overtime, and other benefits. On the other hand, the Labor Code excluded public sector employees not covered by the Personnel Law as well as agricultural workers not connected with the

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<sup>96</sup> See discussion of this in *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>98</sup> See “Qanun al-‘Amal al-Sadir bi-Tarikh 23 Aylul Sanat 1946” in *Majmu‘at al-Qawanin*. For a regionally comparative discussion of the code’s provisions, see J. A. Hallsworth, “Freedom of Association and Industrial Relations in the Countries of the Near and Middle East,” published in two parts in the *International Labour Review* LXX (November 1954) and LXX (December 1954).

manufacturing or trade sectors. Perhaps most importantly, the code transformed employer-employee relations by establishing the state bureaucracy as the guarantor of the new rights, which in turn further valorized the state and shifted the contours of labor mobilization from one of recognition to one of implementation.

Certainly, the 1946 code fell short in terms of inclusiveness and implementation. However, one should not overlook the fact that the code also inaugurated a deeply corporatist model for the integration of mobilized workers. Government bureaucrats were now positioned to intervene in the organization of labor in a much more centralized and effective way than previously was the case. At first, a Social Affairs Services in the Ministry of National Economy facilitated this new role.<sup>99</sup> However, both ongoing labor mobilization and the attendant need to better contain it encouraged the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1951.<sup>100</sup>

Scholarship on the labor movement in the early post-colonial period has emphasized the division of the movement into officially recognized and unrecognized trade unions and labor federations.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, the Ministry of Social Affairs played an important role in shaping the contours of the entire labor movement. In 1955 there were fifty-six officially registered labor unions divided among four federations, and seventy-four recognized

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<sup>99</sup> Directive No. 2031 of 26 January 1943. See Nadim Harfush, “Wizarat al-Shu’un al-Ijtima’iyya wa-Mayadin Nashatuha” in *Dirasat ‘An Hukumat Lubnan*, p. 43.

<sup>100</sup> The cabinet issued Directive No. 4868 on 9 May 1951. See Nadim Harfush, “Wizarat al-Shu’un al-Ijtima’iyya wa-Mayadin Nashatuha,” p. 44. For the internal organization of the ministry, see “Marsum Ishtira’i Raqam 23 Sadir bi-Tarikh 4 Shabat Sanat 1953: Tanzim Wizarat al-Shu’un al-Ijtima’iyya” and “Marsum Ishtira’i Raqam 64 Sadir bi-Tarikh 8 Nisan Sanat 1953: Ta’dil al-Marsum Ishtira’i Raqam 23 Tarikh 4 Shabat Sanat 1953 al-Mukhtas bi-Tanzim Wizarat al-Shu’un al-Ijtima’iyya” in *al-Qawanin al-Haditha*.

<sup>101</sup> To be officially recognized meant to be registered with the proper state authority as per the Labor Code. More on these distinctions and their dynamics will be addressed in the following section.

employer syndicates organized into one federation.<sup>102</sup> The ministry held immense power over these organizations and their members. Beyond requiring the submitting of executive committee rosters and budgetary accounts, the Ministry of Social Affairs held the right to suspend or dissolve registered labor organizations without recourse to judicial review. In addition, the Labor Code mandated the participation of state officials in the otherwise internal election committees of unions and federations. Furthermore, state officials established and supervised arbitration boards dealing with employer-employee conflicts. This is to say nothing of the fact that the Labor Code prohibited unions and federations from participating in any activities deemed “political.”

State management of labor mobilization was not restricted to those unions and federations the government officially recognized. A hallmark of this period was the struggle of more radical elements in the labor movement to register with state institutions. Such recognition provided immediate access to the various provisions of the labor code, including government subsidies, technical assistance, and arbitration hearings. However, state institutions repeatedly denied the registration applications of certain groups as a means of attempting to discipline them. Furthermore, state officials regularly sought to divide the labor movement by granting registration to more pliant—and typically less popular—unions in a given profession.

### **Popular Mobilizations**

The institutional transformations of the early post-colonial period did not occur in a vacuum. Nor were the particular contours of those transformations predetermined or naturally occurring. The legacies of the colonial period, the logic of consolidating independence, and

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<sup>102</sup> See Harfush, “Wizarat al-Shu’un al-Ijtima’iyya wa-Mayadin Nashatuha,” p. 48.

the strategies of elected and bureaucratic officials were important factors in the trajectory of institutions. Equally important, a diverse array of groups sought to participate in shaping that transformation.

One of the fascinating aspects of early post-colonial Lebanon is the ubiquity of associational groups and their repeated mobilizations to bring about certain policy outcomes. In this sense, newspapers from 1946-1955 portray a much broader political field than scholars have acknowledged. These associations manifested in various forms, took root in different regions, and incorporated both elites and non-elites. They contributed to the expansion of the public sphere and sought to shape the terms of debate therein. However, not all associations were equal. Some of them were more structurally advantaged than others. This was due to several factors. The first of these was the class composition of these associations and the concomitant degrees of access to financial and other resources. The second factor is the structuring effects of state institutions. Bureaucratic practices were central to the production of political opportunities, which were also differentially available both across various associational fields and within particular ones. Finally, there is the issue of the strategies of particular associations in mobilizing available resources, taking advantage of political opportunities, and overcoming various constraints.

Associational groups of the early independence period must be located within the historical context of earlier periods of state formation. It was during the nineteenth century that horizontal voluntary associations first emerged across the Middle East, including in the areas that would later comprise Lebanon. The origins of this form of organization were

rooted in the broad transformations of the late Ottoman period.<sup>103</sup> However, it was in the colonial period that such associational life became ubiquitous.<sup>104</sup> Key in this respect was the dramatic upsurge in their mobilizations during World War II in general and the independence struggle in particular. It was then that women's groups, labor unions, Islamic populists, and a host of other organizations both sought to play a role the struggle against French colonialism and were invited to do so by their elite counterparts.

The transition from French Mandate to independent state featured important shifts in the organization of mass politics in Lebanon. Most groups viewed the immediate post-independence period as one in which their particular visions of Lebanon could finally be realized. Their main goals revolved around redefining the meaning of citizenship and thus their place in the broader political economy of Lebanon. These groups therefore articulated popular demands for a sustained state commitment to the issues of political independence, economic development, and social rights.

Several dynamics facilitated the articulation of these demands and mobilizations around them. Accelerated rural-urban migration was one important factor. However, shifting economic conditions, regional developments, and political jockeying were also important. The early post-colonial period featured a range of economic challenges related to wartime increases in the cost of living as well as local reverberations of the global economic

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<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Nadir Özbek, "Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): pp. 59-81; Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>104</sup> For a discussion of the emergence of a local associational field in the late Ottoman period and its transformation during the colonial period, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 91-112.

fluctuations from the late 1940s until the mid 1950s.<sup>105</sup> In addition, popular mobilizations throughout the region provided an important demonstration effect of the demands that mattered, the strategies that worked, and the risks of failure.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, as elite cohesion in Lebanon gave way to important differences over questions related to political appointments and rent-seeking opportunities, some elites turned to popular incorporation as a political resource in their struggles with other elites.<sup>107</sup> These factors combined to effect an unprecedented mobilization of popular groups in Lebanon during the 1946-1955 period. There was therefore a dramatic broadening in the range of issues, tactics, and goals these groups pursued.

While associational groups expanded in numbers and challenged prevailing arrangements, their political effects were ambiguous and uneven. These groups challenged existing institutional arrangements and proposed modifications. When such goals were not accomplished through formal channels, groups sought bargains with select segments of the elite, and invited international support. They expanded the political field through the mobilization of citizens and institutionalization of organizations. However, while expanding

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<sup>105</sup> While the cost of living declined annually from its 1945 high, it nevertheless remained above its pre-war average for the duration of the 1946-1955 period. In addition, both the Korean War and the 1954 global recession cause significant economic hardship on the local population as global supplies and prices fluctuated.

<sup>106</sup> Of particular note with respect to the Lebanese press were developments in Egypt and Iran.

<sup>107</sup> The manifestation of this dynamic in the post-colonial period is not too dissimilar than the ways in which the Constitutional Bloc turned toward the women's movement and labor unions to bolster the former's position vis-à-vis the National Bloc and the French High Commission. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, elite conflict in Lebanon regularly featured the attempt by segment of the elite or another mobilizing "popular-sector support as a means of providing a social base for vanquishing their opponents" and consolidating their position. While popular groups certainly required little elite incentive to mobilize on their own accords, the openings generated by elite conflict provide important strategic openings for popular groups to intensify their mobilizations and strike bargains with those segments of the elite seeking new resources in their struggle with their elite counterparts. For more on this conceptualization of elite conflict and popular-sector incorporation, see Waldner, *State Building and Late Development*, pp. 1-49.

the size and scope of the public sphere, their effectiveness in either forging complete autonomy or achieving their goals was much more ambiguous. Thus while women succeeded in securing their suffrage rights in 1953, they failed to break free from the control of personal status courts. Similarly, while some unions secured their labor rights, others continued to suffer in the face of both employer and state repression. The history of these groups and their struggles highlight important aspects of institution building in early independence Lebanon. These groups manifested forms of collective identity and mobilizations that challenge the tendency to privilege sects as the organizing principle of social relations in Lebanon. Additionally, the particular histories of these mobilizations underscore the role of state institutions in structuring the political field. Finally, despite their structural marginalization within the emerging political economy, all of these groups accepted the legitimacy of state institutions and helped reproduce the political sociability that undergirded such legitimacy.

### *The Women's Movement*

Women's groups began to emerge in Beirut during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>108</sup> In 1954, there were at least three active women's organizations in Lebanon that traced their origins to the late nineteenth century.<sup>109</sup> However, it was in the colonial period that the formation of a women's movement took on a more institutionalized form. Between 1920 and 1939, more than thirty-six groups registered with the Lebanese state.<sup>110</sup> The

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<sup>108</sup> According to Thomson, "Bourgeois women were among the earliest social reformers." She highlights the examples of the Sisters of Love, the Arab Girl's Awakening Society, and the Syrian People's School, founded in 1847, 1914, and 1917, respectively. Such groups established schools, hospitals, orphanages, and even hostel for "wayward girls." Other organizations such as the Muslim Girls Club and the Ladies' Society, both founded in 1917, organized literary activities. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 93-95.

<sup>109</sup> Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, p. 19.

<sup>110</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 96. See also See Ellen Rihan, "Jam 'iyyat al-Nisa'iyya fi Lubnan," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Aylul 1948), p. 12.

original impetus for the mushrooming of women's organizations and their politicization was the provisioning of post-war relief.<sup>111</sup> The majority of organizations were religious charities, emphasizing health care and education for women and girls. Their pattern of expansion in terms of numbers of associations and spheres of action mirrored the continuously shifting socioeconomic crises of the colonial period. Thus the 1925-27 Syrian Revolt and depression era of the 1930s mark two other critical turning points in the consolidation of a women's movement. The range of women's activities steadily widened beyond charity and education, and began to more explicitly agitate for increased state commitments vis-à-vis a host of political and social issues.<sup>112</sup>

Between 1922 and 1924, a number of groups established the Women's Union in Syria and Lebanon (*al-Ittihad al-Nisa'i fi Suriya wa-Lubnan*).<sup>113</sup> The union would go on to coordinate the activities of these groups in the form of conferences, petitions, and protests.<sup>114</sup> The union was the formal organization through which a cross-sectarian women's movement campaigned for political, social, and personal rights.<sup>115</sup> These rights included women's suffrage, equal participation in the public sphere, and the replacement of personal status court with a civil code. This is not to say that the women's movement was an inclusive one. Its leaders came from elite circles and its organizational practices privileged elite norms.<sup>116</sup> The

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<sup>111</sup> Two such groups are the Orthodox Society of Compassion for Ladies and the Islamic Orphanage. Thompson, *Colonial Citizen*, p. 96.

<sup>112</sup> Thus women's groups began to demand cleaner streets, better inspection of state bakeries, pre-marital health examinations, prison reform, and even the protection of women's handicrafts from foreign imports. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 97.

<sup>113</sup> Women established the union in 1922, and officially registered the organization in 1924.

<sup>114</sup> See Rihan, "Jam'iyyat al-Nisa'iyya fi Lubnan."

<sup>115</sup> See Nazik Sarkis, "al-Ittihad al-Nisa'i al-Lubnani al-'Arabi," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Kanun al-Awwal 1948), p. 14.

movement nevertheless played an important role in the three-way bargaining process that helped produce the late colonial civic order.

The early post-colonial period featured important shifts in the mobilization of women's groups.<sup>117</sup> The independence struggle in particular was a key turning point, as it opened up new space for women's groups. Women's protest actions and public statements were an integral part of the mass mobilizations that forced the issues of political independence in 1943 and foreign troop evacuation by 1946.<sup>118</sup> The struggle for independence therefore featured an unprecedented number of women who both joined existing organizations and took to the streets. The new threshold in levels of politicization and mobilization found institutional expression in the 1943 formation of the Women of Lebanon League (Jami'at Nisa' Lubnan).<sup>119</sup> Many of these organizations sought to build on their earlier successes by demanding more thorough integration into the formal political system and greater equality vis-à-vis their male counterparts. However, in doing so they faced a number of obstacles.

The political elite of the early independence period forged a ruling coalition on the basis of several issues, including gender. In the aftermath of political independence, men like

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<sup>116</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 97-98.

<sup>117</sup> For one survey of the range of organizations and their activities, see Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>118</sup> See "Jami'at Nisa' Lubnan," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Kanun al-Awwal 1948), p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. According Thompson, "[T]he new Lebanese Women's Association . . . was crucial in providing communications while newspapers, telephones, telegraph, and even tramways were cut during the protests. They not only marched to embassies and patriarch's residences, but also met daily with wives of the imprisoned officials, received secret directives from their husbands in prison, organized international petition campaign, and provided first aid to the wounded. They also established contact with women's leaders in other cities, and recruited hundreds more women from other classes to join street demonstrations." Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 256.

al-Khuri and al-Sulh sought to consolidate their regime through a “gender bargain” with religious elites.<sup>120</sup> Religious elites were an important component of anti-colonial mobilizations and sought to carry over their power from the Mandate era into the independence period. Thus despite the fact the many leaders of the women’s movement were wives and sisters of the political elite, a parliamentary committee prevented a proposal for women’s suffrage from reaching the floor in 1944. Excluding women from political participation and equal rights appeased religious and rural elites by awarding them control over personal status and social mobility. In exchange, al-Khuri and his inner circle extracted an important degree of cooperation from such elites.

Complicating matters further, most of the women’s organizations of the early independence period continued to primarily represent elite segments of society. This dynamic had several effects. On the one hand, the proximity of these women to centers of power generated a contradictory strategy; they demanded equality while at the same time appealed to male paternal guardianship. The pages of the women’s press in Lebanon are replete with gendered conceptions of citizenship that echoed notions of patriotic motherhood. On the other hand, many of these women spoke in terms of a generic category of woman. They thus ignored important issues central to the experiences of women in more popular sectors of society. Such dynamics complicated the forcefulness of demands for equality as well as the ability to create stronger cross-class coalitions.

The women’s movement made important strategic adjustments during the early post-colonial period. In 1944, the women’s union of Lebanon and Syria reorganized itself into two

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<sup>120</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 252-261, 288-290.

distinct national formations.<sup>121</sup> The name of the Lebanese Arab Women's Union highlighted its regional and international orientation. The union went on to participate in several regional and international conferences related to women, children, and various social as well as cultural affairs.<sup>122</sup> This new orientation was only possible in the context of broader regional and global efforts at multilateral institution building, a key feature of the post-World War II period. Such efforts on the part of the women's union mirrored those of Lebanese state officials that actively participated in the creation of the Arab League, the United Nations, and their various sub-organizations and committees of both. This was not a coincidence. The activities of the women's union during this period reflected a specific strategy to highlight their lack of political enfranchisement and thus embarrass state officials who otherwise sought to project a particular image of Lebanon that claimed exceptionalism vis-à-vis the Arab world and affinity with the West.

Despite the persistent obstacles to women's suffrage, the institutional consolidation of the state bureaucracy facilitated the acknowledgement of women's contributions to the state building project. One example of this was in 1946, when the Ministry of National Defense recognized the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) as an official partner of the Lebanese Armed Forces as well as a public utility company.<sup>123</sup> Leaders of the women's movement had

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<sup>121</sup> See Sarkis, "al-Ittihad al-Nisa'i al-Lubnani al-'Arabi."

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, "al-Mu'tamar al-Nisa'i al-'Arabi al-'Am," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Tamuz 1950), pp. 44-47; "Mu'tamar al-Ittihad al-Nisa'i al-'Arabi al-'Am," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Huzayran 1954); "Nida' Ra'isat al-Ittihad al-Nisa'i al-'Arabi al-'Am . . . Ila . . . al-Mar'a li-Munasabat al-Ijtima' a;-Sanawi al-'Am (Huzaran 1955). During the early independence period, the United Nations organized several international conference in Lebanon in collaboration with the women's movement. These included the 1949 UNESCO conference, the 1949 meeting of the Status of Women Commission, the 1949 UN Social Seminar for Technical Assistance, and the UN Meeting for Training and Auxiliary Workers in 1954. Beirut also hosted the regional representatives of UNICEF and UNESCO. See Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, p. 21.

<sup>123</sup> See "Marsum Raqam 10561/K Sadir fi 27 Tishrin al-Thani Sanat 1947: Bi-I'tibar Ma'had al-Salib al-Ahmar al-Lubnani Ma'hadan Rasmiyyan Khassan li-Ta'lim al-Mummaridat wa-Takhrijihin," in *Majmu'at al-Qawanin*.

established the LRC in 1945, and thus the movement gained important official recognition through the 1946 decision. Furthermore, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recognized the LRC as an official chapter in 1947.<sup>124</sup> Women's groups celebrated this decision as a key signal of the important role women played in the integration of Lebanon into international institutional arrangements.<sup>125</sup> The LRC subsequently facilitated the creation of state-affiliated nursing schools and the national blood bank, while also providing medical exams for new military recruits. Women's groups pointed to these developments as further indication of the contribution of women and the necessity for political enfranchisement.

The women's movement also showed a remarkable capacity to both reorganize itself to better incorporate rural women, as well as to overcome a range of internal factionalisms. Between 1946 and 1955, women's groups took an active role in the incorporation of rural women into the fold of their activities. They expanded their education and health activities to include towns and villages previously outside their geographic reach.<sup>126</sup> However, such a process was hierarchical in two ways. First, rural women were consistently subordinated to urban leadership. Second, the leadership articulated activities and prescriptions for rural society in a framework that peripheralized and underdeveloped rural areas vis-à-vis both the Lebanese government and urban areas.<sup>127</sup> Nevertheless, such projects dramatically expanded

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<sup>124</sup> See Markiza Di Frayj, "Bi Dhikra Mu'assis al-Salib al-Ahmar," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Ayar 1950), p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Also see Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, p. 20.

<sup>127</sup> See, for example, Amili Abi Rashid, "Qadiyyat al-Mar'a al-Rifiyya," *Sawt al-Mar'a*, p. 30.

the mobilizational capacity of women in Lebanon. Through such activities, women's groups established key relationships beyond the confines of Beirut and Tripoli.

The early setbacks to the women's suffrage in the immediate aftermath of political independence, and the expansion of activities to include a host of potential divisive social questions, subjected the women's movement to a range of factional strains. At one point, a number of organizations splintered from the women's union and formed the Women's Solidarity (al-Tadamun al-Nisa'i). However, the divide between the two groups was bridged and resulted in their unification into a new organization: the Federation of Lebanese Women's Organizations (Ittihad al-Hay'at al-Lubnaniyya al-Nisa'iyya). According to one international delegation report, the Lebanese federation represented over one hundred women's organizations.<sup>128</sup>

Perhaps no issue is celebrated in the history of the women's movement (indeed any women's movement) as much as winning suffrage in 1953.<sup>129</sup> Such an outcome was the result of a complex sequence of events featuring important shifts throughout Lebanon. The eventual outcome was also very much rooted in the struggle for women's political and social rights during the colonial era. Nevertheless, a range of strategies enabled the women's movement to take advantage of both these shifts and legacies. This included a series of memos and petitions to the cabinet, meetings and conferences, tactical alliances, and a broad public relations campaign.

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<sup>128</sup> Woodsmall, *Study of the Role of Women*, p. 19.

<sup>129</sup> For examples of self-reflections by members of the women's movement of women's inaugural participation in parliamentary elections, see "Kayfa Intakhabna," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Ab 1953) and Asma Tubi, "Hal Najahat al-Mar'a al-Lubnaniyya fi Khawd al-Ma'raka al-Intikhabiyya Am Fashalat," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Ab 1953), p. 8-9.

In 1950, Women's groups formed the Executive Committee of Women's Organizations in Lebanon (al-Lajna al-Tanfithiyya li al-Hay'a al-Nisa'iyya fi Lubna) with the exclusive purpose of representing their collective interest in the right to vote.<sup>130</sup> It was through this body that the women's organizations submitted memos to the government and organized public meetings.<sup>131</sup> One of the key activities of the executive committee was to identify and publicize male supporters among the different parts of the Lebanese political system.<sup>132</sup> The committee also promised electoral support to those parliamentarians that included women's suffrage in their political platforms. The mobilization of women's groups was so effective that the government sought to strike a compromise with them twice. The first suggestion was to include women in the next round of municipal elections, with an eye toward deferring that participation pending an assessment of their "municipal experience."<sup>133</sup> The executive committee rejected this proposal, and organized protests shortly thereafter.<sup>134</sup> The second compromise proposal was to limit women's suffrage to educated women.<sup>135</sup> This proposal sparked a long debate within women's organizations, though the executive committee eventually rejected its as well.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> See "The Lebanese Woman and Elections," *Sawt al-Mar'a*, p. 41.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> See, for example, "al-Lubnaniyya 'Indama Taghtarib: Ma'ali Wazir al-Kharijiyya Yatahaddath ila Sawt al-Mar'a," *Sawt al-Mar'a*, p. 7; "Sawt al-Mar'a Tastaqi Rijal al-Qada' fi Huquq al-Mar'a," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Ab 1950), p. 12; Ka'di Ka'di, "Haqq al-Mar'a fi al-Intikhab," *Sawt al-Mar'a* (Ab 1950), p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> *Al-Nahar*, 15 March 1951.

<sup>134</sup> *Al-Bayraq*, 16 March 1951 and 22 March 1951.

<sup>135</sup> *Al-Nahar*, 5 November 1952.

<sup>136</sup> *Al-Nahar*, 6 November 1952.

A key turning point in the struggle for women's suffrage was the downfall of al-Khuri and the subsequent election of Sham'un. As president, Sham'un sought to construct a very different base for his tenure as president. This was especially so given that he had been a leading member of a minority parliamentary opposition that turned to public protest and a general strike to bring down al-Khuri.<sup>137</sup> In the face of a non-cooperative parliamentary majority and the increasing defection of key supporters that had allied with him during the lead up to his presidential ascension, Sham'un turned to women's suffrage as a means of securing an alternative base for his presidency. This tactic was part of Sham'un's broader strategic repertoire as a reformer in his attempt to consolidate his tenuous presidency.

Gaining suffrage certainly did not end the struggle for women in Lebanon. Despite earning the right to vote, being appointed to municipal councils, and taking up increasingly public roles in official proceedings, women as a group continued to face structural and institutional impediments to their equal citizenship. For one, personal status laws continued to subordinate women's rights in marriage, divorce, and inheritance to the dictates of religious elites. In addition, despite expanding the field of urban employment, women were largely relegated to secretarial work and continued to find it difficult to enter liberal professions. Finally, the newfound attention to rural women did little to alter the broader process of rural neglect on the part of the public official's economic development model.

### *The Labor Game*

Similar to the women's movement, the trade union movement has its origins in the late Ottoman and French colonial periods. The spread of market relations that accompanied the nineteenth-century transformations produced wage laborers who increasingly migrated to

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<sup>137</sup> A subsequent chapter will address this dynamic in detail.

the urban areas in search of employment. Thus labor activism can be traced at least as far back as the first decade of the twentieth century, which featured port workers' strikes and the formation of a railway workers' association.<sup>138</sup> The formalization and proliferation of labor organizations characterized the colonial period. Three factors contributed to this process. First, French colonial policy dramatically expanded commercial relations while at the same time facilitating the development of new enterprises. Second, repeated economic crises radicalized workers into mobilizing to secure basic rights concerning working conditions and job security. Finally, the growing influence of communist groups and international labor norms provided important resources for both the mobilization of labor and its management.

The formalization of the labor movement during the colonial period manifested both in the number of organizations created and the frequency of strikes held. Prior to 1946, both the French High Commission and the Lebanese bureaucracy had consistently refused to recognize labor as a discrete corporate interest. Trade union organizing was subsumed under the rubric of the much broader Ottoman Law of Associations, whereas the 1934 Code of Contracts and Obligations provided businesses with a set of rights vis-à-vis both their employees and the government.<sup>139</sup> Despite this fact, the press archive and personal memoirs are replete with the activism of trade unions in the fields of railways, ports, tramway, electricity, tobacco, automobile transportation, and printing.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, a fragile alliance

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<sup>138</sup> See Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 84-12.

<sup>139</sup> Joseph Donato, "Lebanon and Its Labour Legislation," *International Labour Review* LXV (January 1952): pp. 64-92, pp. 73-76.

<sup>140</sup> See Ilyas al-Bawari, *Tarikh al-Haraka al-'Ummaliyya wa-al-Naqabiyya fi Lubnan: 1908-1946* (Bayrut: Dar al-Farabi, 1979), pp. 99-334; 'Abdalla Hanna, *al-Haraka al-'Ummaliyya fi Surya wa-Lubnan: 1900-1945* (Dimashq: Dar Dimashq, 1973), pp. 345-476.

between such labor groups and the women's movement during the late colonial period succeeded in establishing a limited set of rights.<sup>141</sup> These included protections for women and child laborers, general standards for industrial safety, and the guarantee of severance pay for employer-initiated termination. However, such legal guarantees left unaddressed the issue of a comprehensive labor code in general and the protection of workers from arbitrary layoffs, long hours, and injury in particular.

Also like the women's movement, World War II and the struggle for independence was an important turning point for the trade union movement. On the one hand, wartime Allied expenditures and import-substitution industrialization expanded urban employment to unprecedented levels.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, soaring prices subjected the working population to disastrous consequences as concerns their purchasing power.<sup>143</sup> The labor movement thus mobilized with unprecedented strength during this period, eventually succeeding in obtaining additional rights. These included a minimum wage, cost-of-living increases, and family allowances.<sup>144</sup> The promulgation of such rights was subject to an intense back-and-forth between both the Allied powers and the various components of the labor movements. Furthermore, trade union mobilizations were fundamental to the general strikes and sporadic protests that helped secure political independence in 1943 and foreign troop evacuation in

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<sup>141</sup> On this alliance, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 156-163 and 235-243.

<sup>142</sup> See Prest, *War Economics*, pp. 221-232; United Nations, *Economic Developments in the Middle East*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>143</sup> According to one estimate, retail prices in Beirut rose ten percent between August 1939 and 1940. By May 1945, the retail price index in Beirut was at 561 relative to January-June 1939 levels. See Prest, *War Economics*, p. 228.

<sup>144</sup> See Donato, "Lebanon and Its Labour Legislation," pp. 76-81.

1946.<sup>145</sup> The trade union movement was able to build on its demonstrated show of strength and secure the passage of a comprehensive labor code in 1946.<sup>146</sup>

The passage of the Labor Code effectively shifted the struggle of trade union mobilization from one seeking the promulgation of labor rights to that of guaranteeing implementation. The period between 1946 and 1955 featured repeated meetings, conferences, and strikes seeking to enforce, in particular, the clauses related to working hours, employment benefits, and access to arbitration.<sup>147</sup> Yet the capacity of the trade union movement to achieve its objectives in this period were limited by the very code it sought to implement.

The political organization of the trade union movement was much more diffuse than that of the women's movement. Trade unions were divided among those with official recognition and those without it. Despite recognizing the right to form trade unions, the Labor Code required all trade unions to register with the relevant ministerial department irrespective of previous registration status under the Ottoman Law of Associations. The code similarly required official registration of trade union federations. However, the unofficial status of unregistered unions and federations was not a function of a lack of interest on their part. Rather, such groups frequently sought to register with the relevant government department, yet the latter regularly denied official licenses to said groups. For example, on 14 April 1947, a delegation made up of representatives of bakers, carpenters, construction workers, employees of the Beirut electricity and tramway company, match makers,

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<sup>145</sup> See al-Bawari, *Tarikh al-Haraka al-'Ummaliyya*, pp. 206-209 and 245-257.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264-288.

<sup>147</sup> The anti-communist *al-Nahar* newspaper identified approximately twenty such instances each year of that period.

mechanics, and printers held an official meeting with the minister of national economy to complain that applications for registrations had been pending for over five months.<sup>148</sup> These trade unions were registered under the Ottoman Law of Association, but were now required by the 1946 Labor Code to register anew as their previous recognition was null and void as part of the new code.

Yet the withholding of official recognition was not the result of benign neglect, but a clear strategy to divide and factionalize the trade union movement.<sup>149</sup> On the one hand, government departments regularly withheld legal recognition from those unions and federations that state officials deemed non-cooperative. On the other hand, officials regularly recruited, planted, and directed informants within existing unions. These informants would in turn call for the new elections of the executive committees in the face of repeated failures to register or create competing trade unions that would undermine the membership base of the more unruly trade unions. For example, the general assembly of the traditional printer's union threatened a general strike in response to the granting of a registration license to a small group of printers with little to no history of trade union organizing while continuing to deny the registration application of the former.<sup>150</sup> While the government eventually granted the printers their registration request, the new printer's union continued to function and

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<sup>148</sup> See *Sawt al-Sha'b*, 15 April 1947.

<sup>149</sup> This is in fact precisely what Irene Gendzier identifies as the "labor game" in her reading of US embassy, state department, and intelligence records as concerns this period. See Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, pp. 115-122.

<sup>150</sup> *Sawt al-Sha'b*, 23 July 1947.

organize in parallel.<sup>151</sup> Such dynamics not only factionalized the trade union movement, but also directly contributed to its internal polarization.

State officials also sought to undermine the trade union movement through more direct means of coercion and violence. They frequently ransacked and shut down the offices of unregistered unions and federations. For example, the gendarmerie raided the office of the communist-affiliated trade union federation on 8 January 1948, confiscating all its records and declaring its office off limits to the public.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, the gendarmerie regularly arrested various trade union members, sometimes targeting leaders and other times simply raising the cost for at-large membership.<sup>153</sup> While much more rare, there are several incidents during the 1946-1955 period wherein striking workers were injured or killed as a result of police beatings and shootings.<sup>154</sup>

Unlike the women's movement, the trade union movement had less international resources to draw on in their struggle. During the early independence period, both the US and British governments pursued an active international labor policy as part of their broader post-World War II global strategies.<sup>155</sup> Anglo-American efforts were central to the creation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, organized in opposition to the World Federation of Trade Union, within which the Lebanese trade union movement was an active

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<sup>151</sup> *Sawt al-Sha'b*, 27 July 1947.

<sup>152</sup> *Al-Nahar*, 9 January 1948.

<sup>153</sup> See, for example, *al-Nahar*, 19 November 1948 and 23 January 1949 for coverage of the arrest and prosecution of trade union activists arrested during the 1948 UNESCO conference held in Beirut.

<sup>154</sup> On 1 February 1950, five thousand people marched in the funeral of Sulayman 'Ali al-Sharif, whom the gendarmerie had shot and killed during a 29 January protest. Several others were injured during the shooting about eighteen trade union members were arrested. See *al-Anaba'*, 2 February 1950.

<sup>155</sup> For a discussion of this dynamic, see Gendzeir, *Notes from the Minefield*, pp. 117-121.

element.<sup>156</sup> US concern with trade union activism in Lebanon is evidenced by the stationing of both a labor attaché and a labor-reporting officer in the US legation in Beirut.<sup>157</sup> These officials frequently drafted reports on the trade union movement in Lebanon and made recommendations for disciplining it in collaboration with Lebanese authorities. While such policies had their roots in the logics of the Cold War, they nevertheless buttressed the efforts of state officials in Lebanon who sought to undermine the labor movement due to a different set of calculations.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to challenge the prevailing narrative of the early independence period as static with respect to the nature of institutional transformation. The 1946-1955 period was a critical period in the expansion of the scope and reach of state institutions. Beyond simply absorbing functions previously carried out by the French High Commission, the state institutional transformation of the early independence period featured the capacity to mobilize resources and intervene in the daily lives of Lebanese citizens in unprecedented ways. Such transformations, however, both reflected and responded to the mobilizations of elite and popular groups who sought a more sustained commitment on the part of state institutions to play a role in consolidating independence and initiating economic development. Certainly, some groups were more successful at realizing their visions for

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<sup>156</sup> On the role of Lebanese trade unions in the World Federation of Trade Unions, see *Sawt al-Sha'b*, 10 December 1949. On the international context and labor repercussions of the creation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, see R. F., "The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions," *World Today* 9 (January 1953): pp. 38-45.

<sup>157</sup> For a discussion of this dynamic, see Gendzeir, *Notes from the Minefield*, pp. 120-123.

institutional arrangements than others. Nevertheless, by 1955 state institutions were implicated in nearly every aspect of the organization of political and economic life.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Foreign Concessions, Public Utilities, and the Origins of Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the relationship between concessionary capitalism, public utilities, and economic development. It narrates and analyzes the origins of the predominantly French-owned Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut (Société Électricité de Beyrouth in French, or Beirut Electricity Company in English, henceforth EDB). On the eve of independence, the EDB supplied Beirut's electricity and owned the exclusive rights to develop and operate the city's electrical grid. The pricing, quality of service, and ownership structure of the EDB, like that of many other public utility companies, were contentious issues in the post-independence period.

The EDB was at the heart of a concessionary system whose origins lay in the late Ottoman Empire, and was subsequently reorganized and institutionalized under French colonial rule. Both the Ottoman and French administrations understood how concessions could help a government simultaneously generate revenue, secure allies within the business community, and provide services to the public. The first two post-independence governments in Lebanon (1943-1952 and 1952-1958) sought to follow this precedent. However, they faced the challenge of promoting a private sector-led development strategy while maintaining their promises of national economic development that would benefit the public at large.

#### **Concessions and Public Utilities in Late Ottoman Development**

The public utilities system that provided for electric current in Beirut—like other public utility services in the city and across the Levant—has its origins in the late Ottoman

Empire and the concomitant political, economic, social, and cultural transformations. State elites and private businessmen developed concessionary agreements primarily in the later half of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. In many ways, such agreements represented the final stage of the Ottoman Empire's integration into the world economy.<sup>1</sup> The coincidence of a peak in export capital from Western Europe and the fiscal bankruptcy of the Ottoman state defined a critical juncture of this final stage.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, and as several historians have demonstrated, the condition of possibility for many of the concessionary arrangements was the nexus of an Ottoman "will to improve," the fiscal limits of imperial and local governments, and the availability of private capital. These dynamics together produced an incentive structure for concessions as a vehicle to fund and administer infrastructural development projects.<sup>3</sup> Historians have demonstrated how such strategies were unevenly deployed—and in those cases where they were deployed, unevenly successful—across imperial cities (Istanbul vs. Beirut vs. Jerusalem)

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<sup>1</sup> For a general discussion of the integration of the Ottoman Empire into the world economy, see Immanuel Wallerstein, Hale Decdeli, and Resat Kasaba, "The Incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the World-Economy," in *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy*, edited by Huri Islamoglu-Inan (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 88-100.

<sup>2</sup> On the peak in European export capital and the associated trade and imperial policies, see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Abacus, 1995). For a comparative discussion of the expansion of European trade and associated imperial policies throughout the Middle East during this period, see Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 44-70. On the increasing volume of trade between European states and the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, see V. Necla Geyikdagi, "The Pre-Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Economy," in *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire: International Trade and Relations, 1854-1914* (London: IB Tauris, 2011), pp. 1-28. On the fiscal bankruptcy of the Ottoman state, see Geyikdagi, "Foreign Capital: Borrowing," in *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 29-52; Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), pp. 100-121, 189-200; Rafii-Sukru Suvla, "The Ottoman Debt, 1850-1939," in *The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914*, edited by Charles Issawi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 94-106.

<sup>3</sup> See Jean Ducruet, *Les capitaux européens au Proche-Orient* (Paris: P.U.F., 1964); Geyikdagi, "Foreign Capital: Direct Investments" and "The Distribution of Foreign Direct Investment by Sector," in *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 53-134; Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

and economic sectors (ports vs. railways vs. water).<sup>4</sup> We must thus turn to the geographic, sectoral, and other specificities in order to appreciate the particular dynamics of individual cases, and in particular those of the EDB.

French capital organized in the form of loans and direct investments was an important element in this context of concessionary incentive.<sup>5</sup> Though the British Empire was the first to lend money and issue bonds to the Ottoman Empire, French capital dominated soon after.<sup>6</sup> By the eve of World War I, French capital accounted for the largest share of all foreign direct investment in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>7</sup> French business interests played a central role in the establishment and expansion of development projects throughout the territories that would form the core of the Lebanese and Syrian states.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Geyicdagi, “The Distribution of Foreign Direct Investment by Sector,” in *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 74-134. For a specific discussion of the development of transportation infrastructure such as ports, railroads, and roads, see Donald Quataert, “Transportation,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, edited by Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 798-823.

<sup>5</sup> One French historian estimates the real value of total French capital holdings in the Ottoman Empire in 1914 at 2.5 trillion French francs, with public funds and direct investment each accounting for 79.7 percent and 20.3 percent, respectively. See Jacques Thobie, “French Investment in Public and Private Funds in the Ottoman Empire on the Eve of the Great War,” in *East Meets West: Banking, Commerce, and Investments in the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Philip L. Cottrell, Monika Pohle Fraser, and Iain L. Fraser (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> According to one estimate, French investors held forty percent (36.72 million Ottoman lira) of the Ottoman foreign debt in 1881. The French-held percentages for 1898 and 1913 were 44.9 percent and 49.5 percent, respectively. These figures represent the largest share of Ottoman foreign debt throughout the period covered, exceeding those of Britain, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and local investors. See Geyicdagi, p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> This share was roughly equal to 45.3 percent (37.38 million British pounds) in 1914, with German and British capital each accounting for thirty-four percent and fourteen percent, respectively. These percentages reflect a significant shift from 1888, estimated at 31.7 percent (5.02 million British pounds) for French capital, and 56.2 and 1.1 percent for each British and German capital, respectively. See Geyicdai, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> For a list of French companies or projects with significant French capital operating in the Syrian provinces of the late Ottoman Empire, see Thobie, “French Investment in Public and Private Funds in the Ottoman Empire on the Eve of the Great War,” pp. 140-142. These include, but are not limited to, the Bank of Lebanon, the Beirut Gas Company, the Beirut Water Company, and the Beirut Tramway and Electricity Company, the Damascus-Hama Railway and its extensions, the North and South Beirut Lebanese Tramway Company, the Port of Beirut. Translations of companies and projects are modified versions of those given by Thobie, and should not be assumed to be the trading names in English-speaking countries.

According to one estimate, French capital represented the overwhelming majority of the approximately 123.7 million French francs in principal European investments in infrastructural projects throughout the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire between 1890 and 1913.<sup>9</sup> During the same period 17.4 million French francs were invested in Beirut's gas, electricity, and tramway sectors.<sup>10</sup> This capital, like that of most foreign and local (private) investments, was primarily organized in the form of concessions.<sup>11</sup> However, the inclusion of public utilities in investment practices and development discourses was not only a function of the preferences of foreign capital holders and governing elites. It was also a result of the coincidence of concessionary capitalist arrangements and mass politics. The latter emerged in the same period and cemented the centrality of—and competing notions about—“the public good” and “public services” among elites and popular classes alike.<sup>12</sup> Thus both elite and popular forces drove, albeit

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<sup>9</sup> See Carolyn Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), p. 18. However, it is important to note the conflicting nature of such statistical accounts. Simon Jackson, for example, argues that “between 1888 and 1914 . . . international banks sank around 70 million francs into the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, principally in infrastructural projects organised as concessions.” Thus even though Jackson covers a period three years longer and inclusive of that which Gates covers, his estimate is almost half that of Gates. Nevertheless, despite such differences, there appears to be a consensus among historians that infrastructural investment represented the lion's share of European investments during the late Ottoman period. For Jackson's estimate, see Simon M. W. Jackson, “Mandatory Development: The Political Economy of the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon, 1915-1939” (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2009), p. 214. For the distribution of European investments in the Ottoman Empire by country of origin and sector of investment, see Table 8.4 and Table 8.5 in Thobie, p. 130-134.

<sup>10</sup> See Boutrous Labaki, *Introduction a l'histoire economique du Liban* (Beyrouth, Université libanaise, 1984), p. 221.

<sup>11</sup> For a specific discussion of concessionary capitalist arrangements in Beirut during the late Ottoman Empire, see Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 84-112.

<sup>12</sup> For a general discussion of the emergence of mass politics in the late Ottoman Empire, see Beinun, *Workers and Peasants*, pp. 71-80. On the emergence of mass politics in the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see James L. Gelvin, *Divide Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of the Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 12-22. For a discussion of the intersection of concessionary capitalist development and mass politics in late Ottoman Beirut, see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, pp. 104-112. For

unevenly, the mobilizations around the establishment and development of public utility services.

Despite the disparate trajectories of various Ottoman concessionary agreements, several key characteristics defined these arrangements on the eve of World War I.<sup>13</sup> First there was the development of links between locally-funded shareholders with foreign companies. Second, both locals and foreigners with connections to the municipal, provincial, and central governments actively developed concessions and contracts into an emerging market for themselves. Third, the intersection between local, foreign, and international business rivalries infused profit-maximizing competition over these markets. Fourth, initial optimism in such projects waned as it became clear that revenue would not cover basic costs. It is in this context that a diverse network of social actors first established tramway and electricity services in Beirut.

#### *The Establishment of Tramway and Electricity Services in Beirut*

In 1905 Salim Ra‘ad established the first company to obtain an electricity-related concession for Beirut.<sup>14</sup> Along with his son-in-law Najib Malhama Pasha and the latter’s two brothers Philippe Efendi and Habib Efendi, they constituted the majority

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a detailed discussion of the the dynamic of mass politics in late Ottoman Beirut as manifested through the city’s municipal council, see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, pp. 138-162. For a comparative discussion of mass politics in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, see Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> For a general listing of concessions related to major infrastrucutral projects in the Ottoman Empire, including the dates on which the concessions were granted as well as the dates the services began operating, see tables 4.2 (major railways), 4.4 (major ports), 4.5 (gas and lighting), and 4.6 (tramways) in Geyicdagi, “The Distribution of Foreign Direct Investment by Sector.” On concessionary arrangements related to railways, ports, gas lighting, and tramways in late Ottoman Beirut, see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, pp. 84-104.

<sup>14</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 99.

shareholders of the Société Anonyme Ottomane des Tramways et de l'Électricité de Beyrouth (the Ottoman Beirut Tramway and Electricity Company, OTEB).<sup>15</sup> The Ottoman Ministry of Public Works granted the OTEB a ninety-nine-year concession for a Beirut tramway system in 1906.<sup>16</sup> Historian Jens Hanssen suggests, however, that the intention of the Malhama<sup>17</sup> family was never to see the development of the tramway system through to completion.<sup>18</sup> Rather, the goal was to make a profit on selling the company before construction even began. A central dilemma in the development of the tramway system concerned the source of energy: “whether to use water generation from the distant Nahr al-Kalb whose exploitation [rights] belonged to a British company, or

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<sup>15</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 99. Further information is provided in a 1910 profile of the company that lists “Najib Pasha Malhama” as the president, along with “Philippe Effendi” and “Habibi Effendi Malhama” as managers. It also lists Victor Limage of Brussels as vice president, and the following names as managers: Adolphe Laloux of Liege, Ch. Thoney of Liege, Edouard Denis of Brussels, Issac Fernandez, and Nouri Bey. See “Société Anonyme Ottoman des Tramways et de l'Électricité de Beyrouth,” *Recueil Financier* (1910). Note that the term “société anonyme” literally translates into “anonymous company,” but was historically used for public limited companies (as opposed to private limited companies or partnerships).

<sup>16</sup> This 1906 date is cited in the French High Commission's 1924 authorization to transfer the gas, electricity, and tramway concessions held by the OTEB (al-Sharika al-Mughaffala al-'Uthmaniyya li-al-Tramway wa-al-Kahruba' fi Bayrut) and its sister company, the COGB (al-Sharika al-Mughaffala al-'Uthmaniyya li-al-Ghaz wa-al-Kahruba' fi Bayrut), to the French TEB (Sharikat al-Tramway wa-'Inarat Bayrut al-Mughaffala). Therein, the Ottoman *firman* granting the concession to the OTEB is dated as 30 April 1906, with 17 May 1906 as the date given for the signing of the related concessionary agreement and general conditions that would govern the concession. Though unclear as to the reason why, this record contradicts Hanssen's claim that concession from the Beirut tramway was granted “half-way through construction in 1908.” Alternatively, the 1906 date is corroborated by the account of Omar Ajam, who at the time of writing was the head of electricity affairs in the Lebanese Ministry of Public Works. On French High Commission's authorization to transfer the related concessions, see the background section in Decision No. 2642 of 31 May 1924 (“Tarkhis Naql Imtiyyazat al-Ghaz wa-al-Kahruba' wa-al-Tramway ila Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut al-Mughaffala” [Beirut Tramway and Lighting Company]) published in al-Mafwadhyya al-'Ulya li-al-Jumhuriyya al-Frinsawiyya fi Suriya wa-Lubnan, *al-Nashra al-Rasmiyya li-al-'mal al-Idariyya fi al-Mafwadhyya al-'Ulya* (1924), pp. 145-148. For Hanssen's listing of 1908 as the listing of the year the concession was first granted, see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 100. For Ajam's account, see Omar Ajam, *L'équipement électrique du Liban* (Beirut: Les presse de l'imprimerie Catholique, 1952), p. 169.

<sup>17</sup> For a history of the Malhama family's rise from seventeenth-century warlords to Hamidian ministers, see chapter four of Jens Hanssen, “The Effect of Ottoman Rule on Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Province of Beirut, 1888-1914” (D. Phil., University of Oxford, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, pp. 99-100.

coal, petrol, or gas driven engines.”<sup>19</sup> In a direct threat to a rival business family—the Sabbaghs<sup>20</sup>—the Malhamas declared their intention to address their energy concerns by expanding their business activities to include the development of electricity for Beirut.<sup>21</sup> However, as holders of the gas lighting concession in Beirut, the Sabbaghs launched a legal campaign against the Malhamas and eventually bought out the OTEB for one million French francs in 1907.<sup>22</sup> This purchase was in keeping with the Sabbagh family’s broader pattern of seeking to monopolize Beirut’s utilities concessions.<sup>23</sup> These attempts included a 1903 legally engineered “financial coup” to take control of the Compagnie Ottomane du Gaz de Beyrouth (the Beirut Gas Company, or COGB), which held the concession for Beirut gas lighting.<sup>24</sup> Another example of this pattern was the 1909 buyout

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<sup>19</sup>Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> According to Hanssen, the Sabbagh family were led by Ibrahim and his brother Elias. In addition to being a major shareholder in the COGB, Ibrahim Sabbagh was also a shareholder in the Société Anonyme Ottomane Chemins de Fer de Beyrouth-Damas-Hawran et Birecik Sur l’Euphrate, the president of the Ottoman Chamber of Commerce in Paris, and executive member of a host of international banks. Originally from Homs, later Marj ‘Ayun, in the eighteenth century the Sabbagh family passed through Acre (“where [an earlier] Ibrahim Sabbagh was Zahir al-‘Umar’s doctor”) before settling in Beirut. Ibrahim Sabbagh had originally “made his fortunes in Beirut’s silk and linen trade in the 1880s.” See Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 98, and fns 60 & 61.

<sup>21</sup> In a profile of the company published in 1910, Salim Ra‘ad is cited as stating that the objective of the concession was “the construction, administration, and exploitation of electric tramways in the city of Beirut, as well as a steam-based plant for the production of electricity for both the lighting of Beirut and the supply of industries based around the city.” See “Société Anonyme Ottoman des Tramways et de l’Électricité de Beyrouth,” *Recueil Financier* (1910).

<sup>22</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 100.

<sup>23</sup> On the Sabbaghs’ broader pattern of seeking to monopolize public utility concessions in Beirut, see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>24</sup> The Ottoman *firman* granting the concession to the COGB is dated as 29 December 1885, with 29 December 1885 and 24 March 1908 as the dates given for the signing of the related concessionary agreements and general conditions that would govern the concession. On the dates of the establishment of the COGB, see background section to Decision No. 2642 of 31 May 1924 (“Tarkhis Naql Imtiyyazat al-Ghaz wa-al-Kahruba’ wa-al-Tramway ila Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut al-Mughaffala”); For the history of the establishment and development of the COGB, including its purchase of the OTEB, see Jacques Thobie’s “Mouvement d’affaires et mouvement ouvrier : La compagnie ottoman du Gaz de Beyrouth, 1887-1914” in his *La France et l’est méditerranéen depuis 1850: Économie, finance, diplomatie* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1993).

of what would eventually come to be known as La Compagnie des Eaux de Beyrouth (the Beirut Water Company, or BWC).<sup>25</sup>

Construction on the electric tramway system began in 1908, with service beginning fifteen months later in 1909.<sup>26</sup> Five tramlines opened in the wake of heated debates on the aligning, paving, and widening of streets alongside the rails:

One connected the pine forest, through the quarter of Bashura, Ras al-Naba' past the military hospital and Khan Fakhri Bey. Another ran from the lighthouse in Ras Beirut to the port. A third offered a fast way around the old city centre by running along the traces of the old city walls towards distant Furn al-Shubbak. The fourth line ran from behind the Petit Serail through the old town to the former Bab Idriss and linked up there to the third line. The fifth line passed from Sahat al-Burj through the wealthy Christian quarter of Mudawwar and Rumayl to the Beirut River in the east.<sup>27</sup>

The Beirut tramway system was immediately implicated in struggles over the organization of political, economic, and social life. Hanssen details this dynamic in his analysis of the administrative and urban development of late Ottoman Beirut, in which he demonstrates the tramway system's centrality in an emerging bourgeois order of space,

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<sup>25</sup> Both the COGB and BWC were established with primarily foreign capital, but eventually encountered financial difficulties that ultimately resulted in their sale to local investors—the Sabbaghs. Gates estimates that nine million French francs in principle European investment went into each of these projects between 1890 and 1913. The early history of the Beirut water concession is more complicated than that of the COGB. Hanssen indicates that it dates at least as far back as 1871, which is when what was initially the British-owned Beirut Waterworks Company Limited purchased the concession to supply the city (by means of the nearby Nahr al-Kalb) from a French entrepreneur, identified only as Thévenin. Other sources, however, indicate that there are two relevant concessions: one for the supply of water to Beirut (for which the British-owned Beirut Waterworks Limited was established), and one for the distribution of water within Beirut (which was first granted in 1874 to primarily French investors). However, Beirut Waterwork Company Limited consolidated its control of both concessions in 1876. The 1909 buyout of the British-owned concessions resulted in the establishment of La Compagnie des Eaux de Beyrouth (Beirut Water Company) that same year. For Gates' estimate of foreign investment in the COGB and BWC, see See Gates, p. 18. For Hanssen's brief account of the BWC, see See Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 98. On the more complicated history of Beirut water concessions, see Geyicdagi, p. 113.

<sup>26</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 101.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

time, and social distinction.<sup>28</sup> Tramlines, he argues, mobilized a range of social actors: investors to purchase lands for the construction of apartment blocks; the guild of horse carriage drivers to protect their dwindling share of public transportation; tramline passengers to protest fare increases; and workers to strike for better pay.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the contentious nature of the creation of public utilities and other public works, particularly when organized as foreign-owned concessions, was not limited to the STEB. It was a common dynamic to other projects, including gas lighting, ports, and railways—both in Beirut and beyond.<sup>30</sup>

### **Colonial Legacies**

Historians of colonial Lebanon have highlighted a range of dynamics related to its political economy.<sup>31</sup> One of these is the French High Commission's attempt to stabilize a particular model of political rule and concomitant economic development.<sup>32</sup> Through a range of social policies and infrastructural projects, the French High Commission responded, even if inadequately, to the demands of the local population. Such policies

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 101-103.

<sup>29</sup> For a general discussion of these mobilizations, see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, p. 104. For details on the strikes, see Jaques Thobie, *Intérêts et impérialismes français dans l'empire ottomane, 1895-1914* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1977), p. 156.

<sup>30</sup> On gas lighting, see Thobie, "Mouvement d'affaires et mouvement ouvrier: La compagnie ottomane du Gaz de Beyrouth, 1887-1914." On ports, see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, pp. 87-92.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of French macro-economic policies in the mandates, see Gates, pp. 22-31. For a discussion of French social policy within the context of a colonial political economy and popular mobilization to reform that framework, see Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). For a specific discussion of Beirut's role as a political, economic, and administrative center of the newly emergent national political economy, see Marwan Buheiry, *Beirut's Role in the Political Economy of the French Mandate: 1919-1939* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1986). On public utilities, and in particular tramway service and electric current, see Jackson, "Mandatory Development," pp. 200-323.

<sup>32</sup> The High Commissioner was the highest ranking French authority in mandate Lebanon and Syria. His function was to simultaneously represent the French government in Lebanon and to oversee the governing of Lebanon and Syria.

were intended to buttress a colonial system of rule that was premised on the army, collaborating local elites, and the state bureaucracy. Another important dynamic of the colonial period was the eventual radicalization of elite and popular mobilizations away from a reformist approach vis-à-vis mandate rule and toward a rejectionist stance insisting on full independence. This is despite the fact that “a broad spectrum of urban society mobilized to claim rights from the [colonial] state” throughout the mandate period.<sup>33</sup> Social rights were the principal goal of various mobilizations in the earlier part of the mandate period. However, from the late 1930s and throughout World War II contentious politics increasingly turned on the explicit demands for self-government and independence from French rule.

#### *Consolidating the Political Economy of the Mandate*

Immediately after the establishment of the mandate, the French High Commission expended great efforts at stabilizing the political economy of the newly defined territory of Lebanon. Such efforts were not merely the function of the externally imposed nature of mandate rule. Rather, they were also a response to the dislocation that the First World War caused and the subsequent 1918-1922 transfer of political, juridical, and fiscal control from Ottoman, to Faysali, to British, and eventually to French authorities.<sup>34</sup> These transitions and the concomitant attempts to establish order had important consequences for the organization of public utilities, the shaping of norms and expectations of the public, and the changing role of state institutions.

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<sup>33</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 163.

<sup>34</sup> On the military and political logics that undergirded such transitions as they pertained to territories that would eventually form the Lebanese state, see Zamir, pp. 38-92. For a general discussion of the effects of World War I on the lives of the local population and the ways in which French colonial policies sought to respond to these effects and that of the diverse array of governing transitions, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 19-70.

Beginning on 24 October 1918, the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) governed the territories that eventually formed the states of Lebanon and Syria. It was not until 1 September 1920 that the French High Commission exercised exclusive control over the internal matters of what on that date was declared the State of Greater Lebanon. Nevertheless, the legal framework of the French mandate in Lebanon (and Syria) was neither transposed from the Ottoman system nor wholly invented. It was an amalgam of legal categories, institutions, and practices that drew on multiple sources of authority (i.e., Ottoman, Faysali, French, and the Mandate Charter).<sup>35</sup> Yet it simultaneously represented a fundamentally reconfigured relationship between the individual and the collective, the local and the foreign, the public and the private, and—finally—the population and the state.

Two particular points regarding this colonial legal context merit highlighting. First, the existence of plural sources of legal authority during the early years of post-Ottoman Lebanon meant that multiple and competing claims were advanced with respect to ownership, rights, and responsibilities. This plurality proved to be a persistent theme in legal campaigns throughout the history of modern Lebanon up to the present day. Nevertheless, the French High Commission used legal argument and *force majeure* to marginalize claims that either threatened French interests or highlighted colonial complicity in particularly contentious politico-economic arrangements.<sup>36</sup> For example, the French High Commission appears to have neither issued nor renewed any concessions

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<sup>35</sup> This was the case in multiple spheres of everyday life in post-Ottoman Lebanon. For a comparative example related to sectarian identity and personal status law, see Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Jackson, "Mandatory Development," pp. 261-262.

until after the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923.<sup>37</sup> Among its many protocols and articles, the treaty guaranteed the legitimacy of concessions granted to nationals (as individuals or corporations) of the contracting parties with the exception of Turkey.<sup>38</sup>

The Treaty of Lausanne was not the only reason to postpone the renewal or granting of concessions. The immediate post-World War I economy featured fiscal and monetary instability. Such dynamics were the result of the devastation of the war, the inflated cost of basic goods, and the existence of multiple and overlapping currencies.<sup>39</sup> Within such a context, the exigencies of stabilizing food supplies and public services, in addition to prices, were necessary before any significant changes could be made to the ownership of public utility concessions and companies.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and subsequent colonial administrative engineering—first through the OETA and then through the French High Commission—resulted in the introduction of several “new” currencies. The Ottoman lira (both gold coin

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<sup>37</sup> The Treaty of Lausanne was signed at the conclusion of seven months of official negotiations. The contracting parties were Turkey (as the successor state to the Ottoman Empire) and what at the time of signing were the British Empire, the French Republic, the Kingdom of Italy, the Empire of Japan, the Kingdom of Greece, the Kingdom of Romania, and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State. For a discussion of the French High Commission’s strategy of awaiting the conclusion of the treaty before issuing or renewing any concessions, see Jackson, “Mandatory Development,” pp. 224-225. For the main text of the treaty, see “Treaty of Peace,” *The American Journal of International Law*, 18, no. 1, Supplement: Official Documents (January 1924): pp. 4-53.

<sup>38</sup> Article 1 of the *Protocol Relating to Certain Concessions Granted in the Ottoman Empire* states, “Concessionary contracts and subsequent agreements relating thereto, duly entered into before 29 October, 1914, between the Ottoman Government or any local authority, on the one hand, and nationals (including Companies) of the Contracting Powers, other than Turkey, on the other hand, are maintained.” For the text of this protocol, see “Protocol Relating to Certain Concessions Granted in the Ottoman Empire,” *The American Journal of International Law* 18, no. 2, Supplement: Official Documents (April 1924): pp. 98-102.

<sup>39</sup> On food prices and shortages in particular, see Thompson, pp. 19-23, 58-63.

and paper note)<sup>40</sup> as well as the French franc and British pound (both in gold coin) were already in circulation prior to the end of World War I.<sup>41</sup> The British-French occupation of Ottoman territory beginning in 1918 introduced the Sterling-backed Egyptian pound to the already existing currency market.<sup>42</sup> Finally, in April 1920, the French High Commission declared the Syrian-Lebanese lira (LLS) as the sole legal tender, eventually suspending the Egyptian pound.<sup>43</sup> It was not until 1924 that the currency regime of the French mandate was sufficiently standardized and institutionalized despite the objections such a currency system continued to solicit.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The Ottoman lira had been the official currency of the Ottoman Empire since 1844. The associated currency system was primarily based on metal coins of various denominations and subdivisions, where one lira was equivalent to five mecrediye or one hundred kuruş. There was also the denomination of the para, where one kuruş equalled forty para. In 1912, the Ottoman government went off the gold standard by introducing paper notes in various denominations of the lira and kuruş. For a general overview of Ottoman monetary policy, see Sevket Pamuk, "Money in the Ottoman Empire, 1326-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, edited by Halil Inalick and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 947-986.

<sup>41</sup> Gold coins of the British pound and French Franc were primarily introduced by the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, which was established in 1881 as the international instrument for addressing Ottoman bankruptcy and ensuring loan repayments to European powers. See Pamuk.

<sup>42</sup> This is most evidenced by a series of laws that sought to effectively legalize the use of the Egyptian pound for the payment of public utility services and other goods. See Decision No. 11 of 1 November 1918 ("Tas'ir al-'Umla" ["Pricing Currency"]), *Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-al-Mantiqa al-Gharbiyya: Min 24 Tishrin Awwal Sanat 1918 – 31 Ab Sanat 1920* [Collection of Orders for the Western Region: From 24 October 1918 to 31 August 1920] (Beirut: Matba'at al-Adab, 1924), pp. 88-89.

<sup>43</sup> One Syrian-Lebanese lira (LLS) was subdivided into one hundred Syrian-Lebanese piasters (PLS). This new currency system was premised on one legal currency (the franc-pegged Syrian-Lebanese lira (LLS), where one lira was equal to twenty French francs), one reserve currency (the Turkish gold lira), and three exchange currencies (paper Syrian-Lebanese liras, Turkish gold liras, and the residual Ottoman coin of mecrediye). For a discussion of French administrative logic undergirding the declaration of the Syrian-Lebanese lira, see Jackson, "Mandatory Development," pp. 218-219, especially footnote 45. For a broader discussion of the immediate aftermath of the institutionalization of the Syrian-Lebanese lira, see Jackson, "Mandatory Development," pp. 219-220. For a general general discussion of the early history of the monetary system in mandate Lebanon (and Syria), see Raymond A. Mallat, *70 Years of Money Middling in Lebanon, 1900-1970: A Guide to Monetary Management for Economic Development in Lebanon* (Beirut: Aleph, 1973), pp. 97-98.

<sup>44</sup> According to Mallat, "In January 1924, the two governments of Syria and Lebanon, on the one hand, and the BSL, on the other hand, confirmed the 1920 French franc exchange standard by signing an official convention. This convention also declared the Lebanese-Syrian currency the only legal tender, established the pound as the only official monetary unit, reasserted the parity of the pound at twenty French francs, and confers on the BSL a fifteen-year extension of note issue with a maximum of twenty-five million

While mandate authorities eventually established the new Syrian-Lebanese lira as the dominant currency regime, its pegging to the French franc combined with the broader trajectory of the introduction and withdrawal of different currencies meant that the local population was subject to an entirely new set of problems related to inflation, devaluation, and other fiscal challenges.<sup>45</sup> On the one hand, both OETA and the French High Commission frequently sought to regulate the use of various currencies in financial transactions, including payment for public utilities.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, both administrations frequently made adjustments to public utilities rates such as those of water, electricity, and tramways.<sup>47</sup> While such adjustments were much more frequent in

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pounds. Despite all the dubious implications it obtained, this agreement marked the dawn of a new era in the monetary history of Lebanon.” See Mallat, p. 98.

<sup>45</sup> For the early development of the Lebanese monetary system under French colonial rule and its concomitant fluctuations and instabilities, see Mallat, pp. 97-102. On the history of the French franc, see Jean-Pierre Patot and Michel Lutfalla, *A Monetary History of France in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990).

<sup>46</sup> For examples of OETA attempts to regulate the use of the various currencies in circulation, see Decision No. 11 of 1 November 1918 (“Tas‘ir al-‘Umla” [“Pricing Currency”]), Decision No. 31 of 14 November 1918 (“al-Awraq al-Naqdiyya wa-al-Ta‘amul Ma‘ha” [Paper Money and Its Uses]), and Decision No. 211 of 24 February 1920 (al-Awraq al-Naqdiyya wa-Luzum Tadawuluha” [“Paper Money and Its Enforced Exchange”]) in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-al-Mantiqa al-Gharbiyya*, pp. 88-92. For an example of OETA explicitly sanctioning the use of Egyptian currency for tobacco purchases in Lebanon and Syria, see Decision No. 120 of 1 January 1919 (“As‘ar Sharikat al-Rigi” [“Reggie Company Prices”]), in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-al-Mantiqa al-Gharbiyya*, pp. 187-188. For an example of OETA explicitly sanctioning the use of Egyptian currency for payment of tramway fares in Beirut, see Decision No. 365 of 1 May 1919 (“Ujur al-Tramway” [“Tramway Fares”]) in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-al-Mantiqa al-Gharbiyya*, p. 188. For examples of the French High Commission seeking to regulate the use of various currencies, see Order No. 32 of 22 September 1920 (“Tabdil al-‘Umla al-Masriyya fi Sanadiq al-Hukuma bi-al-Lira al-Suriya” [Substituting Egyptian Currency in Government Treasuries with the Syrian Lira]), Order No. 174 of 29 November 1920 (“Tanzim al-Muqawalat wa-al-‘Uqud bi-al-‘Umla al-Suriya” [Organizing Contractors and Contracts with the Syrian Currency]), Order No. 617 of 29 February 1921 (“Tabdil al-As‘ar ila al-‘Umla Suriya” [Substituting Prices with Syrian Currency]), and Order No. 1508 of 1 September 1922 (“Ijzat al-Ta‘amul ma‘ al-Dhahab” [“Allowances for the Transacting in Gold”]), in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnan al-Kabir: Min Awwal Aylul Sanat 1920 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal 1923* [Collection of Orders of the State of Greater Lebanon: 1 September 1920 – 31 December 1923] (Beirut: Matba‘at al-Adab, 1925), pp. 200-202.

<sup>47</sup> For examples of modifying water utility rates in Beirut, see Order No. 429 of 3 May 1919, Order No. 1236 of 27 April 1920, and Order No. 1422 for 12 July 1920 (each titled “As‘ar Sharikat al-Ma” [“Water Company Prices”]) in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-al-Mantiqa al-Gharbiyya*, pp. 191-193; Order No. 328 of 27 December 1920 (“Bi-khusus As‘ar Sharikat al-Ma” [Concerning the Water Company Prices]) in

the immediate post-World War I period, they nevertheless persisted throughout the mandate period in response to currency fluctuations.<sup>48</sup>

These types of interventions and adjustments emerged as a specific theme in the struggles over consumer prices related to the provision of electricity (and tramway) services during the colonial period and beyond. One example of this was in April 1920 when the OTEB secured permission for what was effectively the first price increase in tramway fares since the end of the war.<sup>49</sup> The company justified the new prices, both to the mandate authorities and the public at large on the basis of the imposition of the new Syrian-Lebanese lira (LLS) earlier that same month. Another example can be found in the series of increases in Beirut's electric utility rates, which were justified on the basis of either monetary instability or currency devaluations with respect to the French franc.<sup>50</sup>

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*Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnan al-Kabir: Min Awwal Aylul Sanat 1920 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1923*, pp. 423-424. Between 24 January 1921 and 31 October 1922 the French High Commission modified electric public utility rates in Beirut a total of nine times. See Orders No. 441, 618, 34, 519, 941, 1168, 1273, 1323, and 1394 in *Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnan al-Kabir: Min Awwal Aylul Sanat 1920 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal 1923*. For examples in other cities and towns, see Order No. 1872 of 18 July 1927 (“Al-Ta'rifa al-Quswa li-Bay' al-Quwwa al-Kahruba'iyya fi Zahle” [“The Maximim Tariff for Electric Power in Zahleh”]) and Order No. 4128 of 23 November 1928 (“Al-Ta'rifa al-Quswa li-Bay' al-Quwwa al-Kahruba'iyya fi 'Alay wa-Suq al-Gharb” [“The Maximim Tariff for Electric Power in Aley and Souq al-Gharb”]) in *Majmu'at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya: Min Shahr Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1929 li-Ghayat Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1930* [Compilation of Laws and Directives of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon: From January 1929 to December 1930] (Beirut: Matba'at an-Dabbur. 1933), pp. 336, 338. For examples from the 1930s, see Order No. 2153 of 7 August 1935 (“Al-Ta'rifa al-Quswa li-Bay' al-Quwwa al-Kahruba'iyya fi Sur” [“The Maximim Tariff for Electric Power in Tyre”]) in *Majmu'at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya: Sanat 1935* [Compilation of Laws and Directives of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon: 1935] (Beirut: Matba'at an-Dabbur. 1937), pp. 344. Also see Orders No. 714 (‘Alay and Souq al-Gharb), 715 (Ihdin), and 716 (Nabatiyya) of 7 June 1937 concerning the maximum tariff for electric power in those cities in *Majmu'at al-Qawanin wa-al-Marasim wa-al-Qararat al-Sadira 'An al-Hukuma al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya Khilal Sanat 1937* [Compilation of the Laws, Directives, and Decisions Issued by the Government of the Republic of Lebanon in 1937] (Beirut: Matba'at 'Azar. 1938), pp. 344.

<sup>48</sup> See discussion in next paragraph.

<sup>49</sup> See Order No. 1238 of 27 April 1920 (“Ujur al-Tramway” [“Tramway Fares”]) in *Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-al-Mantiqa al-Gharbiyya*, p. 189. Simon Jackson describes this fare change as a “threefold price rise.” See Jackson, “Mandatory Development,” p. 221.

<sup>50</sup> These price increases occurred under the purview of the Société Tramways et Éclairage de Beyrouth (Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut in Arabic, or Beirut Tramways and Lighting Company in

These changes largely occurred between August 1925 and October 1926, when the company successively increased general applicable rates for electric lighting from seventeen, to nineteen (April 1926), to twenty-four (July 1926), and then to twenty-seven Syrian-Lebanese piasters (PLS) per kilowatt -hour (kWh). Put differently, the cost of electric lighting jumped approximately fifty-nine percent within the span of fourteen months. In addition, the company increased applicable rates for motive force electricity in January 1937 from ten to eleven piasters per kilowatt-hour, and then again in September 1937 to 13.25 piasters per kilowatt-hour.<sup>51</sup> This represented a 32.5 percent increase in the cost of motive force electricity over the span of ten months. These price fluctuations and the broader set of fiscal and monetary policies they were part of were in essence attempts at stabilizing newly emerging political and administrative regimes in the aftermath of the collapse and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.

*Société Tramways et Éclairage de Beyrouth*

The logic of self-sufficiency constrained mandatory fiscal policy such that state expenditures were to be covered by locally generated revenue. In fact, with the exception of continuing military subsidies, the mandate effectively paid for itself and “budgets remained balanced even during the depression years and World War II.”<sup>52</sup> Drawing on

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English; henceforth TEB), which bought out the OTEB. This buyout is discussed below. On the the figures and justifications of price increases between October 1925 and August 1927, see the company’s discussion of its own pricing history in its “Statement of Facts” in I.C.J. Pleadings, “*Électricité de Beyrouth*” *Company Case (France v.s. Lebanon)* (Hague: International Court of Justice, 1957), pp. 22-23. This theme would re-emerge in post-colonial struggles, documentation from which would echo the issue. See discussion below.

<sup>51</sup> “Motive force” electrical energy is the type used for commercial and industrial equipment requiring significantly more power than household equipment. Beginning in the late Ottoman period, and through early independence, motive force in Lebanon was typically supplied as low voltage motive force or high voltage motive force.

<sup>52</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 63.

the precedent established in the late Ottoman Empire in order to oversee the development of infrastructure while providing further investment opportunities for French capital, the High Commission contracted out various services—including utilities and public works—in Lebanon and Syria to French businesses. This act of economic patronage vis-à-vis metropole-based entities was simultaneously a strategic maneuver with respect to locally driven demands. In short, the High Commission needed private investors to operate public services that the state could not—or would not—manage directly. That those private investors were based in France provided the High Commissioner and his superiors in Paris with the opportunity to cultivate important support from within the French political establishment.<sup>53</sup>

Historian Simon M.W. Jackson provides what is to date the most detailed narrative and analysis of public utilities concessions in the political economy of the French mandate in Lebanon and Syria.<sup>54</sup> He identifies three key characteristics of the political economy of concessions during the period. First, “the High Commission held tight but indirect control over the major concessions and their ownership and operation.”<sup>55</sup> While a new local concession-granting authority was established—drawn first from municipal authorities and eventually also including representatives of the

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<sup>53</sup> For one example of this dynamic, see Simon Jackson’s discussion of lobbying efforts on the part of the Association of French Businessmen and Industrialists in the Levant (AFBIL) to effect a particular model of economic development and investment opportunities in Lebanon and Syria. According to Jackson, the AFBIL “was an organisation that included representatives of virtually every French corporate and commercial interest present in the Levant.” Crucial to his analysis is how this in turn provided various opportunities for successive high commissioners and other French colonial bureaucrats to secure political backing in Paris. For quote, see “Mandatory Development,” p. 228. For the broader discussion of the AFBIL, see Jackson, pp. 228-232.

<sup>54</sup> Jackson, “Mandatory Development,” pp. 200-323.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254.

“national” government—the High Commission had to approve each concession request.<sup>56</sup> This ensured that the realm of possible outcomes was in accordance with French administrative preferences. The litmus test for a concessionary bid hinged on Syrian-Lebanese applicants having already contracted out the financial and technical aspects of operating the concession to French business interests.<sup>57</sup> Second, “this configuration led to an ownership structure for major concessions that sometimes featured Syrian-Lebanese directors or involved some Syrian-Lebanese capital, but was supervised by French engineers and dominated by French capital and its investors.”<sup>58</sup> The determination to secure French economic privileges in the realm of concessions highlighted the collusion between—and thus exposed the thin veneer allegedly separating—French administrative and business interests both in the mandate and back in the metropole. Third, French business interests “won” the lion’s share of concessionary contracts. Consequently, those companies providing services and earning profits in Lebanon were exempt from local tax laws even if they featured capital input from Syrian-Lebanese and other interests.<sup>59</sup> The reform and restructuring of the concessionary agreements concerning the provisioning of electric current and tramway service for the city of Beirut is illustrative of these dynamics.

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<sup>56</sup> For the text of the law, see Order No. 2511 of 20 March 1924 (“Bi-Taḥdīd al-Imtiyāzāt fī al-Ittīḥād al-Sūrī wa-fī Lubnān al-Kabīr” [“On the Determination of Concessions in the Syrian Federation and Greater Lebanon”]) in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnān al-Kabīr: Awwal Kanun al-Thānī Sanat 1934 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1935* [Compilation of Orders of the State of Greater Lebanon: 1 January 1934 – 31 December 1935] (Beirut: Matba‘at al-Adab, 1927), pp. 482-483.

<sup>57</sup> See Jackson, “Mandatory Development,” p. 253-254.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255.

While the Ottoman-incorporated Société des Tramways et de l'Électricité de Beyrouth (OTEB) was the first to historically obtain the concessions for the development and operation of electric current and tramline service in Beirut, it was the French-incorporated Société Électricité de Beyrouth (EDB)<sup>60</sup> that emerged from the colonial period with the rights for the provisioning of those and many related public utility services. The EDB's position was made possible by a series of developments both preceding and subsequent to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In 1911, the Malhama family sold off its majority shares in La Compagnie Ottomane du Gaz de Beyrouth (COGB)—within which the OTEB of the late Ottoman Empire was a subsidiary—to primarily Belgian investors.<sup>61</sup> By the eve of World War I, the COGB was supplying lighting services through gas as well as electricity, whereas the OTEB was operating the tramlines and providing current for motive force.<sup>62</sup> However, the post-Ottoman reformulation of concessionary arrangements featured the re-establishment of the rights and properties of both those companies under the purview of the Société Tramways et Éclairage de Beyrouth (TEB).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut in Arabic, or the Beirut Electricity Company in English; henceforth EDB.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 216. This is further evidenced by the fact that OTEB shareholders held their meetings in Liege in the immediate post-World War I period. See references to such meetings as held on 7 July 1922 ("extraordinary general meeting of shareholders"), 15 February 1924 ("extraordinary general meeting of shareholders"), and 20 March 1924 ("general association of shareholders") in background section to Decision No. 2642 of 31 May 1924 ("Tarkhis Naql Imtiyyazat al-Ghaz wa-al-Kahruba' wa-al-Tramway ila Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut al-Mughaffala").

<sup>62</sup> A'jam, p. 169.

<sup>63</sup> Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut in Arabic, or Beirut Tramways and Lighting Company in English; henceforth TEB. On 21 February 1922, joint letters were sent on behalf of each of the COGB and OTEB to the French High Commission requesting authorization to transfer the gas and electricity concessions from the former to the latter. Then on 7 July 1922, the shareholders of the OTEB voted in an extraordinary meeting held in Liege to liquidate the OTEB and transfer its concessions and possessions to a French company yet to be established. The High Commission responded to both requests granting authorization, for the first on 23 April 1923 and for the second on 21 June 1923. Later on, the shareholders voted in an extraordinary meeting again held in Leige (on 15 February 1924) to assign executors for the

Reflective of a broader trend during the mandate period, French capital was dominant in the TEB, even though the company featured limited Belgian and Syrian-Lebanese participation. The shareholders of the TEB established the company on 3 January 1923 with the explicit intention of buying out both the COGB and its then subsidiary the OTEB as part of a broader investment strategy rooted in concessions for the provisioning of public utilities in Beirut and its surrounding vicinities.<sup>64</sup> The success of the TEB in purchasing said companies and eventually renegotiating the concessions under its own name was the result of a number of developments. Despite establishing their control over Lebanon and Syria in 1920, French mandate authorities neither issued new concessions nor renewed existing concessions until after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923.<sup>65</sup> However, the combination of a lack of new investments in the

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liquidation process on condition that they seek final approval from the shareholders. Representatives of the TEB and OTEB signed the agreement transferring the concessions and possessions of the OTEB (which had by then absorbed those of the COGB) on 12 March 1924 and registered it in Paris on 15 March 1924. The shareholders of the OTEB approved the liquidation and sale on 20 March 1924. All transactions were affirmed in an order that finalized the authorization of both the transfer of the Ottoman concessions to the COGB of 1885 and OTEB of 1906 to the TEB—which was established on 3 January 1923 as a French company for this express purpose. The order also approved the transfer of all real estate properties and associated possessions on condition they are surrendered to the Lebanese state when the concessions expire at no cost to the government. See Decision No. 2642 of 31 May 1924 (“Tarkhis Naql Imtiyyazat al-Ghaz wa-al-Kahruba’ wa-al-Tramway ila Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut al-Mughaffala”).

<sup>64</sup> As discussed in the previous footnote, the shareholders of the OTEB voted to transfer the concessions and properties of the company to a “French company yet to be established” on 7 July 1922. This date clearly precedes that of the establishment of the TEB, for which early petitions to the French High Commission indicate was primarily created to be that very “French company yet to be established.” See background section to Decision No. 2642 of 31 May 1924 (“Tarkhis Naql Imtiyyazat al-Ghaz wa-al-Kahruba’ wa-al-Tramway ila Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut al-Mughaffala”), p. 146. Excerpts of the January 1923 letter of *Société Tramways et Éclairage de Beyrouth* petitioning the High Commission for the transfer of concessions related to tramway service and electric current in Beirut are extensively quoted in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> This is borne out in the archival record, which provides no indication of the granting of new concessions or the renegotiation of existing ones despite a diverse array of interventions into the supply of public utilities, their pricing, and the currencies with which they were purchased. The exceptions to this were instances where the ruling authority recognized a certain concession in order to assert its existing rights. Not surprisingly, the most notable example in this vein is the 1918 decision to recognize the concession for the tobacco monopoly (la Société de la régie co-intéressée des tabacs de l'empire Ottoman) established as part of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration. See Order No. 9 of 1 November 1918 (“al-I’tiraf bi-al-Riji

COGB since the war and the imposition of a new currency had by 1922 undermined both the fiscal integrity of the COGB as well as the quality of its services.<sup>66</sup> The High Commission therefore authorized on 21 June 1923 the transfer of the Ottoman concessions and related facilities of both the COGB and OTEB to the TEB as part of a corporate liquidation for the total sum of 11.3 million French francs—payable in a complex combination of cash and stocks in the new company.<sup>67</sup> While this 1923 transfer involved a considerable investment on the part of the TEB, it represented only the transfer of the still-valid Ottoman concessions and not the granting of new Syrian-Lebanese concessions. The latter would not take place until after the passage of a comprehensive French mandate concessions law in March 1924, which established a new mechanism for the request, negotiation, granting, and (later) amending of new

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Mabda'iyyan" [Provisional Recognition of the Reggie]), *Majmu'at al-Muqarrarat li-al-Mantiqa al-Gharbiyya: Min 24 Tishrin Awwal Sanat 1918 – 31 Ab Sanat 1920* [Collection of Orders for the Western Region: From 24 October 1918 to 31 August 1920] (Bayrut: Matba'at al-Adab, 1924), p. 184. As discussed earlier, Article 1 of the twelfth protocol of the Treaty of Lausanne states, "Concessionary contracts and subsequent agreements relating thereto, duly entered into before the 29th October, 1914, between the Ottoman Government or any local authority, on the one hand, and nationals (including Companies) of the Contracting Powers, other than Turkey, on the other hand, are maintained." On this part of the Treaty of Lausanne, see "Protocol Relating to Certain Concessions Granted in the Ottoman Empire."

<sup>66</sup> According to an account narrated in 1952, the collapse of the Ottoman paper currency during the First World War rendered "cash receipts" of no value, and company managers could be seen burying the money in front of the office. In addition, both companies are reported to have been unable to fulfill their responsibilities regarding the provisioning of tramway services, electric motive force, and gas lighting due to the dilapidated conditions of the installations, increased demand that could not be met, and near bankruptcy. By that point, the total investments of each company are estimated to have been 8.7 million French francs for the COGB and 13.2 million French francs for the OTEB. For a general assessment to this effect, see the company's discussion of its own history in its "Statement of Facts" in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 18. For the details and figures provided, see Ajam, pp. 169-170. Simon Jackson shares this general assessment, though he reaches his conclusions through exclusively reading French archival sources. For that assessment, see Jackson, "Mandatory Development," p. 224.

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of the context and details of this transfer, see footnote 59 above, which draws on the background section to Decision No. 2642 of 31 May 1924 ("Tarkhis Naql Imtiyyazat al-Ghaz wa-al-Kahruba' wa-al-Tramway ila Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut al-Mughaffala" [Beirut Tramway and Lighting Company]). For the amount of 11.3 million French francs, see Interview with administrative staff member at Électricité du Liban, Beirut, 10 July 2011. This is corroborated by the background section included in the filings of the EDB with the International Court of Justice. See I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 19-20.

concessionary contracts.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, between 1925 and 1929 the TEB secured concessions<sup>69</sup> for the following public utilities services:

- (1) The construction and development of an electric tramway network in the city of Beirut (4 June 1925);<sup>70</sup>
- (2) The public distribution of electrical energy (for all purposes) in the city of Beirut and its surrounding districts (4 June 1925);<sup>71</sup>
- (3) The construction and development of a high voltage electrical energy network for the city of Beirut (26 August 1925);<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Order No. 2511 of 20 March 1924 (“Bi-Taḥdīd al-Imtiyāzāt fī al-Ittīḥād al-Sūrī wa-fī Lubnān al-Kabīr” [“On the Determination of Concessions in the Syrian Federation and Greater Lebanon”]) in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnān al-Kabīr: Awwal Kanun al-Thānī Sanat 1934 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1935* [Compilation of Orders of the State of Greater Lebanon: 1 January 1934 – 31 December 1935] (Beirut: Matba‘at al-Adab, 1927), pp. 482-483. The French archival version of the source is cited and quoted in Jackson, “Mandatory Development,” p. 254, fn 8.

<sup>69</sup> Both the primary sources and secondary literature are inconsistent in identifying the complete set of relevant concessions. The listing herein was initially based on an interview with an administrative staff member of Électricité du Liban in Beirut on 10 July 2011. It was then that I first became aware of the existence of multiple and mutually reinforcing concessions that collectively formed the core of the EDB’s rights and responsibilities regarding the provisioning of public utilities. This listing of concessions is confirmed by the 26 March 1954 agreement between the EDB and the Lebanese government, which effectively nationalized the company with respect to the rights, responsibilities, equipment, and properties associated with electricity and tramway provisioning in Beirut. See “Qanun Sadir bi-Tarikh 2 Tamuz Sanat 1954 bi-Tasdiq al-Brotokol al-Ma‘qud bi-Tarikh 26 Adhar Sanat 1954 Bayn al-Hukuma al-Lubnaniyya wa-Sharikat Kahruba’ Bayrut” [“Law Issued on 2 July 1954: Ratification of the Protocol Signed on 26 March 1954 between the Lebanese Government and Beirut Electricity Company”] *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* [Official Gazette], No. 29 (14 July 1954), pp. 523-528.

<sup>70</sup> This agreement technically constituted a renewal of the tramline component of the 1906 concession, which the Ottoman government granted the OTEB. For final mandate authorization of the concession and contracts, see Order No. S-143 of 10 June 1925 published in *al-Mafwadhīyya al-‘Ulya li-al-Jumhuriyya al-Frinsawīyya fī Suriya wa-Lubnān*, *al-Nashra al-Rasmiyya li-al-A‘mal al-Idariyya fī al-Mafwadhīyya al-‘Ulya* (1925), p. 127.

<sup>71</sup> This agreement technically constituted a readaptation of the electricity components of the 1885 and 1906 concessions, which the Ottoman government granted the COGB and OTEB. For final mandate authorization of the concession and contracts, see Order No. S-143 of 10 June 1925 published in *al-Mafwadhīyya al-‘Ulya li-al-Jumhuriyya al-Frinsawīyya fī Suriya wa-Lubnān*, *al-Nashra al-Rasmiyya li-al-A‘mal al-Idariyya fī al-Mafwadhīyya al-‘Ulya* (1925), p. 127.

<sup>72</sup> While unable to locate the specific record of this concession, it is referenced in subsequent records, most notably the 10 July 1952 reductions in electric utility prices and the 26 March 1954 nationalization of the EDB. For the former, see Decree No. 8904 of 10 July 1952 (“Taḥdīd As‘ar Bay‘ al-Taqa al-Kahruba’iyya li-Sharikat Kahruba’ Bayrut” [“Determining the Prices of Electric Power Sales by the Beirut Electricity Company”]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* [Official Gazette], No. 29 (10 July 1952), pp. 729-731. For the latter, see “Qanun Sadir bi-Tarikh 2 Tamuz Sanat 1954 bi-Tasdiq al-Brotokol al-Ma‘qud bi-Tarikh 26 Adhar Sanat 1954 Bayn al-Hukuma and Lubnaniyya wa-Sharikat Kahruba’ Bayrut.”

- (4) The construction and development of a hydroelectric power plant on the Safa River (Nahr al-Safa) as an energy source for the second and third concessions listed above (4 June 1929);<sup>73</sup>
- (5) The public distribution of electrical energy (for all purposes) both to and within the Lebanese population centers of Ba‘adba, Bdadoun, Choueifat, Hadath, Kfarshima, and Wadi Shahrur (27 July 1929).<sup>74</sup>

In legal terms, these five concessions—like others granted within the framework of the 1924 concessions law—were contractual agreements between the local government and the company in question. In reality, however, these concessions were ultimately reflections of the French High Commissioner’s preferences vis-à-vis which companies

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<sup>73</sup> See “Qanun bi-Manh Imtiyaz Mashru‘ Istikhdam Shallalat Nahr al-Safa li-Tawlid al-Quwwa al-Kahruba’iyya” [Law Granting the Concession for the Project Utilizing the Nahr al-Safa Falls for the Generation of Electric Power], *Majmu‘at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya: Min Shahr Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1929 li-Ghayat Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1930* [Compilation of Laws and Directives of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon: From January 1929 to December 1930] (Beirut: Matba‘at an-Dabbur. 1933), pp. 958.

<sup>74</sup> This particular concession illustrates a number of important dynamics related to the ability of the TEB to consolidate a central place within the political economy of public utility concessions. All the listed geographic areas are population centers located southeast of Beirut, each having various significance. At the time of the granting of the concession, they were considered villages and towns that were administratively separate from Beirut. For example, Ba‘adba is located approximately seven kilometers outside of present-day Beirut. It is the capital of both the Ba‘adba District and the Mount Lebanon Governorate. It served as the capital of the Ottoman province of Mount Lebanon beginning in 1861. Bdadoun is fifteen kilometers outside of Beirut, and located in the Aley District of the Mount Lebanon Governorate and has since the mandate period been developed into a summer tourist destination. Choueifat is located approximately ten kilometers outside of Beirut and is currently considered a suburb of the capital. Beginning in the mandate period, it developed into a manufacturing center. The French High Commission originally granted this concession to Amin Abbas and al-Hilu on 27 July 1929. Joseph Pedros then purchased ninety-five percent of the shares of the concession from al-Hilu, with the High Commission certifying this purchase on 21 October 1929. Pedros and al-Hilu then sold all their shares in the concession to the TEB in December 1932, a transaction the French High Commission approved on 26 January 1933. See, respectively, Law of 21 October 1929 (“Qanun” [“Law”]) in *Majmu‘at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya: Min Shahr Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1929 li-Ghayat Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1930* [Compilation of Laws and Directives of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon: From January 1929 to December 1930] (Beirut: Matba‘at an-Dabbur. 1933), pp. 961-962; Decree No. 5762 of 21 October 1929 in *Majmu‘at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya: Min Shahr Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1929 li-Ghayat Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1930* [Compilation of Laws and Directives of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon: From January 1929 to December 1930] (Beirut: Matba‘at an-Dabbur. 1933), pp. 963-964; Decree No. 1487 of 26 January 1933 (“al-Tasdiq ‘ala ‘Aqd al-Tanazul ‘An Imtiyaz Tawzi‘ al-Quwwa al-Kahruba’iyya fi al-Shwayfat wa-Dawahiha” [“Certification of Contract to Forfeit the Concession for the Distribution of Electric Power in Choueifat and Its Suburbs”]) in *Majmu‘at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya: Sanat 1933* [Compilation of Laws and Directives of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon: 1933] (Beirut: Matba‘at al-Adab. 1934), pp. 478-479.

were granted particular concessions. On the one hand, the 1924 concession law asserted the right of “the Syrian Federation, . . . only one of its states, or the state of Greater Lebanon” or “municipal governments” (depending on the particular concession) to grant concessions.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, the law also asserted—among an array of other monitoring and controlling mechanisms—“concessions will not be considered valid until after they are certified by the High Commissioner.”<sup>76</sup>

### *Protest Repertoires and the Radicalization of Demands*

The TEB was the focus of several targeted boycott and strike campaigns throughout the mandate period, the most significant—and well-documented—of which are those that took place in 1922, 1931, 1943, and 1946.<sup>77</sup> Such mobilizations highlight the dual importance of public utilities and struggles around their provisioning, both to the making of Lebanon’s colonial political economy as well as to the everyday lives of its urban populations. Equally significant is the changing nature of these mobilizations, along with the attendant transformation of public utilities infrastructure from objects of social protest to vehicles for political protest. In her study of the making of the colonial civic orders of Lebanon and Syria, Thompson demonstrates how popular social mobilization was central to the trajectory of the political economies of both states under

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<sup>75</sup> Order No. 2511 of 20 March 1924 (“Bi-Taḥdīd al-Imtiyāzāt fī al-Ittiḥād al-Sūrī wa-fī Lubnān al-Kabīr” [“On the Determination of Concessions in the Syrian Federation and Greater Lebanon”]) in *Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnān al-Kabīr: Awwal Kanun al-Thānī Sanat 1934 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1935* [Compilation of Orders of the State of Greater Lebanon: 1 January 1934 – 31 December 1935] (Beirut: Matba‘at al-Adab, 1927), pp. 482-483, p. 483. The French archival version of the law is cited and quoted in footnote number 8 in Jackson, “Mandatory Development,” p. 254.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> For a survey of popular mobilizations around the provisioning of tramlines and electric current in Beirut throughout the mandate period, see Carla Edde, “La Mobilisation ‘Populaire’ à Beyrouth à l’époque du Mandat, le cas des boycotts des trams et de l’électricité,” in *France Syrie et Liban 1918-1946: Les ambiguïtés et les dynamiques de la relation mandataire*, edited by Nadine Meouchy (Damascus: IFEAD, 2002).

French rule.<sup>78</sup> An intrinsic element of her narrative centers on the transformation of such mobilizations throughout the mandate period itself. If during the onset and consolidation of colonial rule popular mobilizations sought to secure social rights as their ultimate goal, such mobilizations throughout the second half of the mandate period increasingly articulated a demand for political independence.<sup>79</sup>

The TEB protests of 1922 and 1931 fall into the category of social mobilizations that accepted mandate rule but sought to reform its internal organizations. In 1922, the boycott campaign lasted approximately six weeks and ended when tramline fares were reduced from their World War I high, which itself was five times the pre-World War I fare.<sup>80</sup> In 1931, the central boycott committee effectively called off the protest in the wake of more than four weeks of campaigning.<sup>81</sup> The 1931 protest resulted in decreasing the price of electricity by approximately thirty percent, lowering the tramline fares by just a little over twenty percent, and extending the validity of tramline passes to cover holidays. Such mobilizations and their conclusion did not so much question the legitimacy of the French mandate and the High Commission's role in organizing the political economy of Lebanon as much as they sought to reshape the terms of that political economy within the framework of colonial rule.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163. It should also be noted that this shift in the nature of popular mobilizations was contingent on context and did not necessarily constitute the trajectory across colonial settings in the Middle East.

<sup>80</sup> For a detailed analysis of the causes, contexts, and dynamics of the 1922 TEB protests, see Jackson, "Mandatory Development," pp. 200-250.

<sup>81</sup> For a detailed analysis of the causes, contexts, and dynamics of the 1931 TEB protests, see Jackson, "Mandatory Development," pp. 286-318.

<sup>82</sup> Though Jackson provides rich details on the 1922 and 1931 TEB protests, he fails to locate them within a broader regional or global context of consumer and commercial boycotts. In one sense, the 1922 and 1931 boycott campaigns in Lebanon fit into Nancy Y. Reynold's discussion of how "boycotts proliferated as a

While the 1922 and 1931 mobilizations against the TEB called for more transparent and responsive mandate rule, 1943 and 1946 featured a different dynamic. Then, the EDB protest campaigns did not seek to reform the relationship between mandate authorities, public utilities service providers, and private citizens. Rather, the majority of participants altogether rejected that relationship and demanded political independence. In 1943, this demand was manifested in the persistence of boycotts and strikes against the EDB for eleven consecutive days. The spark was the High Commissioner's arrest of President Bishara al-Khuri, Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh, and a number of ministerial deputies on 11 November 1943.<sup>83</sup> Three days earlier, these politicians had introduced and secured the passage of parliamentary legislation that abolished the constitutional clauses recognizing the mandate and undermined the legitimacy of French political authority and military presence.<sup>84</sup> The nationwide

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political tool across the Middle East and South Asia in the first decades of the twentieth century.” However, the Lebanese case contrasts with the Egyptian and Indian cases that Reynolds discusses. The latter two cases primarily featured explicitly anti-colonial objectives, whereas the case of Lebanon (at least with respect to 1922 and 1931) does not appear to be so—as discussed in this section. For the quote regarding the proliferation of boycotts, see Nancy Y. Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, the Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) p. 82. On tramline service in Cairo and related mobilizations in the 1920s and 1930s, see Reynolds, pp. 17-46. On the 1922 and 1931 boycotts in particular, see Reynolds pp. 78-113.

<sup>83</sup> For details of these arrests, what precipitated them, and the eleven days of protest that followed, see Michael Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 44-46; Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 247-253. For contemporary analyses, see Majid Khadduri, “The Franco-Lebanese Dispute and the Crisis of November 1943,” *American Journal of International Law* 38 (October 1944): pp. 601-620; “The Crisis in the Lebanon: A Note on French-Lebanese Relations,” *Bulletin of International News* 20 (27 November 1943): pp. 1039-1045. For accounts written in the years shortly thereafter, see Albert H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 279-288; Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Syria and Lebanon* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1957), pp. 74-79.

<sup>84</sup> More specifically, the constitution was amended (with some clauses being removed and others being amended), eliminating all references to the mandate and the League of Nations, and describing Lebanon instead as “a sovereign state” (Articles 1, 52, 90-95, and 102). Furthermore, French was no longer listed as an official language on par with Arabic (Article 2). For the text of these constitutional amendments, see “Qanun Dusturi bi-Ta’dil Ba’d al-Mawad min al-Dustur al-Lubnani” [“Constitutional Law: Amending Some Articles of the Constitution”], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 4106 (10 November 1943), pp. 11501.

demonstrations took many forms, but the boycott of the tramline service and the targeting of EDB installations were a central component of the general strike in support of those arrested and the broader opposition to French rule. Though British political and military pressure on France was decisive in the eventual French High Commissioner's declaration of the end of the mandate in Lebanon,<sup>85</sup> the targeting of the EDB is one of the more commented on aspects of the countrywide mobilization that targeted various businesses and local personalities.<sup>86</sup>

The 1943 declaration of independence introduced an ambiguous status for Lebanon because the French colonial bureaucracy and military continued to function in the country until 1946—albeit with the “local government” exercising more prerogatives than previously.<sup>87</sup> In fact, it was the goal of eliminating that ambiguity that led to a whole new series of protests against the EDB—most notably in 1946. Then, various political forces organized protest campaigns against the EDB as part of a national strike to force the final withdrawal of French troops.<sup>88</sup> Thus the 1943 and 1946 mobilizations represented an altogether different form of popular protest than those of 1922 and 1931. Toward the end of French colonial rule, the EDB was no longer the target of contentious politics in and of itself. Rather, it had become one pressure point among many that

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<sup>85</sup> On British-French rivalry in the Middle East, specifically over Lebanon, including British pressures on France to grant Lebanon independence, see Abed Al-Hafez Mansur, “Anglo-French Rivalry in the Levant and the Question of Syrio-Lebanese Independence, 1939-1943” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oregon, 1964).

<sup>86</sup> For example, see Khadduri; “Crisis in the Lebanon.”

<sup>87</sup> For a discussion of the period between 1943 and 1946, the ambiguities it involved, and attempts to address them, see Elizabeth Thompson's “Claiming Paternity of Independent Republics” and “The Making of Post-Colonial Citizens” in her *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 247-270, 271-290.

<sup>88</sup> For a general discussion of the events and dynamics that led to the general strike and its eventual outcome, see Ziyadeh, pp. 79-92. For a contemporary account, but one that ends in 1945, see Hourani, pp. 288-307.

constituted the strategic targets of a renewed national mobilization that sought to overturn the entire system of colonial rule.<sup>89</sup> Jackson has eloquently captured this shift, claiming that

the 1931 boycotts show urban society in the interwar era poised on the threshold, between a limited political-economic reformism that sought to render politics and the economy alike more equitable and transparent, within a mandate-imperial framework, and the confessional-nationalist mass politics of the 1930s, which sought to achieve ideological hegemony over the population and then inherit the apparatus of the state through political independence.<sup>90</sup>

*Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut*

In 1935, the Société Tramways et Éclairage de Beyrouth (TEB) changed its name to Électricité de Beyrouth (EDB).<sup>91</sup> The company kept this name through its nationalization in 1954.<sup>92</sup> This 1935 change in name was a strategic calculation by shareholders and/or managers to distance the company from the legacy of protest, namely the 1922 and 1931 boycott campaigns. It also reflected how during the mandate, electricity, as opposed to tramlines, came to represent the overwhelming majority of the company's capital investments, physical infrastructure, consumer market, and profit generation.

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<sup>89</sup> For a detailed discussion of the intersections between popular mobilization, calls for independence, and questions of political economy during the 1939-1946 period, see Elizabeth Thompson, "The Climax and Crisis of the Colonial Welfare State in Syria and Lebanon during World War II," in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, edited by Steven Heydemann (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 59-99.

<sup>90</sup> Jackson, "Mandatory Development," p. 288.

<sup>91</sup> Kahruba' Bayrut in Arabic, or Beirut Electricity in English.

<sup>92</sup> There appears to be no record of this name change in Lebanese state or French colonial archives, as the company was incorporated in Paris. However, beginning in 1935, the name Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut begins to replace Sharikat al-Tramway wa-al-Inara fi Bayrut in official and public records—even if never completely so. There is however evidence to suggest that the company itself changed the name, rather than this new name being a function of some type of unofficial shorthand. See background section in "Statement of Facts" in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 19-20.

The tramway system reached structural limits in terms of users during the mandate. The historical record makes little to no reference of equipment upgrades to the tramway system during the colonial period. Additionally, the colonial period featured a significant increase in automobile transportation's availability and use in the form of private cars as well as various taxi and bus services. Electricity on the other hand became increasingly a part of everyday life—even if unevenly so. This was reflected in the growing use of electric lighting and luxury home appliances as well as the proliferation of technologies such as telephones, radios, and cinemas.<sup>93</sup> There was also a significant increase in the number of hospitality establishments such as hotels, restaurants, and cafes.<sup>94</sup> Electricity production for the city of Beirut featured a four-fold increase between 1925 (5,250,000 kilowatt-hours) and 1939 (21,900,000 kilo-watt hours).<sup>95</sup> Electricity production for Beirut then doubled between 1939 and 1946, reaching a total of forty-two million kilowatt-hours.<sup>96</sup> Similar trends emerged with respect to subscribers. In 1920 there were approximately eight hundred domestic and commercial electricity subscribers in Beirut.<sup>97</sup> By 1938, the number of subscribers reached approximately fourteen thousand, which in turn doubled by 1946 to exceed twenty-eight thousand.<sup>98</sup> In sum, there was a thirty-five-fold increase in the number of electricity subscribers between the

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<sup>93</sup> Kassir, p. 302.

<sup>94</sup> Various editions of *Dalil Suriyya* [*Guide to Syria*] between 1923 and 1929 alone shows the increase as follows: hotels (thirty-five to sixty-two), restaurants (twenty-one to thirty-two), cafes (twenty-two to twenty-six), and cinemas (six to ten). Cited in Kassir, p. 267.

<sup>95</sup> Ajam, p. 30.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Thomson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 181.

<sup>98</sup> Ajam, p. 23.

establishment of the French mandate in Lebanon (1920) and the final evacuation of French troops (1946). Electricity supply was divided between lighting and domestic use, low voltage motive force, and high voltage motive force.<sup>99</sup> While specific figures for industrial subscribers are unavailable,<sup>100</sup> it is worth noting that 540 industrial enterprises were established in Lebanon between 1923 and 1940 alone. The overwhelming majority of these establishments were based in what would become industrial suburbs of Beirut, areas that fell under the EDB's concessions.<sup>101</sup> Several of these were the largest Lebanese-owned industrial enterprises during the French mandate.<sup>102</sup> These statistics speak to a significant increase in electricity's use and to the EDB's centrality in technological advancements, social change, and economic development in Lebanon.

In infrastructural and financial terms, the EDB's electricity concessions involved significant capital investments and even greater profits. Between June 1925 and December 1946, the EDB installed a hydroelectric power plant on the Safa River, twenty kilometers outside of Beirut (1925), a diesel-based thermoelectric power plant in Beirut

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<sup>99</sup> Motive force is the type of electrical energy needed for the operation of mechanical equipment in hospitality businesses, manufacturing plants, and irrigation systems. So while domestic and commercial subscribers primarily utilized the first type of electrical energy, industrial subscribers utilized varying combinations of all three. Some commercial enterprises also utilized low voltage motive force in addition to that of lighting.

<sup>100</sup> In 1942, Beirut electricity consumption was divided between the city's high voltage motive force (twenty five percent), low voltage motive force (twelve percent), domestic users (eighteen percent), tramways system (eighteen percent), concessionaries distributing to mountain villages (eight percent), irrigation and public lighting (three percent), and a combination of other purposes and losses (sixteen percent). Cited in Gates, *Merchant Republic*, p. 77.

<sup>101</sup> Ministère du plan et mission IRFED, *Besoins et possibilités de développement du Liban, etude preliminaire, vol. I* (Beirut, n.d.), p. 198.

<sup>102</sup> These include the Société des Ciments Libanais (established in 1929), Arida Brothers Company (1935), Achcar & Cie (1935), Connatry Jabre & Cie (1937), and Clouterie Libanaise-Syrienne (1938). See Kurt Grunwald, "The Industrialization of the Lebanon and Syria," *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, 76 (1956), pp. 155. For a broader discussion of industrial development during the mandate, see the chapter of this dissertation entitled "Reconsidering Laissez-Faire: Regulating the Flow of Capital and Goods."

(1933), and twenty-five kilometers of high voltage cables (for electricity transmission between the power plants and their various substations).<sup>103</sup> During that period, French investments in the EDB totaled seventy-five million French francs.<sup>104</sup> This figure represents approximately ninety-seven percent of all French investments in the Lebanese electricity sector during the mandate, which totaled seventy-seven million French francs. Representing 9.4 percent of total French investments in Lebanon, the electricity sector was second only to French investments in the banking sector (which represented 84.9 percent of total French investments in Lebanon).<sup>105</sup>

Clearly then, the EDB represented the primary French investment in the public utilities sector. According to Jackson, “profits in the first year [of EDB operations in 1923] were 644,000 francs and by 1926 and 1930 the respective equivalent figures were 2.858 million and 5.6 million [French] francs.”<sup>106</sup> Despite not featuring any capital investments during World War II, the equity price of the EDB on the Beirut stock exchange went from 27.1 Syrian-Lebanese liras in December 1939 to 112 Syrian-

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<sup>103</sup> Interview with administrative staff member at Électricité du Liban, Beirut, 10 July 2011. A 1948 development report commissioned by the Lebanese Ministry of National Economy provides a more detailed assessment. The thermo-electric power plant was first constructed in 1925, and by 1929 was comprised of three Carrels brand diesel engines each producing five hundred kilowatt-amperes. Between 1931 and 1933 another two diesel engines were installed, this time of the Sulzer brand and each producing 1500 kilowatt-amperes. In 1946, a sixth diesel engine was installed. This last engine was also a Sulzer and generated 3000 kilowatt-amperes. The hydroelectric power plant on the Safa River was constructed in 1933, and was comprised of two 4000 kilowatt-ampere turbines that required a water intake rate of 17000 liters per second. The water intake rate is of particular relevance; during the summer months the average available water intake peaked at 700 liters per second which meant that the amount of electrical power produced was drastically less than at other times of the year. In total, the EDB by 1948 was estimated to have installed 394 and 644 kilometers of high voltage and low voltage transmission/distribution lines, respectively—the vast majority of which were installed during the mandate period. See Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir ‘An al-Tatawwur al-‘Iqtisadi fi Lubnan [Report on the Economic Development of Lebanon]* (Beirut: Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Lebanon, 1948), p. 181.

<sup>104</sup> Mohamed Amine El-Hafez, *La structure et la politique économique en Syrie et au Liban* (Beirut: Imprimerie Khalife, 1953), p. 48.

<sup>105</sup> El-Hafez, p. 48.

<sup>106</sup> See Jackson, “Mandatory Development,” p. 255, fn 10.

Lebanese liras in December 1946.<sup>107</sup> The EDB was an influential, lucrative, and successful business venture for its shareholders. This influential role reveals the significance of public utilities as a site of shaping daily life, and the claims people would make about their collective lives, the economy, and the state.

### **Incomplete Decolonization**

The departure of French troops in 1946 signaled the end of Lebanon's long transition to independence. From that point struggles over development supplanted anticolonial mobilizations. The focus of political life shifted from rejecting French rule to the organization of an independent political economy. Debates and mobilizations around the EDB in 1948 and 1951-52 marked two signal points in such struggles as they related to public utilities. The eventual nationalization of the EDB in 1954 was equally important. The secondary literature on economic development and social mobilization in post-colonial Lebanon largely overlooks these campaigns, the services they claimed, and the companies they targeted. The few scholarly works that do refer to them make only passing reference to the January 1952 legislation calling for an inquiry into concessionary companies.<sup>108</sup> Some scholars argue that this legislation signaled the beginning of al-Khuri's loss of control over the Lebanese parliament, thus subsuming the act within a broader political narrative.<sup>109</sup> Later that year, popular and elite forces compelled al-Khuri's resignation as president. But the debate on concessions is more complicated than

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<sup>107</sup> This latter figure represents a decline after a World War II high of 225 French francs in December 1942. For a complete breakdown of EDB equity prices and those of other major concessionary companies listed on the Beirut stock exchange, see Gates, *Merchant Republic*, p. 42.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (New York: Pluto Press, 2007), p. 124.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, Traboulsi, pp. 123-127.

simply marking a shift in political power. Various institutional, social, and cultural dynamics made targeting the EDB and other concessionary companies possible. These companies were a political resource in the elite conflicts that characterized the 1952 crisis. Persistent grievances and popular mobilizations against the EDB rendered state intervention in the affairs of the company a legible nationalist and reformist act. This was despite, and perhaps because of, the almost unanimous elite complicity for most of the 1946-52 period. It was during the eighteen months after the 1952 legislation that the Lebanese government placed the EDB under provisional state control and eventually nationalized the company.<sup>110</sup>

During the years of early independence, the debate on public utilities in general, and the EDB in particular, centered on the tension between social order and social rights. For most government officials, development consultants, and business leaders, the provisioning of tramway transportation and electric current underpinned the maintenance of order and stability. Thus so long as public utility services were functioning according to a basic minimum standard, elite interests expected political stability.<sup>111</sup> Consumers had a different understanding. They expected the newly independent national government to deliver on the promise of economic development and the public good.<sup>112</sup> These

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<sup>110</sup> This history thus complicates the narrative portrayed by scholars such as Fawwaz Traboulsi, who argues that one of the factors that “motivated the financial/commercial oligarchy to opt for independence” was “its desire, all sectarian factions included, to privatize and control the French ‘Common Interests’ as well as the franchise-holding companies.” As noted in this chapter, some members of that elite were themselves complicit in and beneficiaries of the concessionary arrangements put in place during the French mandate. It was this elite, or key members among them to be more precise, that stood to lose the most from altering the relationship between the EDB, state institutions, and the population, and it was them that resisted such changes until they were either forced from office or pressured into accepting a new relationship. See Traboulsi, p. 105.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with former deputy minister of public works. Beirut, 24 April 2011.

<sup>112</sup> The awareness (if not internalization) among state officials and political elites of such notions is best reflected in the ministerial declarations given by individual prime ministers upon the formation of each

expectations were grounded in notions of nationalism and moral economy that either ignored or rejected elite recourse to legal, financial, and technical logics to justify the status quo. Consumers expected that issues of cost, quality, and working conditions of public utilities would be better addressed in a newly independent Lebanon. However, the story of post-colonial struggles over public utilities is not merely one of “unfinished business.” It highlights rather the changing contours of institutional structures, technological developments, consumer practices, and political strategies.

### *The Changing Institutional Context of the EDB in the Wake of Independence*

Technically, service providers such as the EDB were private businesses that had contracted concessions from the Lebanese government dating back to the early mandate period. A thin line between French administrative and commercial interests characterized the institutionalization of concessionary arrangements during the mandate period,

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cabinet, which at the very least always mobilized the themes of sovereign independence, economic development, and the wellbeing of the people as the lynchpins of post-colonial state building. Furthermore, the formal opposition that eventually crystalized in 1951-52 acknowledged such common awareness of expectations and invocation of certain tropes. This was particularly the case when they would argue that the problem with the incumbent government was not one of vision or program, but rather implementation, as both incumbents and the opposition were allegedly speaking the same language of reform, sovereignty, and development. In the words of opposition parliamentarian ‘Abdallah al-Hajj during the 19 June 1951 vote of confidence for the cabinet of ‘Abdallah al-Yafi: “The country has no shortage of programs . . . If the problem were one of programs, we would do best to simply return to the program of Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh in 1943 . . . A program means little if it does not rely on a body backed by a strong party to support the implementation of its programs. Otherwise, programs have no meaning and are worth very little.” For the text of the first “independence” ministerial declaration and its discussion in parliament, see “al-Bayan al-Wizari li-Hukumat al-Sayyid Riyad al-Sulh (25/9/1943 – 3/7/1944)” [The Ministerial Decree of the Cabinet of Mr. Riyad al-Sulh (25 September 1943 – 3 July 1944)] in *al-Bayanat al-Wizariyya al-Lubnaniyya wa-Munaqashatuha fi Majlis al-Nuwwab, 1927-1984, al-Mujallad al-Awwal 1926-1966 [The Lebanese Ministerial Declarations and Their Discussion in the Chamber of Deputies (1927-1984), Vol. 1 (1926-1966)]*, I‘dad Yusuf Qazma Khuri (Bayrut, Mu‘assasat al-Dirasat al-Lubnaniyya, 1986), pp. 125-136. For opposition quotation, see al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 19 June 1951.

particularly since the High Commission was responsible for granting concessions.<sup>113</sup> Throughout the early independence period, three different yet overlapping sets of institutional arrangements structured the struggles over electricity provision. First was the transfer of Common Interests departments and sections to the Lebanese and Syrian governments. Second was the post-independence monetary accord with France. Third were the monitoring mechanisms that state bureaucrats established for the EDB and other concessionary companies.

For most of the mandate period, a specific division within the Common Interests monitored concessionary arrangements. As part of the various independence negotiations in late 1943, the French, Syrian, and Lebanese governments signed a general agreement on 22 December 1943 to transfer the prerogatives of the Common Interests from the French High Commission to the Syrian and Lebanese governments effective 1 January 1944.<sup>114</sup> More specific agreements dealing with individual authorities, departments, and sections officially confirmed the completion of said transfers. While the French High Commission transferred some entities to joint Syrian-Lebanese control, it transferred others to one of the two governments.<sup>115</sup> The French High Commission exclusively

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<sup>113</sup> See earlier discussion in this chapter concerning the ways in which such concessions were granted and thus the central role the French High Commission played in the reformulation of Ottoman concessionary agreements and the awarding of additional new concessionary contracts.

<sup>114</sup> “Itifiaq Ma‘qud fi Dimashq bi-Tarikh 22 Kanun al-Awwal 1943 Bayn Faransa wa-Suriya wa-Lubnan bi-Sha’n Naql Dawa’ir al-Masalih al-Mushtaraka ila al-Dawlatayn” [“Agreement Signed in Damascus on the Date of 22 December 1943 between France, Syria, and Lebanon Having to Do with the Transfer of Departments of the Common Interests to the Two States”], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* No. 9 (1944), p. 5.

<sup>115</sup> The Customs Administration, the monitoring of the Régie (i.e., the tobacco monopoly), and the monitoring of Administration of Lighthouses were all transferred to both states. See, respectively, “Brotokol Tarikh 3 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha’n Naql Idarat al-Jamarik al-‘Amma ila Dawlatay Suriya wa-Lubnan” [“Protocol of 3 January 1944 Regarding the Transfer of the General Administration of Customs to the Two States of Syria and Lebanon”], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 9 (1944), p. 5; “Brotokol Tarikh 3 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha’n Naql Muraqabat al-Rigi al-Lubnaniyya al-Suriyya li-al-Tanbagh wa-al-Tunbak ila Dawlatay Suriya wa-Lubnan” [“Protocol of 3 January 1944 Regarding the Transfer of the

transferred the monitoring of the EDB and the Beirut Water Company to the Lebanese government on 5 January 1944.<sup>116</sup>

However, the transfer of the Common Interests' prerogatives did not abrogate existing agreements between, on the one hand, individual authorities, departments, and sections, and, on the other hand, non-governmental contracting parties. The 1943-44 transfer of the monitoring of concessionary companies simply removed the French High Commission as an intermediary between the Lebanese government and the various concessionary companies. It only transferred responsibility for the concession granting and monitoring authority established under the 1924 concessionary law. As such, despite the alleged new independent status of Lebanon, the Lebanese government was still legally obligated by the rights and responsibilities outlined in the "General Conditions" ("*daftar al-shurut*" in Arabic, and "*Cahiers des Charges*" in French) of each concessionary agreement established during the mandate period.<sup>117</sup>

The 1948 Monetary Accord between the Lebanese and French governments subsequently reinforced the constrained nature of the 1943-44 transfer of prerogatives.<sup>118</sup>

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Tobacco Regie to the Two States of Syria and Lebanon"], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 9 (1944), pp. 5-6; "Brotokol Tarikh 5 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha'n Naql Idarat al-Fanarat ila Dawlatay Suriya wa-Lubnan" ["Protocol of 5 January 1944 Regarding the Transfer of the Monitoring of the Administration of Lighthouses to the Two States of Syria and Lebanon"], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 9 (1944), p. 6.

<sup>116</sup> "Brotokol Tarikh 5 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha'n Naql Muraqabat al-Sharikatayn Sahibatay al-Imtiyazat : Kahurba' Bayrut wa-Miyah Bayrut ila Dawlat Lubnan" ["Protocol of 5 January 1944 Regarding the Transfer of Monitoring of the Two Concessionary Companies, Beirut Electricity and Beirut Water, to the Lebanese State"], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* No. 9 (1944), p. 6.

<sup>117</sup> This is borne out by the fact that during the mandate period, and subsequent to it, all decrees related to particular concessionary companies—whether related to the issue of pricing, quality and quantity of service provisioning, or even ownership structure—invariably invoked one or more articles of these specifications.

<sup>118</sup> Representatives of both governments signed the accord on 24 January 1948. The accord went into effect on 16 February 1949. The timelag between the date of the accord and its going into effect was the function of opposition in Lebanon and subsequent negotiations and clarifications that centered on the issue of when and how Lebanon would be able to completely break from the franc bloc. I am grateful to Nicholas Kardahji and Hicham Safieddine for helping me locate the multiple language versions of the accord in order

While the accord primarily dealt with fiscal and monetary issues related to currency reserves, debt servicing, and trade, a letter appearing as the twelfth annex of the accord stated:

In view of benefits that might be derived, after the termination of the mandate and the declaration of Lebanon's independence, from certain modifications to the contractual texts and annexes governing the concessions of French companies or companies with French capital operating in Lebanon, and in the texts defining how these concessions should be applied, the Lebanese Government commits to enter into negotiations with each of these companies, in the spirit of those negotiations that have already been held to this effect.

The purpose of these negotiations will be to reach a solution, in a contractual manner and within the framework of existing laws, so as to enable the Lebanese government to request parliamentary approval for the modifications in question.

Until the putting into effect of these modifications, the contracts, annexes, and texts that governed the concessions of these companies on 1 January 1944 will remain in force.

The present *modus vivendi* is to be read within the various provisions of the agreement signed on today's date.<sup>119</sup>

The Lebanese government thus committed itself to both the existing arrangements that were in effect prior to the monitoring authority's transfer, and the principle of negotiations and mutual agreement for the modification of concessionary agreements. This latter commitment certainly included the issue of rescinding or extending

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to confirm the consistency of available versions. For one example of such negotiations and clarifications, see Dispatch No. 225 of 19 August 1948, From Thomas J. McCormich, American Legation in Beirut, to Department of State, "Interpretation of the Franco-Lebanese Monetary Accord," United States National Archives (USNA) at College Park, MD. An Arabic version of the accord is republished as Annex 21 in Gabriel Menassa, *al-Tasmim al-insha'i li-al-iqtisad al-Lubnani wa-islah al-dawla [Plan for the Reconstruction of the Lebanese Economy and the Reform of the State]* (Beirut: Manshurat Jam'iyat al-Iqtisad al-Siyasi al-Libnaniyya, 1948), pp. 625-646.

<sup>119</sup> For the full text of this annex, see Menassa, pp. 645-646.

concessionary agreements. What remained unclear was the issue of the supply of additional quantities of public utility services and the rates of sale. It was growing popular pressure that made these issues contentious and forced the government to address them.

As a concessionary company, the EDB was initially subject to the supervision of the Department for Monitoring Concessionary Companies, which was adjoined to the Ministry of Public Works when the Lebanese section was transferred from the Common Interests in 1944.<sup>120</sup> In 1949, the Lebanese government created a new Department for Monitoring Companies, adjoining it to the Ministry of National Economy.<sup>121</sup> The department reported directly to the minister of national economy, and was responsible for the financial, economic, and technical monitoring of all concessionary companies as well as public limited companies.<sup>122</sup> As such, it was empowered to penalize companies for violating laws, agreements, and contracts. It also had the authority to review the accounts and budgets of concessionary companies, as well as control the tariffs—including the study of any requests for changing them.

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<sup>120</sup> See Decree No. 766 of 29 February 1944 (“Ta’yin al-Wizarat allati ’Ulhiqat biha al-Masalih al-Mushtaraka” [Ministerial Assignments for Those That the Common Interests Were Adjoined To]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 10 (8 March 1944), pp. 1-2.

<sup>121</sup> See Decree No. 14385 of 17 February 1949 (“Ihdath Da’irat Muraqabat al-Sharikat fi Wizarat al-Iqtisad al-Watani” [Creation of the Department for Monitoring Companies in the Ministry of National Economy]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 8 (23 February 1949), pp. 131-133.

<sup>122</sup> Additional specifications were laid out in March 1949. See, chronologically, Decree No. 14563 (“Ta’yin Ra’isay al-Fir‘ al-Fanni wa-al-Mali wa-al-Iqtisadi fi Da’irat Muraqabat al-Sharikat” [“Appointing the Heads of the Technical, Financial, and Economic Sections of the Department for Monitoring Companies”]) and Decree No. 14564 (“Ilhaq Muwazzafin fi Da’irat Muraqabat al-Sharikat” [“Appointing Staff in the Department for Monitoring of Companies”]) of 23 March 1949, *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 30 (30 March 1949), pp. 114-115; Decree No. 6674 of 24 March 1949 (“Tahdid Ikhtisas al-‘Anasir allati Tatakawwan Minha Da’irat Muraqabat al-Sharikat” [“Specifying the Specialization of the Units That Make Up the Department for the Monitoring of Companies”]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 30 (30 March 1949), pp. 181-182.

*Public Utilities and Public Debates: 1946-1950*

In the first four years of independence, development reports, economic treatises, and press coverage contained few official references to public utilities. These representations of public utility services were almost exclusively concerned with public order rather than consumer interests. One noteworthy exception to this trend was the 1948 government-solicited comprehensive development report, entitled *al-Tattawur al-Iqtisadi fi Lubnan* [*The Economic Development of Lebanon*].<sup>123</sup> This report was the major development document throughout the first six years of independence. The Gibb report, as it was subsequently referred to, foreshadowed the debate over the EDB and mobilizations against it several years later. The Gibb report did not specifically address the EDB, but discussed the broader public utilities and developmental contexts in which the company operated.

Compared to entire chapters devoted to a discussion of public utility services such as telephone and electricity, the Gibb report's coverage of tramway services is exceedingly sparse. The report devotes only a few sentences to tramways in Beirut, as part of a chapter on roads.<sup>124</sup> However, it does indicate that the five main lines established during the late Ottoman period continued to comprise the Beirut tramway

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<sup>123</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*. Alexander Eston Gibb (1872-1958) was a Scottish civil engineer who after a career in military and civil service founded a consulting firm in 1922. Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, as the firm was officially named, eventually gained notoriety as the largest civil engineering consultancy in the United Kingdom and an important protagonist in international development projects. On Gibb, see Godfrey Harrison, *Alexander Gibb: The Story of an Engineer* (London: G. Bles, 1950); Godfrey Harrison and Alfred J. S. Pippard, "Alexander Gibb, 1872-1958," *Biographical Memories of Fellows of the Royal Society* 5 (1960), p. 75. For other reports by the consultancy, see, for example, Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, *Sabi-Lundi Development: Final Report* (London: Alexander Gibb & Partners, 1949); idem., *The Development of Manufacturing Industry withing the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Alexander Gibb & Partners, 1960); idem., *The Economic Development of Syria* (London: Knappy, Drewett, and Sons, 1947).

<sup>124</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 123.

system in 1948. Its fleet now featured seventy-five tramway cars—sixty of which were double cars designed to hold eighty-five passengers in total per double car.<sup>125</sup> The Gibb report identifies the tramlines as part of a heavily congested urban transportation system. One element of this congestion is the fact that despite a capacity of eighty-five passengers, approximately 150 passengers would cram into tramway cars during rush hour, an occurrence that the report claims was “frequent.”<sup>126</sup> A related problem was the number of standing passengers (both inside and outside the tramway car) who were in turn much more susceptible to injuries due to sudden stops and falling off.

Another element of the congestion of Beirut streets was that residents frequently reached their destinations after “long delays . . . due to the tremendous congestion in the streets.”<sup>127</sup> According to the Gibb report, that congestion was a function of the large number of taxis and buses on the streets. While the report claims that there are no statistics specific to Beirut, it indicates that in 1948 there were approximately six thousand registered cars in Lebanon, two thousand of which were taxis.<sup>128</sup> In addition, there were 590 registered buses. While other development reports and historical accounts raise questions about the precision of these figures, they share the understanding of traffic congestion as a function of an ever-expanding use of automobiles.<sup>129</sup> While the Gibb

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<sup>125</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 123.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>129</sup> A 1959 United Nations development report provides a different set of 1948 estimates for Lebanon, placing the number of passenger cars at 8,100 and the number of commercial vehicles at 3,000. The discrepancy between the estimates is quite large, even if one takes into account that they are not necessarily counting the same total pool of automobiles. Furthermore, the estimates of both Gibb & Partners as well as the United Nations contradict those of journalist Samir Kassir, who lists the number of registered cars in Lebanon to have already reached 10,000 by 1932. Nevertheless, the sentiment of traffic congestion is

report's discussion of transportation centered on the question of road construction and maintenance, the railway system, sea ships, and airplane travel, his discussion of Beirut's urban traffic indicates the increasing use of alternatives to the tramway system.<sup>130</sup> This sense of shifting transportation patterns is borne out in the report's recommendation that in addition to increasing the number of buses, investigating the replacement of tramway cars with electric buses, and better government enforcement of tramway car passenger limits, the number of taxis should be drastically reduced but only on the condition that substitute means of transportation compensate for the difference.<sup>131</sup>

Electricity features more prominently in the Gibb report; it devotes an entire chapter to the question of electric power.<sup>132</sup> The chapter is mostly concerned with the generation of electrical energy, and is part of a broader section of the report on "manufacturing and trade."<sup>133</sup> The chapter's introduction focuses on electric power's necessity in improving manufacturing and agricultural output.<sup>134</sup> By detailing existing

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shared by all three accounts, as indicated by the UN report's sense that "motor traffic has grown very rapidly since the war" and "the steep rise on motor vehicles," as well as Kassir's sense of rapid rates for car imports. While Gibb & Partners does not provide an indication of growth rates, the UN report shows a fifty-two percent increase in passenger cars and a two hundred percent increase in commercial vehicles between 1939 and 1948. Kassir alternatively notes the leap in the number of registered automobiles from "not fewer than 376" in 1921 to 5291 in 1928, and "then almost 10,000 in 1932," with signs of an expanding demand and supply owing to urban renewal projects and the establishment of multiple foreign car dealerships. For UN estimates, see Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Mediterranean Development Project, "Chapter Two," *Country Study: Lebanon* (UN Food and Agricultural Organization, 1959), p. 17. For Kassir's estimates, see Kassir, *Beirut*, p. 303.

<sup>130</sup> This is not to argue that the tramway system was obsolete or unimportant in the lives of Beirut residents. Rather, it is to point out the increasing use of other means of public transportation.

<sup>131</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 124.

<sup>132</sup> See "al-Taqa al-Kahruba'iyya" ["Electricial Energy"] in Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, pp. 178-197.

<sup>133</sup> This was the fifth and last substantive part of the report, and included chapters on each of the following: manufacturing, electrical energy, trade, and tourism. The first four parts of the report were titled "Basic Matters", "Land Use", "Water Use", and "Transportation."

<sup>134</sup> The chapter's introduction claims that "the importance of electric [power] sources need to be elaborated, as the benefits accrued by the country from electricity sources . . . are more than can be enumerated." It

and projected patterns of electricity generation, distribution, and consumption across the country, the Gibb report unintentionally reveals the EDB's centrality to economic development in general.

The EDB was the largest electricity company in Lebanon, dating back to the early mandate period. Second to the EDB was Sharikat Kahruba' Shamal Lubnan (KEC).<sup>135</sup> For comparison, in 1936 the number of domestic subscribers for the EDB and KEC was 13,452 and 3,220, respectively.<sup>136</sup> Those numbers would more than double by 1947, climbing to 26,915 and 7,370, respectively.<sup>137</sup> Illustrative of the companies' relative share of electricity distribution to the rest of the country, the EDB had by 1947 installed a total of 394 and 644 kilometers of high-voltage and low-voltage transmission lines.<sup>138</sup> This was opposed to the KEC's 106 and 94 kilometers of high-voltage and low-voltage

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goes on to state: "An ample supply of electricity facilitates the raising of the [living] standard of the vast majority of the children of the country. This is not meant in the direct sense of everyday use of electricity, but in indirect ways, such as production increases in the fields of agriculture and manufacturing by means of the ability to utilize electric machines. There are many factories in Lebanon that were forced to establish their own private electric generators at exorbitant prices. . . . There are other new factories . . . that could expand operations should public electricity be [more] available. The availability of electricity for water transport by means of irrigation pumping, which is cheaper than other forms of energy, would help improve agriculture. This would also give hope to the irrigation of new lands that would otherwise remain uncultivable without [the deployment of] electric energy." Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 178.

<sup>135</sup> Sharikat Kahruba' Shamal Lubnan was the Arabic rendering for Société Électricité du Liban Nord, also known as La Kadicha due to the fact that it was located in the Qadisha Valley (Kadicha Electricity Company in English, and thus abbreviated KEC). This was the second largest electricity company in Lebanon, in terms of both the number of electricity subscribers and the amount of electrical energy produced. Maronite Monseigneur Antun 'Arida established the company in 1922, obtaining its first concession in 1925 for the provisioning of electricity to Besharra by means of a hydro-electric power plant. It would obtain two subsequent concessions, one for the distribution of electricity in Tripoli and another for the construction of high voltage transmission lines from Bsharra to Tripoli. On the founding of the KCE, see. On the history of KEC, see Ajam, 172; Iskandar Raishi, *al-Ayam al-Lubnaniyya [Lebanese Days]* (Beirut: n.p., 1957), pp. 337-339.

<sup>136</sup> The respective number for industrial subscribers for each of the EDB and KEC in 1936 was 643 and 400, respectively. For the 1936 subscriber numbers, see Table No. 50 in Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 188.

<sup>137</sup> The respective number for industrial subscribers for each of the EDB and KEC in 1947 were 1306 and 1010, respectively. For the 1946 subscriber numbers, see Table No. 50 in Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 188

<sup>138</sup> See Table No. 47 in Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 182.

lines.<sup>139</sup> In 1948 there was a total of thirteen electricity-generating companies,<sup>140</sup> but many more electricity distributing companies.<sup>141</sup> Underlying this system were approximately thirty electricity related concessions, evenly dived between those licensing both production and distribution and distribution only. Thus, in addition to producing electric power for its own direct subscriber base in Beirut, the EDB generated and transmitted electric current to twelve other major subscriber bases, variously divided among electricity-distribution companies.<sup>142</sup> Again, the contrast with the KEC is telling. In addition to producing electric power of its own direct subscriber base in Beirut, the

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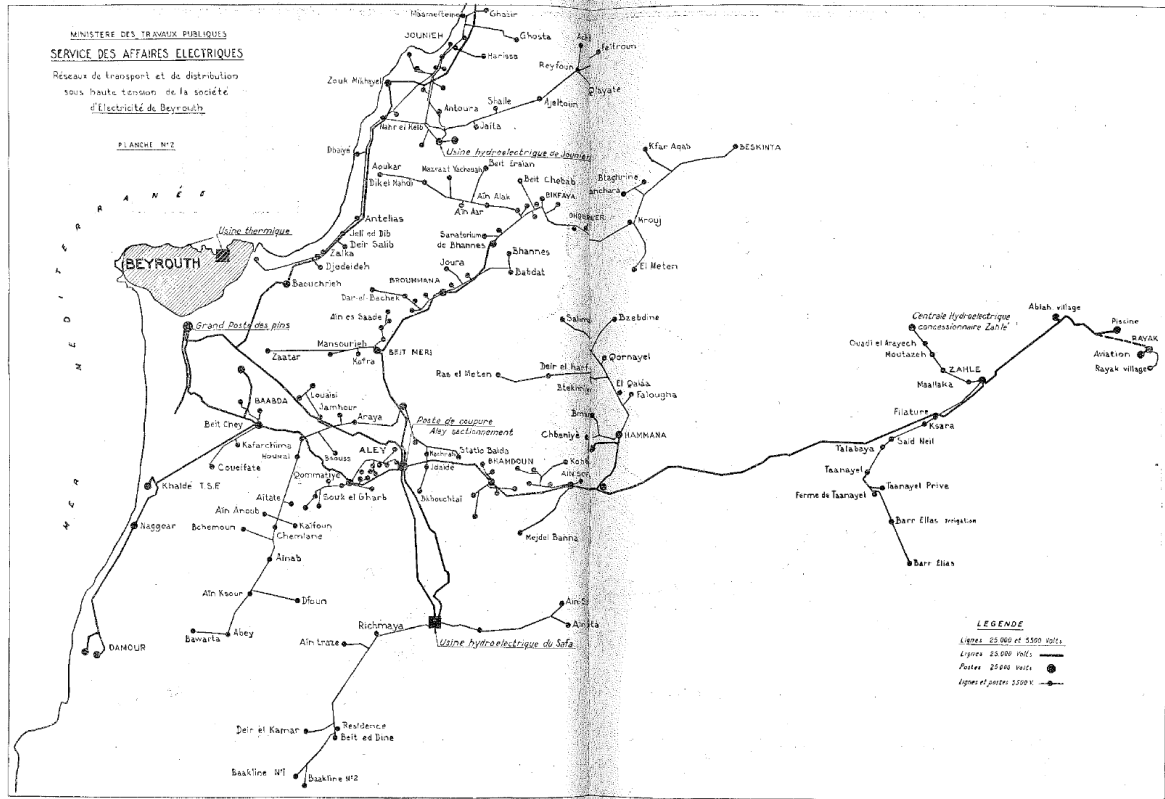
<sup>139</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 182.

<sup>140</sup> These companies were based the following cities (with approximate population estimates): Ba'albak (6,800), Beirut (422,500), Hasbaya (3,100), Junya (22,400), Mshaghrra (3,100), al-Nabatiyya (6,000), Qob Elyas (5,200), Rashayya (2,500), Sayda (18,300), Sir al-Danya (1,500), Sur (8,300), Tripoli (110,800), and Zahle (32,500). See Table No. 45 in Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 180.

<sup>141</sup> In 1925, the French High Commission established the construction and development of high tension electric transmission lines as a public good, thus requiring government authorization and qualifying for concessionary arrangements. Consequently, the High Commission (during the mandate) or the Lebanese government (after independence) awarded some individuals or companies concessions for the distribution of electricity power to and/or within specific cities, towns, and villages but necessarily the right to produce the electricity itself. For example, in 1952 the Lebanese government granted Adil Salman Mahir the right to distribute general electric power to the villages of Shartun, Majdalya, Ramhala, and Baysur. The concession stipulated that Mahir could secure the source of electric power in one of two ways: constructing a power plant in Shartun or purchasing the power from the EDB and constructing a central transmission station. In 1942, the EDB produced fifty-seven percent all electric energy in Lebanon, whereas the KEC produced thirty-seven percent. On the 1925 law establishing high tension transmission lines as a public good and thus requiring a concession from the government, see [Decision No. 145 of 19 November 1925 (“Bi-Sha’n Insha’ wa-Istithmar Khutut Naql al-Quwwa al-Kahruba’iyya Dhat al-Tawattur al-‘Ali” [“Concerning the Construction and Development of High Voltage Transmission Lines”]), *Majmu‘at Majmu‘at al-Muqarrarat li-Dawlat Lubnan al-Kabir: Awwal Kanun al-Thani 1924 – 31 Kanun al-Awwal 1925* [Compilation of Orders of the State of Greater Lebanon: 1 January 1924 – 31 December 1925] (Beirut: Matba‘at al-Adab, 1927), pp. 476-480]. On the Shartun electricity distribution concession, see Decree No. 7522 of 5 February 1952 (“Tarkhis fi Tawzi‘ al-Taqa al-Kahruba’iyya al-‘Umumi fi Qura Shartun wa-Ghayriha” [“Authorizing the Distribution of General Electric Power in the Village of Shartun and Elsewhere”]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 7 (7 February 1952), pp. 57-60. On the 1942 sources of electric power generation, see Gates, *Merchant Republic*, pp. 77-78.

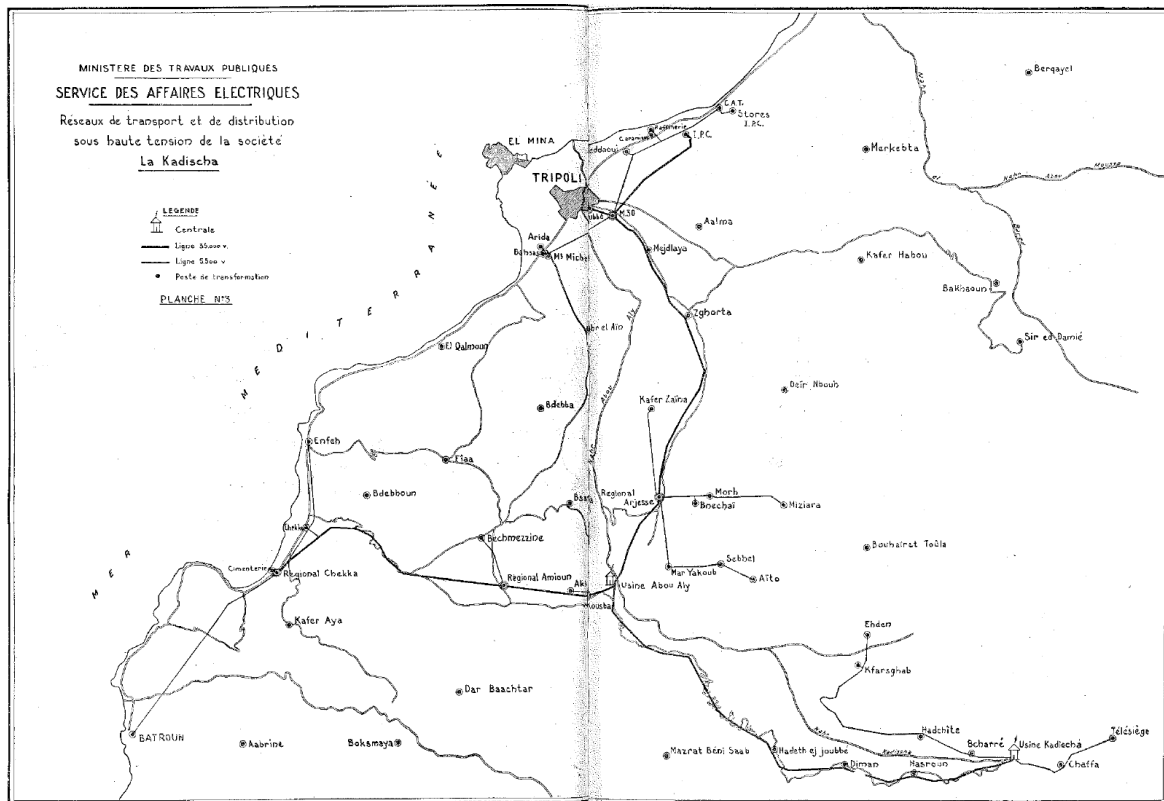
<sup>142</sup> These subscriber bases (and their estimated populations) are ‘Alay–Souq al-Gharb (7,100), al-‘Abbadiyya (14,700), ‘Ayn Sofar (1,600), Antilyas (10,600), B‘adba (17,800), Bayt Miri (2,800), Bahmadun (3,600), Bakfayya (3,600), Brummana (3,300), al-Damur (3,800), Dayr al-Qamar (5,600), and Hammana (8,100). See Table No. 46 in Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 180.

KEC generated and transmitted electric current to only two other major subscriber bases.<sup>143</sup>



[Above: Map of EDB high-voltage transmission and distribution network. Published in Ajam, pp. 16-17]

<sup>143</sup> These subscriber bases (and their estimated populations) are al-Batrun (4,100) and Ihdin (9,200). See Table No. 46 in Gibb & Partners, *Taqdir*, p. 180.



[Above: Map of KEC high-voltage transmission and distribution network. Published in Ajam, pp. 18-19]

The Gibb report's discussion of electric power also stresses the issue of electricity rates. The introduction of the chapter frames the issue as follows:

The availability of electric energy alone is not enough. For the rates of electricity [prices] need to fall by a significant factor. Increasing the source of electric energy while rates continue to remain as high [as they are] is to the benefit of neither the country [as a whole] nor those who seek to develop the economic facilities of the country. We find that the demand [for electricity currently exceeds the supply. However, if rates do not decline, demand will not exceed supply.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqdir*, p. 178.

The report is however sympathetic to the electricity companies in that it identifies the high electric utility rates as a function of production costs.<sup>145</sup> In the case of thermo-electric power generation, the report argues that the primary factor in high rates is the high cost of fuel.<sup>146</sup> In the case of hydroelectric power generation, the report cites limited start-up capital investments that in turn constrain the ability of the plant to make full use of its water resources. Such constraints are due to the fact that developers constructed hydroelectric plants over several phases. Thus the plants took significant time to maximize the production capacity of their power source. The report also discusses the costs associated with electric power transmission and distribution, though it ultimately concludes that additional research is necessary in order to present a detailed and value-based estimate of such costs.<sup>147</sup>

The Gibb report nevertheless asserts that obstacles to lowering electric utility rates must be overcome. However, it never indicates who should be responsible for, or who could be capable of, ensuring such success.<sup>148</sup> Still, the report offers important insights, especially in comparing the relative place and role of the EDB and KEC. For example, we learn that the EDB electric production rate for Beirut was 36.4 kilowatts per one thousand residents in 1948, whereas that of the KEC for Tripoli was 93.5 that same year.<sup>149</sup> The report also indicates that while EDB electric utility rates for lighting were

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<sup>145</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 184.

<sup>146</sup> The report specifies the cost of fuel-based production of one kilowatt-hour rose from 0.36 Syrian-Lebanese piasters in 1936 to 3.9 Syrian-Lebanese piasters in 1946. Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 184.

<sup>147</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 185.

<sup>148</sup> Such lack of clarity on who exactly was responsible for the status quo or ameliorating existing grievances would be common to other major reports in the lead up to the 1951-52 protest campaign.

<sup>149</sup> See Table No. 45 in Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 179. It is worth noting that the population of Tripoli is estimated at approximately one-fourth that of Beirut, which may very well account for the difference.

lower than those of KEC, it was KEC electric utility rates for motive force that were lower than the EDB's.<sup>150</sup> For example, the average rate for a kilowatt-hour of lighting is listed as sixteen piasters for Beirut whereas it is twenty-three piasters for Tripoli. Alternatively, the average rate for a kilowatt-hour of motive force is twenty-three piasters in Beirut whereas it is seven piasters in Tripoli. This lack of symmetry in the relative expensiveness of electric utility rates between lighting and motive force proved decisive several years after the Gibb report's publication. It was Beirut-based industries that some say first began to refuse paying electric utilities bills in 1951. This tactic defined the 1951-52 protest campaign and set it apart from previous instances of anti-EDB mobilizations such as those of 1922, 1931, 1943, and 1946. In 1952, in the wake of government-imposed decreases in the electric utility rates, domestic consumers heeded the central protest committee's decision to end the campaign whereas many industrialists ignored it.<sup>151</sup> The report makes another important comparison, which is that electric utility rates for both domestic use and motive force were much higher in Lebanon than they were in many other countries.<sup>152</sup> The report summarizes the discussion of electric utility rates, stating that "for these reasons, electricity at the present time is a luxury and not accessible to the average person."<sup>153</sup>

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Nevertheless, it is an important difference that would be pointed to in future debates in an attempt to undermine the EDB's claim that it is providing optimal levels of electric current to Beirut residents.

<sup>150</sup> See Table No. 49, Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 185.

<sup>151</sup> This point will be elaborated on in section that deals with the 1951-52 protest campaign.

<sup>152</sup> The Gibb report limits this comparison to industrialized countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. However, both detractors and defenders of the EDB would variously deploy such comparisons during the 1951-52 protest campaign. See Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, 186.

<sup>153</sup> Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, p. 186.

The Gibb report is exceptional in its candid discussion of the centrality of the EDB to Lebanon's political economy as well as the need for increased electric energy production, lower electric utility rates, and an improved urban transportation system in Beirut. Other publications addressing the issue of cost of living, economic development, and political economy released between 1946 and 1950 made no reference to tramway services and electric current. There was thus little said about the centrality of electric current and urban transportation to the everyday lives of citizens.

Most illustrative of the silence on the EDB's importance is Gabriel Menassa's *al-Tasmim al-Insha'i li-al-Iqtisad al-Lubnani wa-Islah al-Dawla* [*Plan for the Reconstruction of the Lebanese Economy and the Reform of the State*], which he published in 1948.<sup>154</sup> Menassa was part of a broad network of politicians, businessmen, and economists who identified their statements and writings on economy as unique interventions in a landscape of economic ignorance and ideological demagoguery. At the time of publication, it was the most detailed and comprehensive study of the Lebanese economy during both the mandate period and the first few years of independence. However, Menassa's *Plan* does not make a single mention of either electric power generation or tramway transportation. This silence is despite several sections discussing the cost of living, transportation, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, and large-scale public works.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Menassa.

<sup>155</sup> On cost of living, see sections entitled "The Rise in Local Prices, Cost of Living, and Bread Prices" and "The Social Question and Unemployment," as well as the chapter entitled "Social Policy" in Menassa, pp. 52-64, pp. 64-66, pp. 439-451. On transportation, see section entitled "Organizing Transportation" in Menassa, pp. 328-331. On tourism, see section entitled "Equipping Tourism, Winter Resorts, and Summer Resorts" and chapter entitled "Tourism and Summer Resorts" in Menassa, pp. 331-336, pp. 396-417. On manufacturing, see section entitled "Lebanese Manufacturing" and chapter entitled "Manufacturing Policy Under a Free Trade System" in Menassa, pp. 17-18, pp. 367-395. On agriculture, see section entitled

Two particular silences are worth noting. First, the chapter on the tax system and the discussion of direct versus indirect taxes makes no mention of the tax-exempt status of foreign concessionary companies.<sup>156</sup> Second, Menassa's discussion of foreign exchange issues makes no mention of the EDB's over-reliance on thermo-electric power plants. As a later report would clarify, thermo-electric power generation required fuel and thus increased the costs of electric energy production and contributed to the loss of foreign exchange since almost all fuel was imported.<sup>157</sup> Such silence on the EDB is even more curious since Menassa was one of the key elite supporters of protest movements against the TEB/EDB during the mandate.<sup>158</sup> During the 1931 TEB protest campaign, he "concluded that the boycotting population was broadly right"; that "the company should make no profits higher than [twelve percent]"; and that there should be "greater Lebanese control."<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, Menassa's *Plan* makes no references to consumer cost, quality and breadth of service, and ownership structure. The EDB's provisioning of public

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"Lebanese Agriculture" and chapter entitled "Agricultural Policy Under a Free Trade System" in Menassa, pp. 9-12, pp. 347-366. On large-scale public works, see chapter entitled "National Economic Preparedness and The Program for Large-Scale Works" in Menassa, pp. 294-346.

<sup>156</sup> See chapter entitled "Fiscal Policy, Tax Policy, and the Budget Under a Free Trade System" in Menassa, pp. 147-253.

<sup>157</sup> On the costs of electric energy production and difference between thermo-electric and hydroelectric generation, see Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Al, "Wasa'ilna al-Lubnaniyya: Muhadarat al-Ustaz al-Muhandiss Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Al" ["Our Lebanese Means: Lecture by the Engineer Mr. Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Al"], *Muhadarat al-Nadwa [Symposium Lectures]*, Issues 3-4 (1950), p. 67; Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*, pp. 184-185. On the question of fuel imports and loss of foreign exchange, see Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Al, "Subul al-Tatawwur al-Iqtisadi wa-al-Ijtima'i fi Lubnan" ["The Means of Economic and Social Development in Lebanon"], *Majalat Ghurfat al-Tijara wa-al-Sina'a Bayrut [The Magazine of the Beirut Chamber of Commerce and Industry]*, Issue 1 (1951), pp. 16-19; 'Abd al-'Al, "Wasa'ilna al-Lubnaniyya," p. 67.

<sup>158</sup> Menassa's intervention was through a letter addressed to Charles Dabbas, who was president of the republic at the time. His central argument therein was that the the company was "taking too much money off the books to pay dividends and to amortize its investments." For a discussion of Menassa's role in debates and mobilization concerning the EDB during the mandate period, see Jackson, *Mandatory Development*, pp. 294-297.

<sup>159</sup> Quoted in Jackson, *Mandatory Development*, p. 296.

utilities is nowhere to be found in his report. Evidence of Menassa's own business ventures, particularly his holding of electricity concessions in Sidon and Tyre is one possible explanation for this silence.<sup>160</sup> Menassa was a competitor of the EDB and his calls during the early mandate period for "greater Lebanese control" likely reflected his own entrepreneurial ambitions at that particular juncture.

Press reports were not much different. With respect to tramway services, they highlighted mundane issues such as overcrowding of tramway cars and delays in scheduled service. However, these depictions did not address the problems of the tramway system as a whole or the issues of cost and quality of service. The centrist *al-Nahar* newspaper best exemplifies this trend. In the period between the final evacuation of French troops (1946) and one of the first post-independence EDB protests (1948), the periodical reported on tramway service a total of seven times. Each report detailed either an injury due to overcrowding (someone falling off the tramway car) or schedule delays that resulted in a pile-up of tramway cars.<sup>161</sup> This was not the case when it came to the newspaper's coverage of electricity services. *Al-Nahar* repeatedly reported on, albeit in passing, power outages, organized neighborhood petitions, as well as government

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<sup>160</sup> In 1929, Menassa secured a forty-year concession for the distribution of electricity to Tyre. He went on to co-found *Sharikat al-Quwwa al-Karuba'iyya li-Sayda* (Sidon Electric Power Company) in 1932. See, respectively, law issued on 13 May 1929 ("Qanun Yakhtas bi-Mashru' Tawzi' al-Quwwa al-Kahruba'iyya fi Madinat Sur" ["Law Regarding A Project to Distribute Electric Power in the City of Sur"]), *Majmu'at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya: Min Shahr Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1929 li-Ghayat Kanun al-Awwal Sanat 1930* [Compilation of Laws and Directives of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon: From January 1929 to December 1930] (Beirut: Matba'at an-Dabbur. 1933), pp. 956-957; Decree No. 9200 of 13 April 1932, *Majmu'at Qawanin wa-Marasim Hukumat al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya: Sanat 1932* [Compilation of Laws and Directives of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon: 1932] (Beirut: Matba'at al-Adab. 1933), pp. 317-318.

<sup>161</sup> See the following issues of *al-Nahar*: 29 December 1946; 2 February 1947; 5 March 1947; 7 March 1947; 3 July 1947; 20 November 1947; 11 February 1948.

bureaucrats' and EDB managers' promises to "inquire into the matter."<sup>162</sup> The *al-Nahar* reports invariably lent credence to the claim that these problems were inherent to the limited electricity-generating capacity of a resource poor country such as Lebanon.

Despite the limited references to the everyday provisioning and consumption of tramline and electricity services, such sources highlight the fact that the operation of public utilities was not without incident. In fact, recollections of the period emphasize the importance of tramline service and the growing need for more stable and affordable electric current.<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, little to no genuine movement on the issue of public utilities occurred throughout the first two years of independence. This was the case in the realm of government action, business maneuvering, and mainstream public debate. Simply put, the issue was not a priority for decision-makers, nor was it necessarily the most immediate concern for everyday Beirutis. This is despite the fact that cost of living and economic development were major components of public discussions of independence, state building, and everyday life. The approach of state elites, economic consultants, and media reports to public utilities was dominant across various mainstream mediums. It reflected continuities between the political economy of postcolonial Lebanon and mandate-instituted colonial economic relations. It also reflected the particular configuration of elite interests at that juncture.

One way to make sense of the lack of concern regarding EDB services was the reality that it did not initially represent an institutional arena that elite actors understood to be subject to restructuring in the sense that other economic sectors were. Put differently,

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<sup>162</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 22 April 1947.

<sup>163</sup> Author interviews with Sevene Barraaj (Beirut, Lebanon, 17 May 2011), Samir Khalaf (Beirut, Lebanon, 18 January 2011), and Karim Mroueh (Beirut, Lebanon, 9 January 2014).

elites found no initial political or economic gain in a sector that was, for the most part, already established, developed, and, in the view of many, off-limits. Examples of sectors where elite actors more intuitively understood such gains as possible included trade regulation, currency exchange, and land tenure regimes.<sup>164</sup> However, this understanding was not the natural fulfillment of decades of concessionary development and politics. On the one hand, those with vested interests in either the public utilities system in particular or the status quo it helped buttress willfully produced such notions. On the other hand, this model expressed just one of several competing visions about the place of public utilities in postcolonial development.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has narrated the origins of the EDB. In doing so, it has highlighted important fiscal, institutional, and mobilizational dynamics that would come into play during the first decade of independence. As the next chapter will demonstrate, independence infused struggles over the provisioning of electricity in Beirut with new meaning. This dynamic was the result of both the transition from French mandate to independent republic as well as shifting strategies of political competition and rivalry among Lebanese citizens, whether elites or non-elites. What makes the story of the EDB so important is the way in which it highlights the contingencies of alliances and conflicts surrounding what are otherwise described as developmental issues. Such contingencies and their consequences

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<sup>164</sup> This dynamic is reflected in the centrality of such sectors in contemporary discussions of Lebanon's political economy and proposals for the country's economic development. Public utilities were marginal, at least until popular mobilizations brought them to the fore of public debates. See, for example, Gibb & Partners, *Taqrir*; Menassa. On early independence struggles to reshape the institutional arrangements concerning trade regulation and land tenure regimes, see, respectively, the second chapter of this dissertation entitled "Reconsidering Laissez-Faire: Regulating the Flow of Capital and Goods" and the third chapter of this dissertation entitled "Peasants, Landlords, and the State: On the Rural Economy and the Politics of Non-Development."

challenge dominant assumptions about political mobilization, institution building, and economic development in Lebanon.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Popular Mobilizations, Elite Conflict, and the Nationalization of Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter highlights how public utilities constituted a central arena of the struggle over the organization of political economy in early independence Lebanon. The reorganization of public utilities such as electricity differed from conflicts over trade regulation, local manufacturing, and agricultural policies. It was primarily consumer mobilization as opposed to elite competition that positioned public utilities in the “national agenda.”

This chapter also disrupts the assumed separation between “the political” and “the economic,” and the seemingly self-evident correlation between these too supposedly distinct spheres. The primary impetus for protesting the EDB was economic; it was rooted in the interests and aspirations of middle class urban consumers. However, as these campaigns proceeded they took on multiple political dimensions. Political factions antagonistic to the president or cabinet of the moment opportunistically lent support to the campaigns. Alternatively, rival business interests seeking new investment opportunities claimed that they could deliver the same services at lower prices and better quality. Furthermore, protagonists—whether the protesters, the EDB, or the government—used various tropes to describe the identities, objectives, and conduct of themselves and of one another. These tropes reveal competing norms about the proper place of both state elites and the masses in the governing of both the Lebanese polity and its economy.

Finally, this chapter attends to the role of state institutions in the “economic affairs” of post-colonial Lebanon and the everyday lives of its citizens. The history of the EDB provides a case of the nationalization and state-led management of a private (foreign) enterprise. It is an exceptional and formative moment in the eventual consolidation of Lebanon’s political economy as an otherwise open, laissez-faire, service-based model. By exploring institutional transformations, bureaucratic expansions, and consumer claims, this chapter complicates linear and tautological narratives of state-led and private sector-led economic development in Lebanon and beyond.

### **Anatomy of the EDB Protests**

Lebanese citizens challenged the EDB through organized protest, especially various forms of boycott, but also legal and lobbying campaigns, which aimed to reform the relationship between the state, the operation of public utilities, and the people. Two particular instances of this were in 1948 and then again in 1951-52. A variety of actors, including urban consumers, neighborhood organizers, students, lawyers, small business owners, rival utilities entrepreneurs, and politicians out of power, called for better, more efficient government services and development projects, as manifested in the electric current. Their demands centered on the pricing, quality of service, and ownership of public utility services as well as labor conditions.

Such protests and campaigns speak to how various social and political groups both materially and discursively invested in public utilities and their importance to state building and economic development. At the level of assumptions and claims, this investment highlights the logic of such collective mobilizations. The protest campaign did not reject the state. Moreover it did not rely on the terms of sectarian or notable

factional politics. The logic was instead based on contending with and shaping the nature and terms of the Lebanese state and its economic development. Certainly, at specific points these mobilizations were subordinated to sectarian jockeying and high politics. But in the first decade of independence, the contestation over public utilities questioned the content but not the premise of the Lebanese nation-state.

While independence marked a rupture, the utilities protests and their associated mobilizations enjoyed significant precedents in and continuities with the late Ottoman and French colonial periods. Both the call for, and chorus of, development as a public good were rooted in Ottoman and French governing practices. Furthermore, the strategic character of public utility infrastructure, and the unusually unifying potential of opposition to foreign control were both at the fore. In the context of public utility services associated with both living standards and the continuing influence of foreign capital, the demand for more consumer-centric policies was a critique of the relationship between government, elites, and the popular classes.

Whereas protests against the EDB failed to achieve any gains in 1948, they succeeded in 1951-52 to fundamentally alter its location in Lebanon's post-colonial political economy. Several shifts between 1948 and 1951-52 enabled protesters to accomplish their goals. These shifts reflected protestors' accumulated experiences and strategies. They also reflected the polarization of Lebanon's political field.

### *The 1948 Protest Campaign*

The immediate context for the 1948 protest was the EDB decision to alter its reduced rates on motive force and irrigation on 21 January 1948.<sup>1</sup> Prior to this decision, electric utility rates were constant since 1943. The EDB justified its rate increases by citing rising labor and fuel costs.<sup>2</sup> Various residents came together and formed a citywide central committee to call for and coordinate a public protest campaign. Organizers issued the call on 22 September 1948, setting the following day as the start of a citywide campaign that was to feature a boycott of both the tramway system and the electric company. Specific figures on the response of Beirut residents are not available. However, press reports from the following two days portray organizers' failure to mobilize a critical mass of consumers. While tramway cars appeared less congested than usual, they certainly did not run empty. More importantly, the Beirut population appears to have paid little to no heed to the call to boycott electricity. The central committee failed to reproduce the levels of mobilization achieved in 1922 and 1931. The minimal response, coupled with the 24 January 1948 announcement of the French-Lebanese Monetary Accord, seems to have quickly turned the public's attention to other issues.

While not the only determining factor, structural conditions also played a decisive role in the 1948 protest campaigns' inability to mobilize a critical mass. The increases in reduced rates primarily affected factories and irrigation systems. They did not alter the

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<sup>1</sup> See "Lettre n° 117, du 21 janvier 1948, de la Directeur d'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle" [Letter No. 117 of 21 January 1948, from the Director of Operations to the Director General of Monitoring], published as Annex 17 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 154-155.

<sup>2</sup> The company specified a twenty-five percent increase in labor costs due to a 5 June 1944 decree, and further increases to costs due to the government's passing of a comprehensive labor code in 1946. For the EDB justifications, see "Lettre n° 117, du 21 janvier 1948, de la Directeur d'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle." On labor legislations and the mobilizations that underpinned them, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 277-281.

general applicable rates for domestic use such as lighting or any of the other reduced rates. In the context of otherwise rising prices that contributed to an increased cost of living in the post-World War II period, some consumers may not have understood the EDB as exceptional at that particular juncture.<sup>3</sup>

Equally important, by 1948 electricity had become a much more integral part of everyday life of Beirut, notwithstanding the Gibb report's claim that it was a luxury inaccessible to the majority of Lebanon's population.<sup>4</sup> A citywide boycott of electric current was a much more difficult mobilization to accomplish than during the mandate. One need only recall the continuing growth in demand and availability of domestic lighting fixtures, electrified public spaces such as cafes, cinemas, hotels, and even commercial signs, as well as industrial motive force.<sup>5</sup> Such demand and availability is reflected in the dramatically growing number of electricity subscribers in the city of Beirut, which is estimated at 14,000 for 1936, 28,200 for 1946, and 51,000 for 1950.<sup>6</sup> Also indicative is the electric energy production levels, which for Beirut alone were

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<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Karim Mroueh for first suggesting this to me. Interview with Karim Mroueh. Beirut, Lebanon, 9 January 2014.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the Gibb report was discussing the country as a whole, which certainly exhibited an urban developmental bias and thus rendered electricity largely inaccessible to the majority of the country's population. Furthermore, while differential access was certainly the rule in Beirut, the protest campaigns sought first and foremost to mobilize those with access to electricity. Nevertheless, protest campaigns against the EDB had the potential to bring together both electricity subscribers (demanding better services and lower prices) with those excluded from such access (demanding easier or cheaper access for initiating services).

<sup>5</sup> While an annual breakdown of how electrical energy was utilized is not available, the 1950 distribution of an approximately eighty million kilowatt-hours of total electrical energy production for Beirut was consumed as follows: twenty-five million kilowatt-hours for lighting (both domestic and commercial), twenty-four million kilowatt-hours for motive force (industrial), six million kilowatt-hours for the tramway system, and the approximate twenty-five percent remaining lost as part of transmission and distribution. See Ajam, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Assuming an average annual growth rate of 5,500 subscribers, that would place the 1948 number of subscribers at 39,200, more than two-and-a-half times as many people as was the case in the last major boycott campaign of 1931. Ajam, p. 23.

estimated at 9.8 million kilowatt-hours for 1931, forty-two million kilowatt-hours for 1946, and sixty million kilowatt-hours for 1948.<sup>7</sup> In this context, the mandate era practice of protest committees smashing windows of homes and stores using electricity was no longer a feasible strategy.

### **The 1951-52 Protest Campaign**

Despite the failure to effectively mobilize against the EDB in 1948, the problems inspiring protest persisted. The local media continued to offer little coverage of the EDB's provisioning of services. However, both the EDB and the government clearly understood the potential for protest campaigns that would demand both lower utility rates and government oversight. The EDB's wariness of such potential demand was evident in the summer of 1950 when it formally requested assurances from al-Khuri that the government would not lower electric utility rates and that it would defend the company "against any demagoguery threatening the equilibrium the future depends on."<sup>8</sup> It appears that al-Khuri gave the EDB such assurances, which the company made a condition of further developing its own electric energy production capacities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This represents over six times as much electricity as that which was produced during the last major boycott campaign of 1931. It is worth noting that electric energy cannot be stored and must be produced for immediate consumption. Therefore, electric energy production levels are an important indication of the consumption of electricity. For production level statistics, see Ajam, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> This request was made in writing on 1 June 1950 from the president of the EDB to the president of Lebanon as a follow up to a face-to-face meeting held in Beirut between the president of the EDB (G. Grandchamps), the general representative of the EDB in Beirut (Rene Castermans), and the president of Lebanon (Bishara al-Khuri). The letter does not specify the date of the in-person meeting, but refers to "the hearing that you kindly gave Mr. Castermans and myself during my recent stay in Lebanon." See "Lettre n° 912, du 1er juin 1950, adressée par le Président-Directeur General de la Société au Président de la République libanaise" [Letter No. 912 of 1 June 1950, from the President and Director General of the Company to the President of the Lebanese Republic], published as Annex 31 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 183-184.

<sup>9</sup> Such assurances appear to have been verbally given in subsequent meetings between al-Khuri and representatives of the EDB. In a 26 September 1950 letter from the president of the EDB (Grandchamps) to the president of Lebanon (al-Khuri), the latter asserts that he is "grateful for the encouragement and assurances that Mr. Casterman [the general representative of the EDB in Beirut] has sought from you [al-

The year 1950 featured a number of local and regional developments that may have given the company's shareholders and managers cause for concern. First, there were increasing calls for reevaluating foreign concessions and agreements. These included local struggles such as the negotiations with the Beirut Water Company to surrender its concession. Other developments transgressed national territory with the nationalization of the railroads in Syria, opposition in Egypt to the military treaty with Britain, and increasing calls for the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.<sup>10</sup> Second, beginning in 1949 and through the first half of 1950, various other urban centers in Lebanon featured reductions in the applicable on-peak and low-level consumption electric utility rates. For example, the government negotiated with electricity companies to decrease the prices of domestic power for domestic and motive forces subscribers in Tripoli and Dayr al-Qamar.<sup>11</sup> Third, Lebanese citizens increasingly turned to contentious

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Khuri] so as to take a serious decision to move forward with massive investment and further development of our facilities.” Outlining certain perceived risks associated with such investments, the president of the EDB goes on to state that “we nevertheless took this decision because of an optimistic view, which was the result of the encouragement and assurances we were given.” See “Lettre n° 1601, du 26 septembre 1950, adressée par le Président-Directeur General de la Société au Président de la République libanaise” [Letter No. 912 of 1 June 1950, from the President and Director General of the Company to the President of the Lebanese Republic], published as Annex 32 in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 185.

<sup>10</sup> Oddly enough, of all of these issues the negotiations with the Beirut Water Company were the least covered in the local press. It was the issue of Anglo-Egyptian relations and the question of nationalizing the Iranian oil industry that frequently peppered the front pages of the major newspapers. The significance of this fact will become more evident in a following section that highlights how calls for nationalizing the EDB directly drew on developments in Iran and the rising popularity of Muhammad Mossadeq. For the eventual conclusion of the government negotiations with the Beirut Water Company, see Law of 11 January 1951 (“Qanun Istilam al-Hukuma Imtiyaz Sharikat Miyah Bayrut wa-Tasdiq al-Tahkim al-Jari bayn al-Idara wa-al-Sharika” [Law Regarding Receipt by the Government of the Beirut Water Company Concession and Certifying the Ongoing Arbitration between the Administration and the Company]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 4 (1951), pp. 35-41.

<sup>11</sup> The government issued the directives establishing the reductions for Dayr al-Qamar (sixteen percent) and Tripoli (twenty-five percent) in December 1950 and January 1951, respectively. However, both directives indicate that they were the result of months-long negotiations as well as previous directives suggesting that the issue of prices be revisited. Ultimately, both directives rendered the rate reductions retroactive to March 1950. On reductions for Dayr al-Qamar, see Directive No. 3837 of 30 December 1950 (“Taḥdid As‘ar Bay‘ al-Quwwa al-Kahruba’iyya fi Nitaq Imtiyaz Dayr al-Qamar wa-Bayt al-Din” [“Setting the Prices for the Sale of Electric Power Under the Concession for Dayr al-Qamar and Bayt al-Din”]), *al-*

politics and direct action to address a host of grievances. Protests and strikes were common throughout the mandate period and the first few years of independence. However, they became increasingly frequent beginning in 1949 and particularly so once the effects of the Korean War reverberated in Lebanon.<sup>12</sup> For example, a survey of local press shows that there was at least one protest of one kind or another each week of the year. Finally, the Khuri regime had alienated a number of key political figures and movements that were coalescing into a loosely networked formal opposition movement.<sup>13</sup> These four dynamics came to the fore at the beginning of the 1951-52 protest campaign. Until then, most political and economic elites in Lebanon, state officials among them, were mostly silent on the EDB.

This silence was particularly noticeable when it came to identifying responsibility for both the existing problems of and potential solutions for electricity. A good example of this trend is in two articles of Ibrahim ‘Abd al-‘Al, who at the time was the director of public works. Appearing approximately a year apart, in 1950 and 1951, both articles describe the contemporary state of economic development in the county and emphasize the importance of electrical energy’s production and distribution.<sup>14</sup> ‘Abd al-‘Al argues

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*Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 1 (1951), pp. 10-12. On reductions for Tripoli, see Directive No. 3962 of 9 January 1951 (“Ta’yin Maw‘id al-‘Amal bi-al-Marsumayn Raqam 2842 wa-2843 Tarikh 11 Aylul 1950 bi-Taahdid Si‘r Bay‘ Quwwa Kahrubai’yya” [“Setting the Effective Date for Directives Nos. 2842 and 2843 of 11 September 1950—Setting the Selling Price of Electric Power”]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 3 (1951), pp. 27-28. These reductions are also discussed in a 1952 report on the electricity sector of Lebanon. See Ajam, p. 146.

<sup>12</sup> During the Korean War, the prices of basic and luxury commodities rose despite not yet having returned to their pre-World War II levels. In this context, hoarding became widespread and unemployment manifested itself in a particularly acute form.

<sup>13</sup> This dynamic in particular will be elaborated on in a later discussion.

<sup>14</sup> See, chronologically, Ibrahim ‘Abd al-‘Al, “Wasa’ilna al-Lubnaniyya: Muhadarat al-Ustaz al-Muhandiss Ibrahim ‘Abd al-‘Al” [“Our Lebanese Means: Lecture by the Engineer Mr. Ibrahim ‘Abd al-‘Al”], *Muhadarat al-Nadwa [Symposium Lectures]*, Issues 3-4 (1950), pp. 57-74; Ibrahim ‘Abd al-‘Al, “Subul al-Tatawwur al-Iqtisadi wa-al-Ijtima‘i fi Lubnan” [“The Means of Economic and Social Development in

that high electric utility rates as well as frequent service disruptions were serious problems in general, but also hindered Lebanon's industrial and agricultural development.<sup>15</sup> For him, the primary issue was ensuring adequate and low-cost supply. However, 'Abd al-'Al nowhere identifies the culprits of the status quo or those responsible for redressing it. Thus, for example, he highlights the over-reliance on thermo-electric power generation (as opposed to that of hydroelectric power plants), but does not assign any responsibility to either the electricity companies or the Lebanese government for not investing more efficiently in electrical energy generation.<sup>16</sup>

In this sense, 'Abd al-'Al's articles echo the Gibb report's assessment of electrical energy's importance to economic development, the growing demand for electricity, and the need to reduce consumer cost.<sup>17</sup> 'Abd al-'Al also reproduces the Gibb report's vagueness on who shouldered the responsibility both for the current conditions and their

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Lebanon"], *Majalat Ghurfat al-Tijara wa-al-Sina'a Bayrut [The Magazine of the Beirut Chamber of Commerce and Industry]*, Issue 1 (1951), pp. 9-24.

<sup>15</sup> As 'Abd al-'Al puts it, "Electricity plays an important role in the life of urbanized nations, for it is considered the basis of all production whether it be industrial and agricultural." 'Abd al-'Al, "Subul al-Tatawwur al-Iqtisadi wa-al-Ijtima'i fi Lubnan" ["The Means of Economic and Social Development in Lebanon"], p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> The difference has to do with production cost per unit of electrical energy. Such costs are much higher with thermo-electric power plants as a function of fuel costs. However, the construction of hydroelectric power plants are much more capital intensive, which either disincentives their construction altogether in favor of thermo-electric power plants, or incentivizes their construction over various stages. In the case of stage-by-stage construction, the hydro-electric plant is put online after the completion of the first stage but not before the power plant is finalized, thus compromising actual efficient utilization of the hydro-electric plant and thus maintaining a relatively high cost of electricity production during the various phases of construction. It is here where the question of responsibility arises. In utilizing thermo-electric power sources, electric power generating companies cut their own fixed capital costs while transferring the burden of fuel costs to the consumers. Furthermore, when the government neither requires the use of hydroelectric power plants nor facilitates the securing of such fixed capital funds, the government is in effect failing to incentivize the electricity company to lower consumer prices. See 'Abd al-'Al, "Muhadarat al-Ustaz al-Muhandiss Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Al" ["Lecture by the Engineer Mr. Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Al"], pp. 67-69; 'Abd al-'Al, "Subul al-Tatawwur al-Iqtisadi wa-al-Ijtima'i fi Lubnan" ["The Means of Economic and Social Development in Lebanon"], pp. 17-19.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, 'Abd al-'Al's articles reference the Gibb report as the source of some of the statistics the former presents.

amelioration. However, ‘Abd al-‘Al does go further than the Gibb report in one aspect. It is ‘Abd al-‘Al who appears to first articulate—in mainstream media—the issue of frequent power cuts, the damage such cuts have caused certain economic sectors, and the reality of several factories turning to small-scale diesel electric generators. The power shortages increased overall manufacturing costs, either through the damage to goods requiring electricity for proper production and storage, or the even higher cost of fuel-based electric power generation when carried out on a small scale. Furthermore, ‘Abd al-‘Al argues that fuel requirements of factory generators and thermo-power plants both increase the cost of electricity production as well as contribute to the loss of foreign exchange since almost all fuel was imported.<sup>18</sup> In effect, it is ‘Abd al-‘Al who begins to analyze the root causes of the problems of electric power generation in the country as well as linking them to broader developmental implications.

Despite a generic discussion of high electric utility rates for various consumers, neither the Gibb report nor ‘Abd al-‘Al actually discuss the structure of pricing. Such rates were for the most part divided between electric lighting rates, low voltage motive force rates, and high voltage motive force rates. However, beyond this division there was a complex multi-tiered pricing system that differentiated between types of consumers within each type of electrical energy as well as between different consumption levels.

At the time of the 1951-52 protest campaign, the EDB had in place at least seven different categories of electric rates for domestic and commercial subscribers.<sup>19</sup> For example, the EDB identified domestic household consumers as category C1-A, with

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<sup>18</sup> See ‘Abd al-‘Al, “Subul al-Tatawwur al-Iqtisadi wa-al-Ijtima’i fi Lubnan,” p. 67.

<sup>19</sup> The following discussion of rates for various electrical energy types and consumption levels are drawn from the discussion in Ajam, pp. 149-153.

designated prices set at twenty-one piasters per kilowatt-hour for monthly consumption levels between zero and seventy kilowatt-hours. However, those domestic subscribers that consumed 521 kilowatt-hours or more on a monthly basis were entitled to a 52.5 percent discount on the standard rate that the lower-level consumers were charged. Furthermore, this discounted rate applied to electric lighting for business premises that contributed to street lighting. The EDB grouped hotels, cafes, restaurants, and small cinemas as category C1-B. While this group of subscribers paid the same electric utility rate as those of category C1-A for consumption levels between zero and seventy kilowatt-hours per month (twenty-one piasters per kilowatt-hour), the EDB afforded them a fifty-six percent discount for monthly consumption levels above 521 kilowatt-hours. In addition, EDB combined a motley group of doctors' office, clinics, craft shops, hotels without restaurants, bars, and cabarets as C7, and charged them twenty-one piasters per kilowatt-hour for a monthly consumption level between zero and eighty kilowatt-hours. However, the EDB charged these same subscribers four piasters per kilowatt-hour for monthly consumption levels exceeding five hundred kilowatt-hours. In other words, the EDB provided this last category of subscribers an eighty-one percent discount for higher-end consumption levels. Thus while the EDB charged domestic subscribers—as well as bars and cabarets—twenty-one piasters for a consumption level between zero and seventy kilowatt-hours, the company provided said businesses with a thirty percent higher discount for consumption levels above five hundred kilowatt-hours than it did to domestic subscribers. Similar complex gradations can be found with respect to the type and consumption level of motive force subscribers.

Three caveats are worth noting about the pricing scheme. First, the last time the EDB overhauled its pricing scheme was in 1943. At that point, the company set minimum and maximum electric utility rates at eight and twenty-one piasters per kilowatt-hour for domestic lighting, five and 13.25 piasters per kilowatt-hour for low voltage motive force, and five and ten piasters per kilowatt-hour for high voltage motive force, respectively. Second, between 1943 and 1951 the applicable on-peak and low-consumption rates for most subscriber categories were equivalent to the maximum allowable electric utility rates established in 1943. One need only recall from the above table that the on-peak or below-seventy-kilowatt-hour monthly consumption level prices for domestic lighting consumers in categories C1-A, C1-B, C7, C-8, and C9 was set at the maximum possible electric utility rate of twenty-one piaster per kilowatt-hour for all of those consumers. Put differently, though the company claimed it had not altered the applicable range of electric utility rates, it was nevertheless charging a majority of lighting subscribers (both domestic and business) the maximum possible rate for on-peak or low-level consumption. Finally, in 1949 and 1950 different companies lowered applicable on-peak and low-consumption electric utility rates in other cities and towns across Lebanon. For example, Tripoli and Dayr al-Qamar residents experienced a sixteen percent and twenty-five percent reduction in electric utility rates, respectively.<sup>20</sup> However, the global economic reverberations of the Korean War (which began in June 1951), and in particular the attendant increases in the prices of fuel and machinery, arrested the spread of this trend of decreasing electric utility rates.<sup>21</sup> There were also proposals put forth for a fourteen

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<sup>20</sup> See Ajam, p. 146.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

percent reduction in on-peak and low-consumption electric utility rates in Bikfayya, Brumanna, and Hammana, though they never materialized.<sup>22</sup> Thus Beirut residents experienced three overlapping trends that made problems of electric utility service stark: circulating expectations for a decrease in electric utility rates similar to other urban centers, rising costs of fuel and machinery which arrested the dispersion of such trends in rate reductions, and Korean War-induced increases in the cost of living due to the effect on the prices of basic food, fuel, as well as household and luxury imports. These structural considerations manifested in a context defined by colonial legacies of popular mobilizations against the EDB as well as post-colonial understandings of national independence and economic development.

Neither the EDB leadership nor government officials were oblivious to the problems with the provision of electric current in Beirut and other areas. They thus agreed to begin constructing the Zouk Mkayel power plant in the fall of 1951.<sup>23</sup> The plan included four turbines that would allegedly resolve the short- to medium-term electric energy supply issues facing the country.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the announcement of the Zouk

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<sup>22</sup> See Ajam, p. 146.

<sup>23</sup> The construction of the Zouk Mkayel power plant was the very same “massive investment and further development of our facilities” that the president of the EDB was referring to in his 26 September 1950 letter to Khuri when the latter expressed appreciation to the former for the assurances against any future intervention in the pricing scheme of the EDB. The original decision to generate electricity via a steam turbine involved a complex array of technical issues. The EDB and government agreed on the Zouk Mkayel area as the site for said power plant because the surrounding geography facilitated the addressing of those technical issues. In short, such a power plant required, among other things, a massive supply of water (both for cooling purposes and boiler supply), a location close enough to the city to keep transmission and transportation costs low but far enough to mitigate against the smoke effects of the turbine, and multiple access roads for the movement of personnel and supplies. For details on the initiation of the construction of Zouk Mkayel power plant, see background section in “Statement of Facts” in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 24-25. For the EDB letter to the Lebanese president, see “Lettre n° 1601, du 26 septembre 1950, adressée par le Président-Directeur General de la Société au Président de la République libanese.” For the technical needs of the Zouk Mkayel plant, see Ajam, pp. 101-103.

<sup>24</sup> For a complete rendering of the specifications of the Zouk Mkayel power plant as initially agreed, see Ajam, pp. 57-60, 101-103.

Mkayel project was not enough to assuage EDB customers' grievances. In December 1951, a full-fledged campaign against the company was underway.

The archival record is not definitive on who formally initiated the protest campaign or when it actually began. The central committee of the protest campaign published a concrete list of demands and call for action on 26 December 1951.<sup>25</sup> The five key demands were: the reduction of on-peak electric utility rates from twenty-one piasters per kilowatt-hour to twelve piasters, the regularization of the domestic voltage supply at 110 volts, government certification and publication of a standard single electric utility rate for each type of electric power utilized, the opening of EDB customer service offices (for processing of service complaints and subscription applications) in different neighborhoods across Beirut, and the subjecting of the EDB to both national income tax and Beirut municipal fees. Thus, the protest campaign demanded that both the EDB and the government take corrective action.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the 1951-52 protest campaign is that it centered on refusing to pay the electric bill while continuing to utilize the service. It did not call for a boycott of the use of electricity. Furthermore, the central protest committee set up hotline numbers for subscribers with discontinued service to call for assistance.<sup>26</sup> In this case, the central committee organized and advertised a response team that reconnected electricity to subscribers the EDB had disconnected.

There are three plausible but conflicting narratives of who called for the 1951-52 campaign and when it exactly began. The first dates the campaign's origin with MP

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<sup>25</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 26 December 1951.

<sup>26</sup> See background section in "Statement of Facts" in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 36.

‘Abdallah al-Hajj’s 21 November 1951 call to withhold payment until either the EDB or the government changes the company’s policies.<sup>27</sup> The second narrative is that al-Hajj was one of several individuals, non-politicians included, who called for action. In this scenario, the actual protest campaign did not officially start until the day after the central protest committee published the 26 December 1951 list of demands. A third narrative places factories’ refusal to pay electric utility bills as the moment of the campaign’s beginning.<sup>28</sup> The 1948 grievances of these industrial businesses had carried over. In the months prior to December 1951 these factories formalized their protest by collectively refusing to pay their bills. It is most likely that these three scenarios overlapped and by late December 1951 the campaign had a broad social base that transgressed the popular-elite divide and varying economic interests.

In January 1952, two populist political parties largely operating outside the realm of formal politics: Hizb al-Kata’ib al-Lubnaniyya (Lebanese Phalanges Party)<sup>29</sup> and Hizb

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<sup>27</sup> Speaking in a parliamentary session, al-Hajj said, “If the company does not change its situation, the people should withhold subscription payments to discipline it should the government prove unable.” See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 21 November 1951.

<sup>28</sup> According to EDB documents, the request for lower prices at the heart of the 1951-52 campaign originated in the manufacturing industry a few months prior to the official launch of the campaign. The EDB claims that manufactures were “ill-equipped” for the task at hand and the subsiding of wartime conditions revealed the inherent weakness of this economic sector as Lebanese industrialists were unable to compete in “normal economic conditions.” Seeking to lower production costs, these manufacturers allegedly sought to lower electricity prices and proceeded to refuse payment once their requests were rejected. See background section in “Statement of Facts” in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 24-25. p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Gemayyil originally founded the Phalange in 1936 as a youth organization modeled on fascist and Nazi counterparts in Europe. The group claimed 8,000 active members by its first anniversary, a number that would grow to 22,000 by the end of 1939. Despite its pro-French orientation (as compared to more regionally oriented and anti-French counterparts), the Phalange regularly clashed with police throughout the mandate period during protests, sit-ins, and sometimes armed assaults. Mandate authorities banned the organization in 1942, however it actively led and participated in the November 1943 general strike which brought the country to a standstill and resulted in the release of Bishara al-Khuri, Riyad al-Sulh, and their colleagues. The new independent government subsequently annulled the decree dissolving the Phalange and eventually recognized the group as a legal organization. It was in the aftermath of this recognition that the Phalange began to self-identify as a political party, running candidates in the parliamentary elections of 1947 and 1951—though failing to win a single seat. It soon joined the growing opposition to Bishara al-

al-Hay'a al-Wataniyya (National Organization Party)<sup>30</sup> gave the campaign a significant push. On 8 January 1952, hundreds of protesters gathered in the 'Akkawi neighborhood (in the Ashrafiyya part of the city) before marching to the nearby EDB headquarters.<sup>31</sup> The protesters chanted slogans condemning the EDB's oppression and the government's inaction. They cheered on speakers that articulated campaign demands and threw stones damaging EDB offices. This protest marked a turning point in the public campaign against the EDB. The campaign mobilized people on the street and brought together disparate political groupings. By late January 1952 the EDB was claiming that approximately fifty percent of Beirut subscribers were not paying their electricity bills.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Formal Opposition and Its Intersection with the EDB Protests*

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Khuri despite the ban the 1949 ban he imposed on all political parties. The was lifted in May 1952. During the ban, the Phalange operated as the Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani (Lebanese Federation Party). Most notable about the Phalange is that—beyond its large numbers—the organization represented perhaps the best organized and most disciplined group. Its capacity to wage protests and strikes was rivaled only by that of the communists. The party's joining of the opposition in general and the protest campaign against the EDB in particular represented an important turning point for both. This is especially so given Maronite base of the group, the largest portion of which is located in Mount Lebanon but the second largest local is in Beirut. See Michael W. Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon: The Challenge of a Fragmented Political Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 232-249.

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Khalid founded the National Organization Party in 1950. At the time of the protest campaign against the EDB, it represented the largest active Sunni-based party in Beirut. It thus eclipsed al-Najada (The Helpers), which had been established in 1937 and represented the most disciplined and organized Sunni mobilizing force in Beirut throughout the mandate period. The latter was unable to withstand a series of internal divisions in the aftermath of independence, which when coupled with the 1949 ban on political parties effectively neutralized al-Najada until its reemergence in the second half of the 1950s. The significance of the National Organization Party joining the protest campaign against the EDB lies in its capacity to effectively mobilize residents of Sunni neighborhoods and that its identity as a Sunni organization posed a challenge to the majority of Sunni Beirut notables that had sided with al-Khuri and his various cabinets, either as members of parliaments or as local notables. See Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon*, pp. 232-249.

<sup>31</sup> See *al-Hadaf*, 9 January 1952.

<sup>32</sup> See "Lettre n° 176, du 29 janvier 1952, du Directeur de l'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle" ["Letter No. 176 of 29 January 1952, from the Director of Operations to the General Director of Monitoring"], published as Annex 45 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 209-210. Also see background section in "Statement of Facts" in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 37.

The support of some political elites was an important element in the protest campaign's development. As formal political opposition to al-Khuri's regime consolidated, it incorporated key elements of the central protest committee's demands. This was a function of the opposition's inclusion of populist figures such 'Abdallah al-Hajj and Kamal Jumblatt. It also reflected how the EDB had become a political resource in the broader struggle between the Khuri presidency and its various detractors.

During the mandate period, the National Bloc formed the parliamentary base of the status quo. Al-Khuri's Constitutional Bloc represented the formal opposition at the time.<sup>33</sup> However as popular groups and certain political elites mobilized and routinized anticolonial norms, the Constitutional Bloc gained ground. In 1943, the Constitutional Bloc won enough seats in parliament and built a coalition strong enough to elect al-Khuri to the presidency.<sup>34</sup> It was the combination of the 1943 parliamentary and presidential election results that set the stage for the November 1943 crisis. This crisis began with constitutional amendments and featured the arrest of al-Khuri, al-Sulh (his prime minister), and several other members of the cabinet. Eventually, the crisis resulted in the declaration of Lebanese independence, which was a result of a general strike as well as

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<sup>33</sup> The origins of this party rivalry is traced back to the competition between Emil Idde and Bishara al-Khuri, which eventually crystallized in 1932-34 around the issues of restoring the constitution, and subsequently the legitimacy of French authority in Lebanon. The French High Commission suspended the constitution twice during the mandate period, first between 4 May 1932 and 1 January 1934, and then again between 1 September 1939 and 21 September 1943. On the development of the rivalry between Idde and al-Khuri during the mandate period, see Hourani, pp. 184-185; Hudson, p. 42; Traboulsi, pp. 93-95; Labib Zuwiyya Yamak, "Party Politics in the Lebanese Political System," in *Politics in Lebanon*, edited by Leonard Binder (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), pp. 155-156.

<sup>34</sup> On the increasing popularity of the Constitutional Bloc and the 1943 elections, see Hourani, p. 257; Hudson, pp. 42-46; Ziadeh, pp. 70-74. For results of the 1943 parliamentary elections, see Markaz 3A li-al-Dirasat, *Dalil al-Na'ib al-Lubnani, 1861-1992: Ma'at wa-Thalathun Sana Min 'Umr al-Majlis al-Niyabi* [*The Guide of Lebanese Parliamentarians, 1861-1992: One Hundred and Thirty Years of the Parliament*] (Bayrut: Makraz 3A li-al-Dirasat, 1993), pp. 89-93.

US and British government pressure.<sup>35</sup> It was not long after the announcement and evacuation of foreign troops that the Constitutional Bloc began to face an opposition.<sup>36</sup> This opposition went well beyond the Constitutional Bloc's traditional rivals, the National Bloc. The latter party had been thoroughly discredited by its collaboration with mandate authorities during the November 1943 crisis, and the French High Commission's appointment of its leader Emile Idde as president in the wake of al-Khuri's arrest.

The development of a new formal opposition against al-Khuri occurred in four distinct yet overlapping stages. The first attempts to create a new formal opposition to al-Khuri's Constitutional Bloc began in 1946. 'Abdulhamid Karami, Henri Far'oun, Alfred Naqqash, and Kamal Jumblatt brought together a number of people under the umbrella of the Reform Bloc.<sup>37</sup> The Reform Memo, which the opposition published on 8 May 1946, called for administrative, budgetary, judicial, and electoral reforms.<sup>38</sup> It also demanded that the government study and ameliorate the rising cost of living and unemployment

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<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that Idde was appointed president of the republic in November 1943 when the "independence government" led by al-Khuri and al-Sulh were arrested. See discussion on the 1943 crisis and associated footnote in a previous section of this chapter.

<sup>36</sup> The debates and mobilizations surrounding the evacuation of British and French troops are succinctly summarized in Ziadeh, 79-92. Highlights include a general strike in May 1945, the political intervention of the United States, and the evolution of two international institutions that would also provide resources in these struggles: the Arab League and the United Nations. On 7 July 1945, the French High Commission announced its acceptance that Lebanon and Syria would form national armies and that it would transfer control of the Troupes Speciales to the Lebanese and Syrian governments. In early 1946, it was agreed that all British and French troops would evacuate Lebanon and Syria by the end of the year. Syria thus marks its "yawm al-jala'" ["evacuation day"] on 17 April and Lebanon 31 December.

<sup>37</sup> See *al-Bashir*, 24 January 1946; *al-Telegraf*, 24 January 1946. Also see Bishara Khalil al-Khuri, *Haqa'iq Lubnaniyya, al-Mujallad al-Thani: Min 21 Aylul 1943 ila 31 Kanun al-Awwal 1946 [Lebanese Facts, Volume Two: From 21 September 1943 to 31 December 1946]* (Bayrut: Manshurat Awraq Lubnaniyya, 1960), pp. 337-338.

<sup>38</sup> The Reform Memo was published in the 8 May 1946 issue of *Sawt al-Ahrar*. For an account of the memo, why it was published in the newspaper, and how its authors envisioned realizing its goals, see Kamal Jumblatt's speech in parliament on 9 May 1946, 5<sup>th</sup> Session, 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting, No. 9, pp. 572-576.

rate, provide economic direction to revive various economic sectors, and attend to the policy of rationing.

The parliamentary elections of May 1947 represented a turning point in the new opposition's formal consolidation. Many observers and opposition candidates claimed that gerrymandering, ballot box stuffing, voter harassment, and bribery during the election produced a loyal two-thirds majority required to effectively dominate the parliament.<sup>39</sup> The ensuing debates and discussions further expanded the opposition, particularly when this new parliament voted to make a constitutional exception and proceeded to elect al-Khuri for a second six-year presidential term.<sup>40</sup> The outcome of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and al-Khuri's use of the war to declare martial law and repress virtually any and all public criticism against his regime further polarized matters. In a second attempt to formalize their demands, opposition figures formed the National Liberation Bloc. This bloc organized its activities on three levels: parliamentary attacks on the president and his hand-picked cabinet,<sup>41</sup> popular conferences that sought to demonstrate greater accountability toward "the people,"<sup>42</sup> and the publication of "*Barnamij Kutlat al-Taharrur al-Watani*" ["The Program of the National Liberation

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<sup>39</sup> On the results of the 1947 elections, see Markaz 3A li-al-Dirasat, *Dalil al-Na'ib al-Lubnani*, pp. 93-97. For a contemporary source on these allegations, see Hizb al-Kutla al-Wataniyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Jarimat 25 Ayar: Kayfa Jarat al-Intikhabat al-Niyabiyya fi Jabal Lubnan [The Crime of 25 May: How the Parliamentary Elections Happened]* (Bayrut: n.p., 1947). For historical analysis of the context, outcomes, and allegations concerning the 1947 elections, see Eyal Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 128-139.

<sup>40</sup> The new parliament passed a law on 9 April 1948 allowing al-Khuri to run for a second term as president. He was elected approximately seven weeks later on 27 May 1948, and began his second term in September 1949. For the context, outcome, and dynamics of the re-election of al-Khuri, see Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence*, pp. 139-145.

<sup>41</sup> The parliamentary attacks officially began on 25 January 1949. See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 25 January 1949.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Sami al-Sulh organized one of the most notable popular conferences in his home, which appears to have been attended by 3,000 people. See *al-Nahar*, 1 February 1949; *al-Nahar*, 5 February 1949.

Bloc”]. In addition to core members Karami, Naqqash, and Jumblatt, new members came into the fold.<sup>43</sup> Most notable among them was Kamil Sham‘un, who had been a core member of the Constitutional Bloc and was imprisoned alongside al-Khuri and others in November 1943.<sup>44</sup> The National Liberation Bloc’s demands echoed the Reform Bloc’s earlier agenda. However, there were several new demands that included new elections according to a revised and reformed electoral law.<sup>45</sup> The demand for the dissolution parliament resulted in the some individuals’ defection.<sup>46</sup> Despite these shifts, much of the opposition coalesced around explicitly political issues, thus maintaining more continuity with the previous incarnation of the emerging formal opposition.

The year 1949 featured the third attempt to consolidate this new opposition. With the repeal of marshal law and the re-emergence of various political parties, a number of opposition leaders sought to incorporate both the traditional National Party as well as more popular political parties.<sup>47</sup> What eventually became known as the Coalition of the

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<sup>43</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 8 January 1948. See also Bishara Khalil al-Khuri, *Haqa’iq Lubnaniyya, al-Mujallad al-Thalith: Min Awwal Kanun al-Thani Sanat 1947 ila 18 Aylul Sanat 1952 [Lebanese Facts, Volume Three: From 1 January 1947 to 18 September 1952]* (Bayrut: Manshurat Awraq Lubnaniyya, 1960), p. 49.

<sup>44</sup> It is worth noting that Sham‘un was not an official member of the Reform Bloc formed in 1946. However, it was in his newspaper, *Sawt al-Ahrar*, that the bloc published the Reform Memo of 8 May 1946. This was a function of several factors, one of which was that Sham‘un was sympathetic to some of the reformist demands of the emerging opposition. Furthermore, several historians argue that it was al-Khuri’s re-election bid that converted Sham‘un to the opposition, given the latter’s own presidential ambitions. See, for example, Zisser, pp. 142-143.

<sup>45</sup> The demands of the new formal opposition centered on the dissolution of parliament and the creation of a new cabinet, the respect of political freedoms and the repeal of marshal law, as well as a general amnesty for all those convicted under the printing and press laws. See “Bayan bi-Ism Kutlat al-Tahrir al-Watani” [“Statement by the National Liberation Bloc”], *al-Nahar*, 29 January 1949.

<sup>46</sup> The key example in this regard is Far‘oun. He had been a member of the Reform Bloc but, rather than participate in the opposition’s new incarnation, worked with Butros al-Jamil to mediate between the National Liberation Bloc and the Khuri regime. This in many ways can be read as a reflection of both the shifting of alliances and conflicts as well as the increasing polarization between the core of the opposition and the president. See *al-Nahar*, 7 January 1949; *al-Nahar*, 8 January 1949.

<sup>47</sup> The détente between the core members of the new formal opposition and the National Party was on some levels made possible by the death of Emile Idde, who was never able to live down the fact that he had

Parties demanded the dissolution of the parliament, free elections under a reformed election law, public freedoms rooted in judicial reform, and what was called “good” or “proper” rule.<sup>48</sup> Two important dynamics are worth noting about this coalition. First, the inclusion of popular groups such as the National Appeal Party,<sup>49</sup> Jumblatt’s recently formed Progressive Socialist Party (Hizb al-Taqaddumi al-Ishtiraki),<sup>50</sup> and the Popular Federation Party (Hizb al-Ittihad al-Sha‘bi)<sup>51</sup> infused the program with socioeconomic demands that had not previously been at the fore of such formal mobilizations. These included fiscal and monetary reform, various state-sponsored social safety nets, and general economic development. A second dynamic is that while the Phalanges had

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accepted the appointment as president by the French High Commission in November 1943 as a replacement for the then-imprisoned al-Khuri. The attempted incorporation of both the National Party as well as popular parties was first manifested in a series of meetings in October 1949 between representatives of the National Liberation Bloc, the National Party, the Phalanges, the National Appeal Party, the Progressive Socialist Party (Hizb al-Taqaddumi al-Ishtiraki), the Popular Federation Party (Hizb al-Ittihad al-Sha‘bi), and the Ghasasinna Party (Hizb al-Ghasasinna). However, the Phalange Party eventually withdrew from these consultations due to the fact it saw the cabinet and not the parliament as the problem. On the initial meetings, see *al-Nahar*, 8 October 1949; *al-Nahar*, 16 October 1949. On the Phalanges withdrawal, see al-Khuri, *Haqa’iq Lubnaniyya, al-Mujallad al-Thalith*, p. 257.

<sup>48</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 9 September 1949.

<sup>49</sup> Kathim al-Sulh formally founded the National Appeal Party in 1945. It was the smallest of the Beirut Sunni-based political parties, and largely seen as a vehicle of popular mobilization for a particular segment of the al-Sulh family that was more removed from the centers of power than Riyadh and Sami al-Sulh. See Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon*, pp. 232-249.

<sup>50</sup> Kamal Jumblatt founded the PSP in 1949. Despite its predominantly Druze base, the party featured a multi-confessional leadership and quickly emerged as a leading party among the non-communist left. Its program included an array of populist demands, including the nationalization of all concessionary companies and their transformation into workers cooperatives. During the opposition to al-Khuri and the protest campaign against the EDB, the PSP featured a number of individuals who would go on to play founding and other important roles in pan-Arab parties such as Hizb al-Ba‘th al-‘Arabi al-Ishtiraki (The Arab Socialist Resurrection Party). See Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon*, pp. 213-227.

<sup>51</sup> This was a spinoff party of the then-banned Hizb al-Suri al-Qawmi al-Ijtima‘i (Syrian Social Nationalist Party –SSNP). Antun Sa‘ada established the SSNP as the Syrian National Party in 1932, later adding the “Social” in 1947. The group identified itself as a “pan-Syrian” party that was staunchly anti-communist and anti-socialist, even if its program contained populist demands. The Lebanese government executed Sa‘ade in July 1949 for an alleged plot to overthrow the government. On the SSNP in general, see Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon*, pp. 91-119. On the government’s accusation against the Sa‘ada and the SSNP, see Wizarat al-Anba’ fi Lubnan, *Qadiyyat al-Hizb al-Qawmi [The Case Against the National Party]* (Bayrut: Wizarat al-Anba’, 1949).

participated in the initial consultations concerning the establishment of the coalition, it eventually withdrew due to the coalition's lack of recognizing the legitimacy of the existing parliament.

Until the parliamentary elections of April 1951, the new formal opposition was overwhelmingly extra-parliamentary in nature. Changes to the electoral law in preparation for the 1951 elections altered this dynamic. The 1951 electoral law expanded the list of MPs from fifty-five to seventy-seven, and divided the two electoral districts of Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon into multi-constituency districts.<sup>52</sup> Key opposition figures scored important victories during the 1951 elections, particularly in the constituencies of Ba'abda-Matn and Shuf-ʿAlay—both of which were new electoral constituencies as per the 1951 law.<sup>53</sup> The results featured the Patriotic Socialist Front (PSF) among various elected opposition members.<sup>54</sup> Despite being relatively small in

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<sup>52</sup> In 1947, for example, parliamentary elections were organized along five large single-constituency districts: Beirut, Beq'a, South Lebanon, North Lebanon, and Mount Lebanon. In the 1951 parliamentary elections, Beirut, Beq'a, and South Lebanon were each allotted more seats (towards the new seventy-seven total), but remained large single-constituency districts. In North Lebanon and Mount Lebanon, each of the two districts were divided into three smaller constituencies with various seat allotments, while increasing the two districts' total seats (towards the new seventy-seven total). Accordingly, the 1951 electoral law divided the Mount Lebanon district into the Ba'abda-Matn, Kisirwan, and Shuf-ʿAlay constituencies, and the North Lebanon district into the ʿAkkar, Zgharta-Batrun-Kura, and Tripoli constituencies. For the 1951 electoral law, see law dated 8 August 1950, "Qanun al-Intikhabat al-Niyabiyya 1951" ["The Parliamentary Electoral Law for 1951], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, no. 33 (16 August 1950), pp. 523-539.

<sup>53</sup> These included Jumblatt, Sham'un, Ghassan Twayni, Emil Bustani, and Anwar al-Khatib winning in the Shuf-Alay districts. Also important were the Matn district victories of ʿAbdallah al-Hajj, [Elia Abu D.], and Dikran Tobsat. A runoff election in the Shuf-Matn district also featured the victory of Pierre Idde of the National Party over Pierre Gmayer of the Phalanges. For the complete list of parliamentary members that the April 1951 elections produced, see Markaz 3A li-al-Dirasat, *Dalil al-Na'ib al-Lubnani*, pp. 97-102. For media coverage of the elections and their results, see *al-Anba'*, 6 April 1951; *al-Nahar*, 15 April 1951; *al-Nahar*, 19 April 1951; *al-Bayraq*, 25 April 1951.

<sup>54</sup> The Popular Socialist Front (PSF) announced itself on 21 May 1951. See relevant editions of *al-Anba'*, *al-Bayraq*, and *al-Nahar*.

number and excluded from the postelection cabinets,<sup>55</sup> PSF's parliamentary presence enabled it to critique al-Khuri, his appointed cabinets, and loyalist parliamentary members. In addition, many of the non-National Party opposition members included a hitherto unprecedented list of socioeconomic proposals in their economic platforms.<sup>56</sup> These included addressing the unemployment problem, the transformation of major foreign corporations into employee-run cooperatives, as well as the provision of free education for elementary and secondary students, health insurance for all citizens, and housing allowances for state employees.<sup>57</sup> Yet even the National Party was required to sign on to such demands as a condition of its participation in the PSF. Certainly, the commitment of specific individuals and parties to these demands should not be taken for granted. However, the PSF's inclusion represents two facts that would have a bearing on the front's relationship to the EDB protests. First, such socioeconomic demands had become common to popular-based political parties and reflected normative notions about economic development, the role of government in the everyday lives of its citizens, and popular mobilizations. Second, these issues were themselves political resources in the process of alliance making among elites of the political opposition.

Corruption was one of the key allegations that the opposition leveled against al-Khuri and his government. After the 1951 elections, the opposition attempted, on three separate occasions, to form a parliamentary committee of inquiry to investigate

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<sup>55</sup> For a listing of the four cabinets subsequent to the April 1951 parliamentary elections, their ministerial declarations, and parliamentary discussions of them, see *al-Bayanat al-Wizariyya al-Lubnaniyya wa-Munaqashatuha fi Majlis al-Nuwwab, 1927-1984, al-Mujallad al-Awwal 1926-1966*, pp. 220-275.

<sup>56</sup> See *al-Anba'*, 6 April 1951.

<sup>57</sup> Other items on the electoral platform included judicial independence, reformed press and publication laws, and political freedoms including the right to form parties and organize associated activities.

corruption. Yet due to overwhelming parliamentary support for al-Khuri, little could be accomplished, and parliament was primarily a site of voicing grievances and having them on record.

One incident of corruption involved the financial dealings of the Lebanese legation in Paris. MP ‘Abdallah al-Hajj revealed the details of the incident during a 13 June 1951 speech in parliament.<sup>58</sup> Al-Hajj noted that Lebanese students studying in France sent a formal letter of complaint notifying parliament that the Lebanese Ministry of Finance—through the Lebanese legation—refused to make available foreign exchange so that the students could pay for their educational expenses in Paris. The Ministry of Finance justified its rejection of the request by claiming that there was a shortage for foreign currency. Al-Hajj pointed out that around the same time, the Ministry of Finance had provided foreign currency to Laure al-Khuri (the president’s wife), Khalil al-Khuri (the president’s son), and two other individuals on their frequent trips to Paris. Furthermore, al-Hajj cited a local newspaper report of the Lebanese legation’s hosting of a party at the Paris Ritz Hotel in honor of Lor al-Khuri. Party expenses totaled approximately 1.2 million French francs. He concluded asking the government to explain itself, implying that only corruption could explain the discrepancy in treatment between students and individuals close to the president.<sup>59</sup> The government gave no formal

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<sup>58</sup> The speech was republished in its entirety on 22 June 1951 in *al-Anba*’.

<sup>59</sup> In his speech, al-Hajj asked: “What are the foundations upon which the Ministry of Finance decides when to provide foreign exchange and when not to? Does every citizen have the same opportunity to be given foreign exchange that was afforded to those individuals pointed to? If the answer is yes, then we would like to make a note of it and entrust his excellency the minister of finance to satisfy the needs of students and non-students alike. However, if the answer is no, then what is the justification that permits his excellency the minister to give one citizen something he deprives another citizen of in the same situation? Where is the principle of equality and justice, which are pillars of the letter and spirit of the constitution?” See ‘Abdallah al-Hajj, “Khitab al-Na’ib ‘Aballah al-Hajj fi Majlis al-Nuwaab” [“The Speech of MP ‘Abdallah al-Hajj in Parliament”], *al-Anba*’, 22 June 1951.

response to these allegations—neither during that particular parliamentary meeting nor subsequent to it.

A second corruption incident involved the development project for the Khalda Airport (later known as the Beirut International Airport). The parliament initially assigned the Ministry of Public Works a proposed budget of twenty-one million Lebanese liras for the completion of the development project. This figure was subsequently increased to thirty-one million liras in January 1950. However, by June 1951 project expenses reached forty-four million liras. On 30 June 1951, Gabriel al-Murr—a former minister of public works—published a letter addressed to then-Minister of Public Works Philip Bulos criticizing the project’s overflowing budget.<sup>60</sup> He called on Bulos to officially request a parliamentary committee of inquiry that would review the implementation of the development project from its initial proposal. Al-Hajj raised the issue of the airport development project in a 7 July 1951 statement.<sup>61</sup> He subsequently (on 2 August 1951) called for a parliamentary committee to investigate the airport development project’s financial records.<sup>62</sup> After Speaker of Parliament Ahmad al-As‘ad put the motion to a vote, a majority voted down the motion. At this point, the PSF parliamentary bloc withdrew from the session.<sup>63</sup> Al-Hajj would once again raise the issue

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<sup>60</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 30 June 1951.

<sup>61</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 7 July 1951.

<sup>62</sup> More specifically, al-Hajj submitted a motion to “appoint a parliamentary committee to investigate the expenditures of funds assigned for the airport works.” See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [*Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies*] 2 August 1951.

<sup>63</sup> These members were ‘Abdallah al-Hajj, Pierre Idde, Kamal Jumblatt, Kamil Sham‘un, Ghassan Twayni, Dikran Tobsat, and Anwar al-Khatib. See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [*Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies*], 2 August 1951.

of a parliamentary committee of inquiry on 6 November 1951.<sup>64</sup> Again, the motion was voted down. By then the executive committee responsible for the airport development project had filed suit against al-Murr accusing him of slander.

It was at this point that the popular momentum against the EDB began to crystalize into the protest campaign. Thus the formal opposition also began to draw attention to the EDB and its services. In late November and early December, al-Hajj called on the government to take action. His demands pre-empted many of those that the central protest committee would advance: subjecting the company to income tax, creating a unified electric utility pricing system that would be properly publicized, and the opening of EDB office branches in different neighborhoods.<sup>65</sup> Al-Hajj directly linked the issue of the EDB to other services provided by foreign companies as well as corruption: “The persistence of oppression through obscene prices in cement, water, and electricity that are levied on the people is the product of the corruption . . . .”<sup>66</sup> Once again the opposition called for a parliamentary commission of inquiry, this time to investigate foreign concessionary companies—the EDB in particular.<sup>67</sup> Parliament convened on 6

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<sup>64</sup> During a parliamentary speech, al-Hajj said: “What was said and is said about the airport works, and the millions that have been spent on them, cannot be met with silence. After all that has occurred, this case that is occupying the public mind cannot be left without conducting a parliamentary investigation. . . . At the risk of begrudging the reputation of governance in the country and its prestige among public and private citizens, will your government agree to and put forth a proposal to the parliament for the formation of a parliamentary committee of inquiry into the case of the airport based on the attached statement of Mr. al-Murr . . . ?” See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 6 November 1951.

<sup>65</sup> According to al-Hajj: “The electricity company, which the entirety of the population complains about, does not pay a single fils in income tax. This company, which charges consumers different prices for the same issue and the same industry, deals with the customers as if they were its *iltizam*.” See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 21 November 1951.

<sup>66</sup> See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 4 December 1951.

<sup>67</sup> Highlighting the parliament’s refusal to form a committee of inquiry on previous matters, al-Hajj asked: “Is the noble parliament, which opposed the formation of committees of inquiry into the airport and foreign

December 1951 to discuss al-Hajj's motion. However, rather than let the motion go up for a vote and defeat it with the majority, loyalist parliamentarians sought to avoid the question altogether. They claimed that the monitoring of foreign concessionary companies fell under the cabinet's jurisdiction and not that of the parliament.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, they argued, the parliament would have to first pass a constitutional amendment empowering the parliament to form such a committee.<sup>69</sup> Anwar al-Khatib, a PSF parliamentarian, suggested that parliament vote to request that the cabinet form of a committee of inquiry into the EDB and other concessionary companies' conduct.<sup>70</sup> Parliament approved the motion with a majority of votes.

Thus despite loyalists still constituting the overwhelming majority of parliament in December 1952, the assembly nevertheless passed a motion calling on the cabinet to investigate the EDB and other concessionary companies. This event merits attention for several reasons. First, the recourse to legal arguments about jurisdiction highlights the fact that EDB practices and policies powerfully resonated with public opinion. Rather than voting the motion down like previous instances, loyalist parliamentarians sought to avoid the vote altogether. To do so, they innovated jurisdictional arguments. Second, the

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exchange [matters], prepared to form a committee of inquiry to look into all the issues related to concessions and corporations, their profits, and the implementation of the conditions of their concessions?" See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 4 December 1951.

<sup>68</sup> It was Prime Minister 'Abdullah al-Yafi who first initiated this line of argumentation, claiming that such an act would "undermine the parliamentary democratic system that established a separation of powers." See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 6 December 1951.

<sup>69</sup> In the words of MP Rashad 'Azar: "The constitution makes no mention of the formation of committees [of inquiry] ... If we wish to obtain an outcome we are required to put forth a law that seeks to amend the constitution." See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies]*, 6 December 1951.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

motion on the EDB was the PSF's first parliamentary victory. This was impressive since the party lacked the numerical presence to force a vote in its favor. Finally, by December 1951, the EDB's provision of services, and broader developmental considerations related to the standard of living, had formed an anchor in an opposition coalition that brought together an otherwise disparate and typically politically focused set of actors. Thus the year 1952 saw elite opposition groups as well as Beirut civilians locating the EDB as central to and emblematic of government's shortcomings in good governance, economic development, and genuine independence. Clearly then, popular mobilization on the provision, supply, and cost of electricity pressured even loyalist elites in unprecedented ways.

#### *Phases of the Protest Campaign*

The protest campaign against the EDB officially ran from December 1951 to July 1952. During this time, the struggle over the EDB proceeded in four phases: initiation, escalation, stalemate, and turning point, culminating in a government-issued reduction in electric utility rates. It was shortly after that reduction that the central protest committee formally ended the campaign.<sup>71</sup> However, such a price reduction, government-imposed no less, was by no means a guaranteed outcome. The start of the protest campaign featured stiff resistance on the EDB's part, a high degree of government collusion with the company, and various ebbs and flows in securing campaign victories. It was the

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<sup>71</sup> The central protest committee officially ended the campaign on 15 July 1952, five days after the government decreed the rate reduction. However, struggles over the EDB would continue thereafter, most notably culminating first in the March–April 1953 government-imposed provisional control of all the EDB's electricity concessions and associated facilities, and then in March 1954 with the purchase agreement between the government and the EDB effectively nationalizing the company. These developments and their related mobilizations will be discussed in a later section.

combination of the campaign's discipline, the increasing polarization of the Lebanese political field, and various external contingencies that produced the eventual outcome.

As mentioned above, the precise start date of the protest campaign is somewhat unclear. Various dissenting elements that manifested in November and December of 1951 coalesced into a coherent and unified protest campaign around 26 December of that year.<sup>72</sup> Some of these earlier elements included letters and telegraphs of complaint from consumers to various government officials,<sup>73</sup> elite and popular calls for the organization of a protest campaign,<sup>74</sup> and parliamentary debate about the need for a commission of inquiry.<sup>75</sup> Once consolidated into a unified movement, the protest campaign demanded a reduction in prices, simplification of pricing schemes, government certification of electric utility rates, improved voltage quality, and better customer service.<sup>76</sup> The primary tactic of the campaign was to refuse payment of electric utility bills until those demands were met.

This initial phase (November–December 1951) featured two important events. The first was the EDB's distribution of a pamphlet justifying the company's electric

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<sup>72</sup> It was on this date that a central protest committee published a concrete list of demands and call for action in *al-Bayraq*.

<sup>73</sup> Opposition politicians made direct appeals to the population of Beirut to submit such complaints. Furthermore, al-Hajj, Jumblatt, and others pointed to and sometime read out loud such complaints during their comments and speeches in parliament.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Hajj himself at several points both invited a campaign and threatened to lead one.

<sup>75</sup> See previous discussion about committee.

<sup>76</sup> As previously mentioned, the five key demands were: the reduction of on-peak electric utility rates from twenty-one piasters per kilowatt-hour to twelve piasters, the regularization of the domestic voltage supply at 110 volts, government certification and publication of a standard single electric utility rate for each type of electric power utilized, the opening of EDB customer service offices (for processing of service complaints and subscription applications) in different neighborhoods across Beirut, and the subjecting of the EDB to both the national income tax and Beirut municipal fees. See *al-Bayraq*, 26 December 1951.

utility rates.<sup>77</sup> This document echoed the standard company line with respect to issues of production costs, planned capacity development, and the EDB's fiscal integrity. The second event was the establishment of an ad-hoc commission to investigate the cost of electricity production and recommend lower electric utility rates.<sup>78</sup> Both the pamphlet justifying electric utility rates and the committee of inquiry on prices reflect how seriously the EDB and the government took the protest campaign.

The campaign's second phase lasted from January through March of 1952. Escalation characterized this period. The campaign expanded to include a broader spectrum of tactics and participants as formal popular parties joined and street protests

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<sup>77</sup> See "Brochure intitulée 'La Question de l'Électricité à Beyrouth' diffusée fin décembre 1951 par la Société pour informer l'opinion" ["The Brochure 'The Electricity Question in Beirut,' Distributed in December by the Society to Inform the Public], published as Annex 41 in I.C.J. Pleadings.

<sup>78</sup> Decree No. 1843 of 22 December 1951 established the commission, which was comprised of Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Al (as chair), Sa'id Hamada, Antwan Baz, and Nqula Khayr. Its mandate featured (1) documenting the cost of production of the EDB, sale prices, profits, and taxes paid; (2) documenting the number of Lebanese and foreign staff members, the conditions and terms of their employment, and whether or not the company employs a sufficient number of Lebanese; (3) present recommendations for reducing prices, improving the quality of service to consumers, and improving working conditions. The commission was empowered to seek the assistance of any experts it wants. The conclusions and recommendations of the commission were to be submitted as a single report within fifteen days of the date the commission was established. Oddly enough, *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya* did not publish a copy of the 22 December 1951 decree, and there is no mention of it in the press in the days following its alleged issuance. It does however appear in EDB filings with the International Court of Justice, attached to a letter dated 12 January 1952 from al-'Al notifying the company of the decree and requesting the company present a file outlining its financial accounts and rational for its existing pricing schemes. The EDB complied with the commission's request and submitted its files on 19 January 1952. It is worth noting that the 12 January government notification/request and the 19 January EDB response both occurred after the expiration of the fifteen-day period the commission was supposed to conclude its work within. This might be an indication of the fact that the commission was not acted upon until the government felt it absolutely necessary, which—as the following discussion of the escalation phase will demonstrate, was precisely what characterized the month of January (when the request was made of the EDB), as well as the following two months. For the decree establishing the commission, see "Arrêté n° 1843, du 22 décembre 1951 nommant une Commission chargée d'enquêter sur le prix de revient du kWh et de recommander un abaissement des tarifs" ["Decree No. 1843 of 22 December 1951, Appointing A Commission to Investigate the Cost of KWH and Recommend Lower Prices"], published as Annex 42 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 42-43. For the EDB files submitted to the commission, see "Dossier remis le 19 janvier 1952 à la Commission d'Information créée par Arrêté n° 1842 du 22 décembre 1951" ["File Submitted On 19 January 1951 to the Commission of Inquiry Established by Decree No. 1842 of 22 December 1951"], published as Annex 43 in I.C.J. Pleadings.

became more frequent.<sup>79</sup> On one level, the central protest committee established technical teams to restore electricity to city residents disconnected for lack of payment.<sup>80</sup> The protest committee invited citizens to join the campaign and placed advertisements for technical assistance contacts in newspapers and cinemas.<sup>81</sup> On another level, some individuals and groups vandalized EDB offices and installations.<sup>82</sup> Such uncommon acts would ultimately result in the interruption of electric current supply to certain areas. The central protest committee disavowed this strategy. By late January, the EDB estimated that fifty percent of its subscribers had been refusing to pay their electric utility bills.<sup>83</sup> This development resulted in major revenue losses for the company.<sup>84</sup> Recognizing the

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<sup>79</sup> Recall also that in January 1952 both the Phalanges and al-Hay'a al-Wataniyya officially joined the protest campaign. For an example of the EDB expressing concern over the expansion of participation in the protest campaign, see "Lettre n° 176, du 29 janvier 1952, du Directeur de l'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle."

<sup>80</sup> See "Lettre n° 176, du 29 janvier 1952, du Directeur de l'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle."

<sup>81</sup> It is worth noting that the EDB listed the Rivoli and Opera cinemas in particular, which are two of the more important cinemas in Beirut at the time. "Lettre n° 176, du 29 janvier 1952, du Directeur de l'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle."

<sup>82</sup> The EDB called on the government to dispatch the police in order to investigate the acts and punish those responsible. See "Lettre n° 176, du 29 janvier 1952, du Directeur de l'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle."

<sup>83</sup> Further indication of the level of escalation is provided by a 4 February 1952 letter from the EDB to the government. The company argued that, if necessary for public order, it would be willing to accept a reduction in electricity utility rates provided the government compensated the resultant lost revenue. For EDB letter indicating that over fifty percent of subscribers were refusing to pay their electric utility bills, see "Lettre n° 176, du 29 janvier 1952, du Directeur de l'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle." For EDB letter offering to lower rates in return for compensation, see "Lettre n° 215, du 4 février 1952, du Président de la Société et du Directeur de l'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle" ["Letter No. 215 of 4 February 1952, from the President of the Company and Its Director of Operations to the Director General of Monitoring"], published as Annex 46 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 210-211.

<sup>84</sup> One report estimated that by the end of April 1952, the protest campaign had deprived the company of approximately 2.25 million liras in owed revenue. This figure is offered by a Dutch report commissioned by both the EDB and the government, whose findings were released on 15 May 1952. The report's origins, its authors, and its findings are discussed below. For the figure of 2.25 million liras in unpaid bills, see IR. Ringers and IR. G. J. T. Bakker, "Rapport à Son Excellence Monsieur le Président du Conseil au sujet du conflit de la Compagnie d'Électricité de Beyrouth" [Report to His Excellency the Prime Minister on the Subject of the Conflict of the Beirut Electricity Company], published as "Annexe 4: Rapports du 15 mai

threat posed by the protest campaign, and seeking to bolster its position, the EDB solicited affidavits of support from experts and professionals in the global electricity industry.<sup>85</sup> It was in this context of escalation that the government and the EDB began official negotiations.<sup>86</sup>

Three additional developments took place during the escalation phase. First, in late February the committee established to inquire into the EDB pricing scheme presented its findings.<sup>87</sup> It concluded that EDB justifications for existing pricing structure was sound, and that a price reduction would invariably increase the demand for electricity while undermining the finances needed to further develop the production capacities of the

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1952 des Experts hollandaise, MM. Ringers et Bakker” [“Annex 4: Report of 15 May 1952 by Dutch Experts Mr. Ringers and Mir. Bakker”] in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 107-110, p. 107.

<sup>85</sup> These experts variously endorsed the EDB claim that it alone had the right to modify electric utility rates, and that its current pricing scheme was commensurate with its resources and those of Lebanon. The experts included, among others, a representative of the Strasbourg Electricity Company, deputy commercial manager of the British Electricity Authority, the general director of France Electricity Company, and others.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Abd al-‘Al initiated the formal negotiations in his capacity as the director of the General Directorate for the Monitoring Companies, and by means of a letter addressed to the EDB on 16 January 1952. Two components of this letter are worth noting. First, the letter made reference to a cabinet meeting on 7 December 1951, wherein the body decided to task the General Directorate for the Monitoring of Companies to initiate discussions with the company regarding amending the general conditions and contracts related to the EDB’s concessions. This cabinet meeting was in fact held the day after the parliamentary vote requesting that the cabinet establish a committee of inquiry into the EDB and other concessionary companies—the vote which represented the first major political victory of the formal opposition. Also worth noting is that the letter from al-‘Al made specific reference to the 1948 Monetary Accord as the basis and framework for these negotiations. The letter thus immediately legitimated the idea that whatever issues exist they would be resolved through mutual consent rather than the prerogative of the government to protect the interests of the consumers/citizens. The EDB responded to the request for formal negotiations via a letter from the director of operations and general representative of the company in Beirut (Castermans) dated 30 January 1952 informing al-‘Al that the Board of Directors had jointly appointed a board member and a company engineer to represent the EDB in the initial stages of the negotiations. For the government letter initiating negotiations, see “Lettre n° 449, du 16 janvier 1952, du Directeur Général du Contrôle à la Société” [“Letter No. 449 of 16 January 1952, From the Director General for Monitoring to the Company”], published as Annex 8 in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 128. For the EDB’s response, see “Lettre n° 179, du 30 janvier 1952, de Directeur d’Exploitation au Directeur Général du Contrôle” [“Letter No. 179 of 30 January 1952, From the Director of Operations to the Director General of Monitoring”], published as Annex 9 in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 129.

<sup>87</sup> See “Rapport de la Commission d’Information nommée par arrêté n° 1843 du 22 décembre 1951, remis fin février 1952” [“Report of the Commission of Inquiry Appointed by Decree No. 1843 of 22 December 1951, Submitted End of February 1952.”], published as Annex 44 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 204-209.

company.<sup>88</sup> The second development during this escalation phase was an official meeting between representatives of the government and the EDB.<sup>89</sup> The company showed a willingness to reduce the electric utility rates for the lowest consumption level of domestic subscribers. Beyond this point, however, the EDB and the government agreed to seek arbitration for other issues.<sup>90</sup> Thus the company rejected most of the protest campaign's demands, while the government revealed itself to be more conciliatory than antagonistic towards such a position. The final development during this escalation phase was the cabinet forming the ad-hoc Supreme Committee of Inquiry for Concessions.<sup>91</sup> The decree establishing the committee directly referenced the "approval of the parliament," and set a six-month period for the investigation of concessionary companies so as to suggest "recommendations, projects, and amendments to the [contractual] specifications needed to secure the public good."<sup>92</sup> It is worth recalling that since late

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<sup>88</sup> The committee's report began by presenting a brief survey of the history and installations of the EDB, highlighting an eighteen-percent average annual increase in the demand for electricity between 1946 and 1951. Much of this survey echoed the position of the EDB as manifested in the pamphlet it distributed to the public towards the end of December 1951, justifying its prices on the basis of the nature electricity consumption as well as the financial and technical aspects of increasing production.

<sup>89</sup> See "Procès-verbal de la Réunion tenue le 11 mars 1952 dans le bureau du Directeur Général de la Justice à Beyrouth" ["Minutes of the 11 March 1952 Meeting Held in the Office of the Director General of Justice in Beirut"], published as Annex 34 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 188-193.

<sup>90</sup> Additionally, the EDB agreed to conduct additional studies to explore possibilities for improving electricity distribution in the city, while the government confirmed the status of the electricity concessions of the company.

<sup>91</sup> See Ordinance No. 7830 of 14 March 1952 ("Insha' Lajnat al-Tahqiq al-'Ulya li-al-Imtiyazat fi Wizarat al-Ashghal al-'Amma" [Creation of A Supreme Committee of Inquiry for Concession in the Ministry of Public Works"], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 12 (1952), pp. 221-222.

<sup>92</sup> The EDB protested the creation of the committee, arguing that it accepted the premise of renegotiating existing agreements but rejected the idea that new institutions had the authority or expertise to determine whether the company was conducting itself appropriately or not. On the establishment of the committee, see Decree No. 7830 of 14 March 1952 ("Insha' Lajnat al-Tahqiq al-'Ulya li-al-Imtiyazat fi Wizarat al-Ashghal al-'Amma" [Creation of A Supreme Committee of Inquiry for Concession in the Ministry of Public Works]). On the EDB protest to the formation of the committee, see "Lettre n° 627, du 29 mars 1952, de la Directeur d'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Travaux Publics et du Contrôle à Beyrouth" ["Letter No. 627 of 29 March 1952, From the Director of Operations to the General Director of Public

December 1951 members of the formal opposition had regularly called on the government to review all concessionary companies.<sup>93</sup>

Stalemate characterized the third phase from March through May of 1952. On the one hand, the government announced that it had forced the EDB into certain concessions and that this was only the first victory of many it was pursuing.<sup>94</sup> These claims were far from reality. As mentioned above, records reveal the government's conciliatory posture toward the EDB and its pliancy in agreeing on arbitration on matters that EDB was unwilling to compromise on.<sup>95</sup> There is little indication that the government was at that point either exerting meaningful pressure on the EDB or pursuing alternative avenues for addressing the protestors' grievances. Despite these realities, the government's public announcement energized the protest campaign. The EDB expressed its frustration with this fact in a letter to the Ministry of Public Works.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, new endorsements of the protest campaign continued to flow. One noteworthy instance was the statement of

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Works and Monitoring of Companies in Beirut," published in Annex 11 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 132-133; "Lettre n° 662 du 7 avril 1952, de la Directeur d'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Travaux Publics et du Contrôle à Beyrouth" ["Letter No. 662 of 7 April 1952, From the Director of Operations to the General Director of Public Works and Monitoring of Companies in Beirut," published in Annex 12 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 133-134.

<sup>93</sup> Again, it is worth recalling the parliamentary vote on 6 December 1951, where a formal request was made of the cabinet to inquire into the concessionary company. However, the cabinet never fully acted on this request with the exception of initiating formal negotiations. Consequently, the formal opposition repeated its call, this time referring to the parliamentary vote. See *al-Nahar*, 16 January 1952.

<sup>94</sup> This was accomplished through a public statement by the minister of public works. See "Le règlement du litige avec la Société d'Électricité : Communiqué du Ministère des Travaux Publics du 27 mars 1952" ["The Settlement of the Dispute with the Electricity Company: 27 March 1952 Statement of the Minister of Public Works"], *Commerce du Levant*, 2 April 1952.

<sup>95</sup> See "Procès-verbal de la Réunion tenue le 11 mars 1952 dans le bureau du Directeur Général de la Justice à Beyrouth."

<sup>96</sup> See "Lettre n° 656 du 3 avril 1952, du Directeur d'Exploitation au Directeur Général du Travaux Publics et du Contrôle à Beyrouth" ["Letter No. 656 of 3 April 1952, From the Director of Operations to the General Director of Public Works and Monitoring of Companies," published in Annex 163 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 507-508.

support published in *Sawt al-Mar'a*, the official monthly publication of Jami'at Nisa' Lubnan (the League of the Women of Lebanon). Therein, an article surveying major developments in the country informs readers that Beirutis

sought to strike the day they withheld their payment of fees to the electricity company, and they continue to strike. However, the company [continues to] indulge itself, and earns profits that the consumers view as incommensurate with “the product” provided to them. In addition, the administration of the company has not budged one hair. The cabinet of Mr. [‘Abdullah] al-Yafi has gone and the cabinet of Mr. [Sami] al-Sulh has come, and still the strike is where it has been.<sup>97</sup>

*Sawt al-Mar'a* rarely commented on contentious politics. The editors' intervention here is an indication of both the protest campaign's persistence and its effect on public discourse. This broad appeal had not yet translated into any tangible gains from the EDB. However, it did constrain the company's responses. As one report put it, “the company is not able to take measures normally available to electric distribution systems around the world—that is, to deprive those who refuse to pay for the benefits of distribution—as the movement is too large to take such measures.”<sup>98</sup>

The period of stalemate also featured the publication of two documents that effectively cleared the EDB of any wrongdoing and legitimated the status quo. The first document was a letter from the ad-hoc committee set up to investigate concessionary companies. The committee cleared the EDB, claiming that the company had conducted itself in accordance with its obligations under the contracts and specifications of its

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<sup>97</sup> See Salma Sa'igh, “Madha fi al-Bayt al-Lubnani” [“What Is In The Lebanese House?”], *Sawt al-Mar'a* (April 1952).

<sup>98</sup> See I.R. Ringers and I.R. G. J. T. Bakker, “Rapport à Son Excellence Monsieur le Président du Conseil au sujet du conflit de la Compagnie d'Électricité de Beyrouth,” p. 107.

concessions.<sup>99</sup> The company would go on to cite this letter in subsequent negotiation meetings and public statements as a means of legitimating its position.<sup>100</sup> The second document was a more comprehensive report that two Dutch consultants authored.<sup>101</sup> Both the government and the EDB had jointly commissioned the “international experts” as external reviewers, and their findings corroborated those of the committee of inquiry. After a comprehensive technical and economic survey of the EDB, the “Dutch report”—as it came to be referred to—concluded, “these prices are based on sound economic principles and can satisfy the needs of the clients.”<sup>102</sup> The report went on to recommend a rate reduction for monthly domestic consumption levels that did not exceed twenty kilowatt-hours. It did so on the basis of what it termed a “social [rather than economic or legal] perspective.” Thus it strongly discouraged any other rate reductions and deferred to the EDB to “elaborate a pricing system that incorporates this special reduction without

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<sup>99</sup> See “Lettre n° 88/L, du 25 avril 1952, du Président de la Commission Supérieure d’Enquête à la Directeur d’Exploitation. Note juridique, annexée, du Gouvernement Libanais, en date du 1er avril” [“Letter No. 88/L of 25 April 1952, from the Chair of the Supreme Committee of Inquiry to the Director of Operations, Legal Note of Lebanese Government Dated 1 April Attached”], published as Annex 13 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 134-136.

<sup>100</sup> See “Lettre n° 830, du 30 avril 1952, de la Directeur d’Exploitation au Président de la Commission Supérieure” [“Letter No. 830 of 30 April 1952, From the Director of Operations to the Chair of the Supreme Committee”], published as Annex 14 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 136-137.

<sup>101</sup> The consultants are identified as I.R. Ringers (a “former minister of reconstruction” in the Netherlands) and G.J.T. Bakker (the Dutch representative to the International Union of Electric Energy Producers and Distributors). Based on additional research, it is quite possible that this Ringers is the same Ringers as engineer Johan Ringers (1885-1864), who served as General Director of the Department of Public Works and oversaw the reconstruction of Rotterdam in the aftermath of World War Two. For the identification of Ringers and Bakker in the report, see I.R. Ringers and I.R. G. J. T. Bakker, “Rapport à Son Excellence Monsieur le Président du Conseil au sujet du conflit de la Compagnie d’Électricité de Beyrouth.” For a biography in Dutch of Ringers, see Tessel Pollmann, *Van Waterstaat tot Wederopbouw: Het leven van dr.ir. J.A. Ringers (1885-1965)* [From Water to Reconstruction: The Life of Dr. J.A. Ringers (1885-1965)] (Boom: Amsterdam, 2006).

<sup>102</sup> See I.R. Ringers and I.R. G. J. T. Bakker, “Rapport à Son Excellence Monsieur le Président du Conseil au sujet du conflit de la Compagnie d’Électricité de Beyrouth,” p. 108.

changing other prices.”<sup>103</sup> The Dutch report thus reinforced the EDB’s position in its meetings with the government. This third period of the protest campaign ended with a divergence between the protesters and the government. On the one hand, records of back channel negotiations between the government and the EDB indicate that by the end of May 1952 the government was moving even closer to the company’s position.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, around the same time, the central protest committee rejected the findings of both the committee of inquiry and the Dutch experts.<sup>105</sup>

A turning point in the protest campaign against the EDB began in late May and early June. This would not have been possible without the protestors’ persistence in the face of the EDB’s unresponsiveness, government’s inaction, and EDB-validating reports. However, the turning point was also a function of increasing polarization of the Lebanese

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> This is indicated by a letter sent on 26 May 1952 from the minister of public works to the EDB director of operations, wherein the latter informed the former of the government’s endorsement of both the minutes of the last face-to-face negotiations as well as the Dutch report. It was in that last negotiation meeting (held on 4 March 1952) that the EDB expressed a willingness only to modify the prices for the lowest consumption level of domestic subscribers, while opting for arbitration on all other matters that the government would seek to pursue. This position was thus first reinforced by the recommendations of the Dutch report, and then adopted by the government. See “Lettre n° 1195, du 26 mai 1952, du Minstre des Travaux Publics a la Directeur d’Exploitation” [Letter No. 1195 of 26 May 1952, From the Minister of Public Works to the Director of Operations], published as Annex 48 in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 214.

<sup>105</sup> For the rejection of the protest committee, see *al-‘Amal*, 22 May 1952; *al-Teleghraf*, 20 May 1952. This rejection was echoed in parliament on 29 May 1952. Therein, MP Bahij Taqi‘ al-Din accused the two Dutch experts of visiting and consulting with the Paris office of the EDB before arriving in Beirut to begin their investigation. He further questioned the report’s integrity by claiming that a serious investigation would have required an exploration of the EDB accounts which would have meant a much longer period before the issuing of the report. Furthermore, He thus challenged the conclusion that found the company’s justification of existing prices to be based on sound economics. During his statement, Taqi‘ al-Din referned the Gibb report claim that prices were too high and that electricity was an inaccessible luxury. These accusations were serious enough to solicit a response from the minister of finance the following day. Minister Emil Lahhud rebuked Taqi‘ al-Din without mentioning his name, claiming that there was no proof of such an accusation of collusion with the EDB and that such accusations are all the more serious when raised in parliament, the record of the proceedings for which are published. See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies], 29 May 1952; al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies], 1 June 1952.

political field. Various segments of society organized protest campaigns of their own. These included strikes by the telephone and postal workers,<sup>106</sup> the railroad workers,<sup>107</sup> as well as the unions of vegetable merchants, furniture builders, and barbers.<sup>108</sup> These strikes were part of a series of protests that had effectively paralyzed the government.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the formal opposition had begun to escalate their attacks on al-Khuri and his cabinet. They drew on the EDB protest campaign as a key example.<sup>110</sup> In what appears to be a major escalation in PSF discourse and accusations, Jumblatt published an article titled “The Foreigners Put Them In, So Let the People Get Them Out.”<sup>111</sup> He explicitly argued that al-Khuri, his inner circle and associated cabinets, and the economic

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<sup>106</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 3 May 1952.

<sup>107</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 4 May 1952.

<sup>108</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 8 May 1952.

<sup>109</sup> While the protest campaign against the EDB was certainly the longest lasting, it was nevertheless part of an expanding repertoire of contentious politics of the early independence period in general and the last year of the Khuri presidency in particular. In addition to the previously mentioned strikes declared in May, private school teachers and the lawyer syndicate each went on strike in March/April 1952. Importantly, these individual strikes were increasingly being viewed as part of the same larger struggle, even by certain segments of the elite. As Salma Sa'igh put it in *Sawt al-Mar'a* when concluding her brief highlights of the EDB consumers, private school teachers, and lawyers syndicate strikes: “You may not succeed today in all your demands. You may be temporarily defeated in the face of mountains from the dark ages. But remember that victory in the end belongs to freedom and its champions. How sweet the words of a free martyr are: ‘Free men may die, but freedom does not.’” See Salma Sa'igh, “Madha fi al-Bayt al-Lubnani” [“What Is In The Lebanese House”].

<sup>110</sup> Speaking in parliament during the 8 May 1952 vote of confidence for Sami al-Sulh's reshuffled cabinet, al-Hajj linked the issues as well: “Who in the country does the government represent? Does it represent the railway workers as they strike? Or does it represent the telephone workers by threatening them with being fired from their jobs after shooting at them? Or does it represent the fifty thousand [people who are] unemployed, or the fifteen thousand that emigrated? Or does it represent those refusing to pay their [utility] bills to the electricity company that the government defends on the basis of encouraging foreign capital [investments] in Lebanon through protection without limit?” See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies], 8 May 1952.

<sup>111</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 30 May 1952.

interests they all represented had forsaken the cause of independence and failed to represent Lebanese citizens.<sup>112</sup>

In this general context, the protest campaign appears to have gained the upper hand. Two particular developments hint at this shift. First, EDB correspondence with the government featured a change in tone. Prior to the end of May 1952, the company justified its existing rates with reference to rights under concession terms; the “fiscal balance” of the corporation; as well as the notion that, absent a capacity to increase supply, a decrease in the electric utility rates would result in increased demand and consumption and additional power outages.<sup>113</sup> However, the company now began to frame rate reductions as threats not simply to the company itself, but to ongoing projects to expand electric production capacity and meet electricity needs across the country.<sup>114</sup> The second indication that the protest campaign was gaining the upper hand is the government’s decision to negotiate directly with the central protest committee and

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<sup>112</sup> In retaliation for the article, the government closed Jumblatt’s newspaper (*al-Bayraq*), eventually suspending it for eight months, and referred Jumblatt to the Ministry of Justice for prosecution. In addition, the government suspended six other papers for one month each as a consequence of their republishing of Jumblatt’s article after his newspaper was closed. These were *al-Bayraq*, *Bayrut*, *al-Nahar*, *al-Nida’*, *Sada Lubnan*, and *al-Teleghraf*. On the suspension of *al-Bayraq* and Jumblatt’s referral to the Ministry of Justice, see *al-Nahar*, 1 June 1952; *al-Hayat*, 15 June 1952. On the suspension of the six other newspapers, see *al-Hayat*, 18 June 1952.

<sup>113</sup> See, for example, the following previously cited documents: See “Brochure intitulée ‘La Question de l’Électricité à Beyrouth’ diffusée fin décembre 1951 par la Société pour informer l’opinion” and “Dossier remis le 19 janvier 1952 à la Commission d’Information créée par Arrêté n° 1842 du 22 décembre 1951.”

<sup>114</sup> As the president of EDB put it: “The conditions under which the company has been compelled to operated since last December and the impossible situation it was put with respect to obtaining payment has had a profound and adverse effect on the [financial] climate, ruining the preparation work of a long series of efforts. ... Our company wishes to establish evidence that no fault can be imputed to it if this work is now compromised and the [needed] electrical equipment of Lebanon is delayed or undermined.” See “Lettre du 26 juin 1952 de President-Directeur General de la Société et du Directeur de l’Exploitation au Directeur General du Control” [“Letter of 27 June 1952 from the President of the Company and the Director of Operations to the General Director of Monitoring”], published as Annex 50 in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 216.

exclude the EDB from such meetings.<sup>115</sup> Government officials increasingly made public statements sympathetic to the protest campaign. They acknowledged many of the campaign's grievances. More importantly government officials began to reverse the previous official position that changes in electric utility rates could only be implemented with EDB consent.<sup>116</sup> On several occasions, both the minister and director of public works put forth proposals that were clearly unacceptable to the EDB. The problem, they now claimed, was EDB intransigence: the only solution was forcing the company to accept the proposals.<sup>117</sup>

Such statements did not only represent a shift in the government's public position on the campaign's demands. They also represented attempts to claim the mantle of popular representation that was at the core of not simply the campaign but the formal opposition's critique of government policy on the EDB. The minister of public works, in particular, claimed that it was the government's proposal, rather than that of the central protest committee, which provided the solution.<sup>118</sup> He further argued that the government

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<sup>115</sup> See *al-'Amal*.

<sup>116</sup> One newspaper article cited a cabinet-level source that the cabinet was now of the opinion that the EDB is required to reduce its rates (as per the government proposal) and that company could seek remedy through Lebanese or international courts should it view such reductions as unjustified or illegal. See *al-Hayat*, 3 July 1952.

<sup>117</sup> In an interview with *Nida' al-Watan*, Minister of Public Works Ahmad al-Husayni stated: "During the past few days, we have entered a definitive stage. . . . At this stage, we feel the conflict has come to an end. . . . With respect to the solution we have reached, it requires an imposition on the company of a reduction that will deprive it of 1.25 million liras in annual profit. . . . With regard to what should happen now, I believe the issue requires a quick solution. I recommended to the government that it apply the solutions that it produced and force the company to accept. I am convinced that the people and the popular committees that represent them will be satisfied because [the solution] ensures the public interest and realizes popular claims." See *Nida' al-Watan*, 4 July 1952.

<sup>118</sup> As he put it, "During the past few days, we have entered a definitive stage. The popular committees have converted to the solution the government established based on expert reports and studies." See *Nida' al-Watan*, 4 July 1952.

had always been acting in the interest of the people.<sup>119</sup> Such statements reflected a broader conflict between the government and the central protest committee, which had its roots in the months of struggle between the two—despite the fact that the government was now more responsive to the committee than the EDB.<sup>120</sup> This conflict, however, was for the most part put aside in an attempt to reach a final decision that the government would announce and the central protest committee would accept by calling for the end of the campaign. On 9 July 1952, various newspapers declared the end of the “conflict over electricity” and went on to speculate on the campaign’s final accomplishments.<sup>121</sup>

Surely enough, on Thursday 10 July 1952 the government issued a reduction in electric utility rates.<sup>122</sup> The decree listed nearly all the major EDB-related laws and agreements with the exception of the 1948 Monetary Accord. Throughout the protest campaign, the EDB drew on the Monetary Accord to establish the basis for its claims that any changes to the relationship between the company and the government (including the authority to set prices) necessitated negotiations.<sup>123</sup> As outlined above, the government

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<sup>119</sup> As he put it, “The popular committees pretend to be the only ones defending the cause of [the poorer classes], thus forgetting that the interests of the government and that of the people are intertwined, and that all that the government has done thus far has been in the interest of the people for [the sake of] realizing their rights.” See *ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Highlighting such differences, an article in *al-Teleghraf*, for example, claimed that the government had always protected the company, and that there were major differences between the findings of the government’s experts and those that the central protest committee had presented.” See *al-Teleghraf*, 6 July 1952.

<sup>121</sup> See 9 July 1952 issues of *al-Nahar*, *al-Nida’ al-Watani*, *al-Teleghraf*, and *al-Yom*.

<sup>122</sup> See Decree No. 8904 of 10 July 1952 (“*Tahdid As‘ar Bay‘ al-Taqa al-Kahruba’iyya li-Sharikat Bayrut*” [“Setting Prices of the Sale Electricity for the Beirut [Electricity] Company”], *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 29 (1952), pp. 729-731.

<sup>123</sup> The 10 July 1952 decree lowering electric utility rates was signed by al-Khuri, Sami al-Sulh, and Ahmad al-Husayni. It referenced the following in its preamble: the Lebanese Constitution, the 4 June 1925 concessionary agreements for a tramways system and the distribution of electricity in Beirut, the 26 August 1925 agreement for the establishment of a high voltage distribution network, the 4 June 1929 concessionary agreement to establish a hydro-electric plant on the Safa River, the 21 October 1925 concessionary agreement for the distribution of electrical energy to Shwayfat and other towns, Articles 13 and 21 from the

had initially accepted this basis of negotiations. However, the protest campaign's mounting pressure and the EDB's steadfastness forced the government to abandon the goal of a consensual agreement with the company. More importantly, the reductions lowered the maximum applicable rates by twenty-one percent from twenty-one to 16.5 piasters for lighting (domestic use); by twenty-two percent from 13.25 to 10.25 for low voltage motive force; and by thirty-seven percent from 13.25 to 8.5 for high voltage motive force. The reductions also set a standard discounted rate for lighting at 6.5 piasters, making all subscribers of lighting power with a monthly consumption rate above a certain level eligible. These discounted consumption levels were drastically lower than the EDB's previously existing pricing scheme. This reduction reflected actual electric energy type (ten-ampere versus seventy-ampere meters) rather than types of establishments (home versus restaurants). The new rates were effective as of 1 January 1952, thus retroactive to the protest campaign's early period.

The official protest campaign against the EDB ended on 15 July 1952, when the central protest committee called for its end.<sup>124</sup> On that day the government also issued a letter to the EDB formally informing the company of the rate reductions.<sup>125</sup> However, this was not the end of the conflict. The EDB for its part protested the rate reductions and argued that it was entitled to government compensation for revenue lost due to the new policy. Additionally, many factories and cinemas continued to refuse paying electric

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general conditions of the 4 June 1925 agreement, Article 12 from the general conditions of the 26 August 1925 agreement, Article 11 of the general conditions of the 26 October 1929 agreement, letter no. 215 from the EDB dated 4 February 1952, the decision of cabinet in its 4 June 1952 meeting, the recommendation of Minister of Public Works.

<sup>124</sup> *al-Nahar*, 6 July 1952.

<sup>125</sup> See "Lettre n° 1548, du 15 juillet 1952, du Minstre des Travaux Publics à la Société" ["Letter No. 1548 of 15 July 1952, From the Minister of Public Works to the Company"], published as Annex 52 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 218-220.

utility bills claiming that the rate reductions did not go far enough in addressing their specific circumstances.<sup>126</sup>

As the Khuri regime continued to face ever-expanding and disruptive political opposition,<sup>127</sup> it sought to mitigate against the situation by announcing a series of reforms. The government claimed that these reforms addressed the grievances of various protesters, the formal opposition, and the regime's defectors.<sup>128</sup> Two additional reductions in electric utility rates were important components of these alleged reforms. The government issued a second rate reduction on 19 August 1952,<sup>129</sup> specifying discounted rates for various consumption levels of low voltage and high voltage motive force.<sup>130</sup> This second reduction also established on-peak hours for each month of the

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<sup>126</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 28 July 1952; *al-Nahar*, 2 August, 1952.

<sup>127</sup> Several developments gave shape to this expansion and its disruptive nature. On the one hand, the Phalanges and al-Hay'a al-Wataniyya formed a formal alliance called the Popular Front, which though taking issue with some of the PSF demands contributed to the overall opposition against the government and the mobilization of protests and strikes. On the other hand, the 23 July 1952 Free Officer coup in Egypt galvanized the formal opposition, as the latter portrayed itself as part of a regional reformist wave that sought to challenge corruption, feudalism, and colonialism. This was particularly the case with the more populist figures like Jumblatt and al-Hajj. One example of this is the telegram from al-Hajj to the new Egyptian prime minister, 'Ali Mahir, congratulating the Free Officers and expressing hope that "[their] work leads to the liberation of humanity from the tyranny of humans in the Nile Valley and every where [else]." The PSF sought to capitalize on the euphoric atmosphere in the aftermath of the Egyptian coup by calling for a popular festival in Dayr al-Qamar on 17 August 1952. This gathering proved much larger than anticipated, with some estimates placing the number of attendees at forty thousand. The festival was the platform on which the PSF escalated its opposition by openly calling for the resignation of al-Khuri should he fail to implement the reforms demanded by the opposition. For al-Hajj's telegram, see *al-Bayraq*, 2 August 1952. For the reports on the Dayr al-Qamar and the demands advanced during the festival, see 18 September 1952 issues of *al-Bayraq* and *al-Nahar*.

<sup>128</sup> Al-Khuri announced his "reformist plan" shortly after the Dayr al-Qamar gathering, pledging to address administrative, social, and economic grievances.

<sup>129</sup> See Decree No. 9228 of 19 August 1952 ("Taḥdīd al-Ta'rifāt al-Mukhaḥafadda li-al-Quwwa al-Muharikka li-Sharikat Kahrubā' Bayrut" ["Defining the Discounted Rates for Motive Force from the Beirut Electricity Company"]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 35 (1952), pp. 791-796.

<sup>130</sup> The smallest monthly consumption level for low voltage motive force was defined as zero to eighty kilowatt-hours at a rate of 10.25 piasters per kilowatt-hour, whereas the largest monthly consumption level for that type of energy was defined as 560 to 600 kilowatt-hours at a rate of 5.5 piasters. The smallest monthly consumption level for high voltage motive force was defined as zero to sixty kilowatt-hours at a rate of 8.5 piasters per kilowatt-hour, whereas the largest monthly consumption level for that type of energy

year.<sup>131</sup> The government issued the third and final reduction on 5 September 1952,<sup>132</sup> affirming the universal rate lighting electricity for domestic, commercial, and industrial consumers while also providing additional instructions regarding off-peak versus on-peak usage for motive force. These reductions satisfied enough factories and cinemas to definitively end the formal manifestations of the protest campaign.

However, the additional electric utility rate reductions solicited a dramatic reaction from the EDB. On 5 September 1952, the company instituted its first formal electricity-rationing program. It justified the program on the basis that rate reductions had caused an “artificial inflation of demand.”<sup>133</sup> The EDB claimed it was unable to meet this inflation given existing constraints on capacities and finances. By then, however, the Khuri regime was paralyzed. The country soon became entangled in an open confrontation between al-Khuri and his loyal parliamentarians on the one hand, and the PSF and a range of mobilized parties and protesters on the other. On 15 September 1952, a two-day general strike began. It culminated in al-Khuri’s resignation and the eventual election of Sham’un as president. After this point, debates and struggles over the EDB would take on an entirely new set of dynamics. Rather than responding to bottom-up

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was defined as 540 to 600 kilowatt-hours at a rate of four piasters. These discounted rates were available to all subscribers irrespective of the type of establishment, and represented significantly lower rates on all levels than those previously offered by the EDB.

<sup>131</sup> These were, 4:20–8:20 p.m. for January, 5:00–9:00 p.m. for February, 5:20–9:20 p.m. for March, 5:40–9:40 p.m. for April, 6:00–10:00 p.m. for May, 6:20–10:20 p.m. for June and July, 5:40–9:40 p.m. for August, 5:00–9:00 p.m. for February for September, 4:40–8:40 p.m. for October, and 4:20–8:20 p.m. for November and December.

<sup>132</sup> See Decree No. 9379 of 5 September 1952 (“Taḥdid Ta’rifat al-Inara wa-al-Quwwa al-Muharikka al-Masmuh bi-Isti’malihā muddat 24 Sa’a fi al-Yom (Sharikat Kahrubā’ Bayrut) [“Determining Rates for Lighting and Motive Force Permissible 24 hours A Day (Beirut Electricity Company)”]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 37 (1952), pp. 824-829

<sup>133</sup> See Ordinance No. 9380 of 5 September 1952 (“al-Taqnin bi-Sura mu’aqta li-Tawzi’ al-Taqa al-Kahrubā’iyya fi Mantiqat Imtiyaz Bayrut wa-Dawahihā” [“Temporary Rationing of Electric Power in the Area of the Concession for Beirut and Its Suburbs”]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, no. 37 (1952), pp. 485-489.

mobilization or intervening on behalf of protesters, the Sham'un regime dramatically shifted the government's approach toward the EDB as well as the broad constituencies of protesters who sought to assure access to infrastructure.

### *Common Tropes*

Struggles over the terms upon which the EDB provided electric current to the Beirut residents may have begun with the apparently simple demand for lower electric utility rates. However, as the criticisms, debates, and mobilizations continued, those struggles highlighted a variety of assumptions, tropes, and visions on the organization of economy and the state, as well as the role of various social groups in them. Thus, it is worth considering some of the broader arguments in defense of the EDB and the government's initial position toward it, the protest movement's critiques, and the intersections between the two.

As the political opposition to the Khuri regime accelerated, some political elites increasingly joined the ranks of protest campaign's supporters.<sup>134</sup> However, the dominant reaction among elites was condescension and a rhetorical deployment of "order and stability." This condescension was manifest in the frequent emphasis on the "backward lower class elements" that allegedly had little appreciation for the pressing issues of national development or public order.<sup>135</sup> Allies of the cabinet and the EDB accused the protesters of threatening order and stability in three ways. First, some ministers and parliamentarians said the turn to contentious politics subverted formal channels of political participation and thus undermined both democracy and the state. Articles in

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<sup>134</sup> See previous discussion of the formal opposition to the Khuri regime and its interest in the increasing mobilizations against the EDB.

<sup>135</sup> See *Le Jour*, 9 January 1952.

loyalist papers advanced calls for the need to utilize appropriate forums such as letters to parliamentarians and government-established entities to communicate complaints.<sup>136</sup> They also stressed the issue of proper jurisdictional authority to enforce policies or implement new ones.<sup>137</sup>

Secondly, these critiques claimed that the protestors' activities—whether in non-violent demonstrations or in less common acts of vandalism—threatened public safety. Statements went to great lengths to portray such acts as posing a range of problems for passersby, nearby businesses, and even public hygiene.<sup>138</sup> The EDB and its defenders singled out the technical teams that the central protest committee dispatched to reconnect electricity as particularly hazardous to the ad-hoc technicians handling the equipment and to the entire electrical grid.<sup>139</sup>

Finally, some businessmen and bureaucrats argued that the subversion of formal channels and the destruction of property undermined Lebanon's potential to attract foreign capital. Lebanon, they claimed, was both dependent on foreign investments and a model for the unfettered flow and safety of capital. The protest campaign threatened these hallowed principles.<sup>140</sup> Others warned of the dangerous implications of government intervention in EDB affairs. Such conduct would dissuade the diverse array of existing

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<sup>136</sup> See *Le Jour*, 23 December 1951; *Le Jour*, 9 January 1952.

<sup>137</sup> See *al-Hayat*, 9 January 1952; *Le Jour*, 6 December 1951.

<sup>138</sup> While this was particularly common in loyalist papers, some opposition papers reproduced this particular tropes at times, indicating a degree of discomfort with grassroots popular mobilization that was entirely under the control of the political opposition.

<sup>139</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 3 January 1952.

<sup>140</sup> See *al-Hayat*, 16 January 1952; *Le Jour*, 16 January 1952.

capital holders with investments in Lebanon.<sup>141</sup> In the context of an ongoing debate about the desirability of the free movement of capital and goods in and out of Lebanon, many in the trade sector viewed the protesters' demand for government intervention as a dangerous development. On the one hand, state officials and businessmen regularly argued that government intervention would scare off foreign investment. On the other hand, they claimed it would serve as a precedent for those that sought to make a case for increased government intervention and various types of state-sponsored protectionism and social safety nets.

Underlying the arguments against the protest campaign was a defense of the institutionalized hierarchies that have defined much of the history of modern Lebanon and which various social movements and protests frequently challenged. This defense was most evident at two particular junctures. The first was when a select group of Beirut notables and parliamentarians complained that the protest campaign disrupted their relationship with their constituencies. They bemoaned the fact that neighborhood protest committees established direct lines of communication with both the central protest committee as well as parliamentarians from other districts that had supported the campaign.<sup>142</sup> Such acts circumvented the preferred role of these notables as mediators in the provisioning of state-sponsored services, but also as the authoritative reference for local grievances. The second instance in which this defense of institutionalized hierarchies was clearest was when one member of the cabinet warned that the protests

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> See *al-Hayat*, 20 January 1952.

campaign would lead to “anarcho-communism or a dictatorship of the street.”<sup>143</sup> In fact, portraying the protesters as a communist front and (ironically) agents of a foreign power were consistent features of elite attempts to delegitimize the protest movement for much of the campaign.<sup>144</sup>

In their attempts to assert their particular vision of order and stability, government officials (and their allies in the business community) made constant reference to the Lebanese state’s complex legal commitments. Protesters had little appreciation for such commitments given their “concern with only the most immediate of needs, that while certainly important should not be allowed to compromise the basis of a modern functioning society.”<sup>145</sup> On the one hand, they drew on the Ottoman precedent of granting concessions and their attendant contracts. The republic, some claimed, must remain committed to such agreements because they were reorganized and institutionalized during the mandate period under “the supervision of a local authority.” On the other hand, the terms under which the mandate was abolished stipulated that changes to existing agreements between the government and entities such as the EDB had to be mutually

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<sup>143</sup> In one particular incident, parliamentarians known as the Beirut Bloc (meaning, those hailing from the Beirut electoral district) took issue with weekly visits to their districts from both activists and parliamentarians from neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city and altogether different electoral districts, respectively, in order to document complaints against the EDB. These parliamentarians couched their complaints in terms of the opposition seeking to undermine the electoral base of government allies in a district where the opposition was too weak to win any seats. The retort by the central protest committee only highlighted what was really at stake: “The constitution stipulates that a member of parliament represents the nation as a whole and that such representation cannot be limited or made conditional in any way. We are activists and parliamentarians of the people and for the people, even if we hail from specific neighborhoods or were elected by specific constituencies.” See *al-Hadaf*, 17 January 1952.

<sup>144</sup> See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [*Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies*], 15 January 1952.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

agreed upon through negotiations or put into effect through arbitration.<sup>146</sup> In the words of one editorial, “How is Lebanon expected to prosper through collaboration with foreign business and governments if it fails to live up to one of its very first agreements as an independent country?”<sup>147</sup>

Government officials and economic elites resorting to Ottoman and mandate law was a duplicitous act. The Khuri regime and much of its formal and informal allies laid claim to the nationalist struggle for independence.<sup>148</sup> They themselves helped produce a corpus of tropes about Ottoman servitude and French corruption.<sup>149</sup> These were two separately developed tropes subsequently integrated into the grand narrative of Lebanese nationalism throughout the late colonial and postcolonial periods.

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<sup>146</sup> Recall that the 1943-44 transfer of the monitoring of concessionary companies in general, and that of the EDB in particular, from the French High Commission to the Lebanese government simply removed the former as an intermediary between the Lebanese government and the various concessionary companies. It only transferred responsibility for the concession granting and monitoring authority that was established under the 1924 concessionary law. As such, despite the alleged new independent status of Lebanon, the Lebanese government was still obligated by the rights and responsibilities outlined in the “General Conditions” (“*daftar al-shurut*” in Arabic, and “*Cahiers des Charges*” in French) of each concessionary agreement established during the mandate period. The 1948 Monetary Accord between the Lebanese and French governments subsequently reinforced the constrained nature of the 1943-44 transfer of prerogatives vis-à-vis concessionary agreements. While the accord primarily dealt with fiscal and monetary issues related to currency reserves, debt servicing, and trade, the Lebanese government, in a letter appearing as what is effectively the twelfth annex of the accord, committed itself to both the existing arrangements that were in effect prior to the transfer of the monitoring authority, and the principle of negotiations and mutual agreement for the modification of concessionary agreements. For the transfer of the monitoring authority, see “Brotokol Tarikh 5 Kanun al-Thani 1944 bi-Sha’n Naql Muraqabat al-Sharikatayn Sahibatay al-Imtiyazat: Kahruba’ Bayrut wa-Miyah Bayrut ila Dawlat Lubnan.” For an Arabic version of the accord, see Annex 21 in Gabriel Menassa, *al-Tasmim al-insha’i li-al-iqtisad al-Lubnani wa-islah al-dawla*.

<sup>147</sup> See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [*Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies*], 15 January 1952.

<sup>148</sup> See, in particular, al-Khuri’s triumphant speech after his release from prison on 21 November 1943 in Bishara Khalil al-Khuri, “‘Ahd al-Ra’is li-al-Umma” [“The Promise of the President to the Nation”], *Majmu‘at Khutab: Aylul 1943–Kanun al-Awwal 1951* [*Collection of Speeches: September 1943–December 1951*] (Bayrut: al-Dar Lubnaniyya li-al-Nashr al-Jami‘i, 1983), pp. 1-3.

<sup>149</sup> See, for example, al-Mu’tammar al-Thaqafi al-Awwal, *Lubnan fi ‘Ahd al-Istiqlal* [*Lebanon in the Age of Independence*] (Bayrut: n.p., 1943).

Recourse to the “complexities of Lebanon’s legal obligations and historical commitments” also allowed elites to distance themselves from implication in the existing state of affairs. Khuri himself was a member of the cabinet on several occasions during the mandate period and participated in the approval process of several foreign concessions.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, it was Khuri who provided verbal assurances to the EDB that the government would stand with the company should there be attempts to pressure it into changing its policies.<sup>151</sup> Finally, the Khuri family law firm represented the EDB in Lebanon during the period of the protest campaign.<sup>152</sup>

The recourse to legal complexities also allowed for a “stalling dynamic” in the government’s response to the protest campaign.<sup>153</sup> Even when claiming to be “serious about resolving the electricity issue,” the government drew on the need to pursue a course

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<sup>150</sup> Al-Khuri served as prime minister in the second (5 May 1927–5 January 1928), third (5 January 1928–10 August 1928), and fifth (10 May 1929–12 October 1929) cabinets of the governments established under the 1926 constitution. During those periods, he held concurrent ministerial assignments. Al-Khuri also served as minister of interior in the first cabinet (31- May 1926–5 May 1927), which was headed by Emil Idde.

<sup>151</sup> See “Lettre n° 1601, du 26 septembre 1950, adressée par le Président-Directeur General de la Société au Président de la République libanese.”

<sup>152</sup> See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [*Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies*], 6 December 1951.

<sup>153</sup> In describing the 1922 protest campaign against the EDB, Jackson highlights a “corporate disjuncture between local managers and their European chiefs . . . .” He claims that “this geographical-political dissonance helped to split the political and commercial process to the disadvantage of local protesters, who were faced with the authorities and managers able to appeal to the Metropole. Political momentum slowed as a result and political temperatures fell, opening the way for alleged and eventually real divisions in the popular movement.” This is what Jackson terms a “stalling dynamic.” For him, it is a “steering obstruction . . . that came to the fore as the boycott continued. The stalling dynamic helped prolong the movement, even as it provided further evidence for the boycotters’ claim that the concessionary companies did not have the mandate countries’ best interest in mind, and that decisions were taken in France on a purely commercial basis.” A similar dynamic played out during the 1951-52 protest campaign, though Paris was less so focus of lobbying campaigns given the “national independence” of the Lebanon as opposed to its mandate status during the 1922 protest campaign. Despite this dynamic, the 1951-52 protest campaign demonstrated a remarkable resilience and ability to overcome such dynamics. This was in large part due to the fact the issue of the EDB formed part of a broader list of grievances against the government around which Lebanese society was mobilized and an effective formal opposition was highlighting. See Jackson, pp. 236-238.

of action “within the rubric of existing and relevant laws.”<sup>154</sup> Such issues were “complex” and required time to make sound decisions. In the meantime, of course, the status quo persisted and the protest campaign faced the challenge of maintaining its momentum.<sup>155</sup> Equally important, such legal recourse offered one avenue for reasserting the preferred hierarchy of decision-making. Only those with the necessary expertise and experience could identify, explore, and resolve legal issues. This confinement to the experts justified closed-door negotiations and back-channel communications that avoided the transparency and responsiveness the protesters were calling for.

Arguments that justified the status quo and demonized those that sought to challenge it were not merely a response to the protest campaign’s form. They were also retorts to the claims that protesters and their supporters advanced. With the EDB unresponsive to consumer needs and grievances, the central protest committee demanded action from both the company and the government.<sup>156</sup> For its part, the government alternated between one of two poles throughout most of the protest campaign. As discussed above, one of these poles was to distance itself from the struggle by claiming that the conflict was between the consumers and EDB.<sup>157</sup> The other pole was the government’s justification of the company position by finding no fault with EDB’s policies or practices.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 3 January 1952.

<sup>155</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 12 January 1952.

<sup>156</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 26 December 1951.

<sup>157</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 3 January 1952.

<sup>158</sup> See the discussion of the phases of the protest campaign, and in particular the findings of the two government-formed committees, in previous sub-section entitled “Phases of the Protest Campaign.”

The protesters' call for government support brought into focus the unaccountable nature of both the Khuri presidency as well as the president's appointed cabinets and the parliament that backed him. Such unmasking of the nexus of power in Lebanon was initially implicit. However, it quickly came to the fore as protesters and their allies drew on EDB as a case in point of government corruption and unaccountability.<sup>159</sup> As one speaker at a demonstration put it, "Corrupt governance is the result of an undemocratic distribution of prerogatives and responsibilities. . . . There are absolute prerogatives without responsibility, and there are absolute responsibilities without prerogatives."<sup>160</sup> Campaign organizers and supporters argued that government elites undermined the premises of independence and political representation by failing to support their fight against unjust prices and low quality service. For them, "the spirit of independence is embodied in realizing the aspirations of the people for freedom, public good, and both spiritual and material growth."<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, they argued that, "public service . . . begins and ends with the defense of the rights and freedom of citizens that tasked them with representing their interests."<sup>162</sup> In short, the provision of quality electricity at fairer prices was a public good that every citizen had a right to. In the context of a broader set of movements seeking to pressure the government into delivering on its promise of independence and development, protesters categorically rejected the government's failure

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<sup>159</sup> See previous discussion in sub-section entitled "The Formal Opposition and Its Intersection with the EDB Protests," wherein I discuss how opposition parliamentarians used the problems of the EDB and broader issue of public utility services as a case in point of government corruption and thus the need for a committee of inquiry. It was that particular discussion that resulted in the opposition's first parliamentary victory vis-à-vis various attempts to pass legislation that would seek to hold the government accountable despite the majority of parliamentarians having regularly voted down such proposals.

<sup>160</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 21 January 1952.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

to intervene, in addition to official findings or statements that favored the status quo, as symptoms of corruption and unaccountability.

Critics of the government's unresponsiveness to the protest campaign intimately linked corruption charges to the country's colonial past (and present). The mobilizations around EDB also demarcated the national from the foreign, and by extension, articulated a particular vision of postcolonialism. The central protest committee and its allies charged that the unaccountable nature of the government was a direct holdover from the French colonial period. For them, "the president that enjoys the prerogatives of the French High Commission is responsible to nothing and to no one."<sup>163</sup> They accused "this special clique" of "inheriting their power from the mandate and settling into it."<sup>164</sup> More so, they claimed that those in government "inherited the mentality and methods of the French High Commissioner who represented a farcical democracy such that it was he who exercised real control of elections, the cabinet, and all the interests of the state."<sup>165</sup>

Additionally, the EDB's French ownership structure cast doubt on the government's nationalist credentials and rendered the company's pricing logic as nothing more than foreign domination. In general, EDB's critics claimed, "We are independent, but we are not yet free from the traditions inherited from colonialism." For some, the company's foreignness struck at the core of the claim of independence. In one statement, the central protest committee argued:

There is today no country in the world where companies and individuals do not pay taxes except this one. Foreigners sold our resources to foreigners, and foreigners ruled us in the interest of foreigners. We live in

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<sup>163</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 3 January 1952.

<sup>164</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 21 January 1952.

<sup>165</sup> See *al-Anaba*, 3 January 1952.

an age in which colonialism has been defeated and countries have risen up to support one another in actualizing freedom, independence, and control over their resources. We are part of these countries, or else there would have been no meaning to the United Nations and its emergence in defense of the freedom and progress.<sup>166</sup>

Along similar lines, MP al-Hajj argued that

Foreign companies can no longer bribe or buy presidents and bosses to control both the leaders and their followers. The government is no longer foreign to the people so as to help the companies against the people through its occupying army. . . . The Lebanese [citizen] today rejects and refuses to be humiliated by any foreigners in this country, whether they came as mercenaries, investors, or swindlers. He rejects that a foreigner evades Lebanese laws that the citizen and his family live under.

For others, the question of the EDB drew boundaries between domestic and international affairs. Some clarified that they were neither calling for revocation of the concessions granted to the EDB nor for the nationalization of the company. They nevertheless believed that

Shame on us for being treated with such humiliation in our own homes. The issue is first and foremost one of national dignity. If we do not claim the rights that are ours and of which we are the source then we will encourage others to take advantage of our resources, our rights, and our dignity. . . . We can differ on our internal matters. However, in the combatting of foreigners and their companies it is our duty to be an undivided, united front.

At the center of all these critiques of government unaccountability and of the EDB's unjust (read: foreign) exploitation was a deeper critique of rationalities undergirding the status quo. The central protest committee rejected the pro-government legal, economic, and technical logics that government committees, international experts, and company engineers put forth. At times, the campaign mobilized its own technical

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<sup>166</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 26 December 1951.

reports, financial records, and legal opinions to challenge these logics on their own terms. However, the protesters and their allies primarily drew on notions of moral economy to highlight the justness of their cause.<sup>167</sup> Current prices, they argued, were not justifiable, neither as a function of the country's general economic situation nor the company's massive profit margins.<sup>168</sup> They understood electricity as a public utility, whose provisioning was first and foremost about the population's welfare and its right to accessing it. The central protest committee and its supporters rejected the idea that electric utility prices needed to guarantee EDB shareholders a certain level of profits.<sup>169</sup> Instead, they argued, it was the rights and needs of the people that should first be secured prior to the implementation of any profit-maximizing—let alone profit-seeking—strategies.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, it was the responsibility of the government to ensure such access through whatever measures necessary, even at the expense of breaking legal obligations or undermining foreign capital flows. Such expectations were not “aimed at ruining and destroying the country as our adversaries falsely claim so as to hide their continued exploitation of our resources, rights, and people.”<sup>171</sup> Rather, they were “rooted in the reality that the public good is the wellspring of legitimacy, and only from and for it can genuine independence, democracy, and development be realized.”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 26 December 1951.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 4 January 1952.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [*Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies*], 22 January 1952.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

One hallmark of the protest campaign's discourse on the EDB, the government, and the broader contexts within which both operated was its global perspective. Protesters anchored their demands in an understanding of the contemporary moment as one of decolonization and post-colonialism. Such a conceptualization was not only informed by the history of Lebanon itself, but also drew on developments throughout the Middle East and across the world. On the one hand, this is evident in campaign statements and reports that referenced the cost of production and public utility rates in cities outside of Lebanon.<sup>173</sup> On the other hand, the campaign drew inspiration and cited as precedent the movements for the nationalization of resources and industries in other countries. This was nowhere more evident than in the numerous references to Muhammad Mossadeq and his calls for the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry. This is not surprising given that newspapers sympathetic to the protest campaign regularly featured news items updating readers on developments related to Mossadeq. However, newspapers not sympathetic to either of the protest campaign or Mossadeq also provided coverage—even if less so than others—on developments in Iran. Thus politicians and activists involved in the protest campaign directly drew on the example of Mossadeq. The most notable example of this was during a parliamentary speech in which MP al-Hajj criticized the “obscene prices” of the EDB and other concessionary public utility companies. Therein, he argued:

There is no doubt that what the prime minister said about reform needing a magic wand is correct. There is also no doubt that there truly is corruption in this country. However, what is not acceptable is that we listen to this and not take any action to realize the required reform or find the magic wand needed to address corruption. . . .

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<sup>173</sup> See *al-Bayraq*, 26 December 1951.

. . . You know what is happening around us in our sibling countries. In Iran, the parliament and the cabinet—with the support of the people—cancelled the oil concession that granted the British fifty percent [of the profits], and for which it is dependent on to supply its fleet. The Iranian abrogation of the concession therefore poses a military and economic threat to one of the most powerful states. Nevertheless, the people, the parliament, and the cabinet of Iran moved to cancel it. You also know that the cabinet and parliament—with the support of the people—in Egypt cancelled a military and political treaty [with Britain] and called for the evacuation of [foreign] troops and the annexation of the Sudan.

The magic wand is the will of the people that you represent and that the cabinet can realize.<sup>174</sup>

Indeed, it was speeches of this sort coupled with a broader awareness of regional developments that led some newspapers and magazines to label al-Hajj the “Mossadeq of Lebanon.” As the title of an exposé in *al-Sayyad* put it: “‘*Abdullah al-Hajj: Saddiq aw la tussaddiq, ana al-doktor Musaddiq*” [“‘Abdullah al-Hajj: Believe it or not, I am Dr. Mossadeq”].<sup>175</sup>

While the protest campaign displayed an impressive capacity for sustained collective action throughout its seven-month life, it was not without its own internal divisions and tensions. This was evident on multiple levels. The endorsement of the Phalanges and the National Organization immediately placed neighborhood sub-committees at odds with the attempt by the two formal organizations to assume the leadership of the campaign. Such fears were not unsubstantiated. It was not long before government officials and EDB representatives met directly with Muhammad Khalid and Pierre Gemayyil—presidents of each of the National Organization and Phalanges,

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<sup>174</sup> See al-Jumhuriyya al-Lubnaniyya, *Mahadir Majlis al-Nuwwab* [*Minutes of the Chamber of Deputies*], 4 December 1951.

<sup>175</sup> The Arabic construction uses word play such that the Arabic word for believe (*saddiq*) rhymes with the Arabic pronunciation of Mossadeq (*Mussaddiq*), while at the same time Mossadeq in Arabic (*Mussaddiq*) literally means “believer.” See *al-Sayyad*, 4 February 1952.

respectively—to discuss the campaign and potential solutions to the crisis.<sup>176</sup> The central protest committee and its constituents were therefore caught between the desire for the political capital and party discipline that the two organizations brought with them and the more ad-hoc and representative nature that the committee strove for. Such differences in leadership styles/visions crisscrossed with differences around the campaign demands. While some segments of the protest campaign had as their goal the nationalization of the EDB, others were quite explicit in their rejection of such a policy—either for strategic or ideological reasons. Still other disagreements centered on the exact level of price reductions that the campaign should strive for in the face of the government's unwillingness to fully accede to the originally stated demands.

Such dynamics were particularly borne out in July 1952 toward the end of the campaign. While the Phalange pushed for calling off the protest campaign in light of their view that protesters had secured as much as they could, other members of the central protest committee expressed a desire to press on in pursuit of further reductions.<sup>177</sup> Thus even with the 10 July government announcement of price reductions and the 15 July official ending of the protest campaign,<sup>178</sup> some papers bemoaned the fact that further reductions were not secured or even that the EDB was not nationalized.<sup>179</sup> Indicative of these fault lines were the many factories and some cinemas that continued to refuse

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<sup>176</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 5 January 1952.

<sup>177</sup> See *al-Telegraph*, 28 June 1952.

<sup>178</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 16 July 1952.

<sup>179</sup> See *al-Telegraph*, 16 July 1952.

paying their electric utility bills despite the official ending of the protest campaign.<sup>180</sup> Such issues continued to animate discussions and mobilizations around the EDB well into 1954, albeit in an altered manner with the resignation of al-Khuri and the subsequent election of Sham'un.

### **Kamil Sham'un, Nationalization, and the Politics of Coalition Building**

Al-Khuri resigned on 17 September 1952. Five days later, on 22 September, the Lebanese parliament elected Kamil Sham'un as president of the republic. Soon after, fissures between the members of the coalition that forced al-Khuri to resign came to the fore. The start of Sham'un's presidency overlapped with a parliament whose majority sided with al-Khuri until the very last moment.<sup>181</sup> More specifically, the PSF had vigorously attacked this very majority as part of the opposition campaign to mobilize pressure on the incumbent government and eventually force the resignation of al-Khuri. However, rather than basing his first cabinet on PSF parliamentarians—which identified themselves as “a popular majority even if not a numerical majority”—Sham'un opted to carry on with the Khuri regime strategy of designating the PSF a minority bloc and thus accord it minimal

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<sup>180</sup> See “Lettres du président-général de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics” [“Letters from the President of the Company to the Minister of Public Works”], published as Annex 56 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 228-230.

<sup>181</sup> Recall that during the 1951 parliamentary elections only eight opposition candidates won their seats to form a relatively small formal opposition in the seventy-seven-seat legislature. While several other parliamentarians would join the ranks of the PSF as the latter expanded its activities and mobilize popular protests, the bloc never exceeded twenty-five percent of legislature. Why then did they elect Sham'un president over his presidential rival Hamid Franjiyye? Scholars differ on the precise set of forces that contributed to such an outcome. They nevertheless agree that it had little to do with long-term alliances and more to do with strategic decisions and best-case scenarios in the particular context within which the elections were held. On this, see Caroline Attié, *Struggle in the Levant: Lebanon in the 1950s* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 46-47; Hudson, p. 275; Traboulsi, p. 127.

cabinet representation.<sup>182</sup> This immediately caused a rift between Sham‘un and the core of the PSF, which Jumblatt represented and from which the National Bloc increasingly distanced itself.<sup>183</sup> Thus in its first few months, the Sham‘un regime was characterized by a reformist mandate while undergirded by an anti-reformist alliance. It was in this context that the next major round of mobilizations around the EDB unfolded. Rather than bottom-up mobilizations, this new round featured the presidency and cabinet as the driving force of a dynamic that—though unplanned—would lead to nationalization.

The sequence of events that led to the nationalization of the EDB proceeded in four phases: negotiations, escalation, and polarization, culminating in the government-imposed provisional control of the company. It was almost one year after the imposition of provisional control and the French government’s subsequent filing of a case with the International Court of Justice that all parties reached agreement on a government buyout of the concessions and facilities of the EDB. However, such a trajectory was neither a pre-established goal of the Sham‘un regime nor an inevitable outcome of the negotiations between the government and the company. Rather, it was the combination of contingent developments in domestic coalition politics as well as the legacies of popular mobilizations against the EDB that produced the eventual outcome.

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<sup>182</sup> The cabinet was in effect a technocratic cabinet comprised of four persons. Khalid Shihab served as prime minister, as well as Minister of Interior, Minister of Justice, Minister of Information, and Minister of Defense. Musa Mubarak assumed the positions of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Public Works, and Minister of Post and Telegraph. Salim Haydar was assigned the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Finally, George Hakim was Minister of Finance, Minister of National Economy, and Minister of Agriculture. For this ministerial assignments, as well as the ministerial statement of the cabinet and subsequent parliamentary discussion during the vote of confidence, see “Tashkil Hukumat al-Amir Khalid Shihab” [“The Formation of the Government of Amir Khalid Shihab”] in *al-Bayanat al-Wizariyya al-Lubnaniyya wa-Munaqashatuha fi Majlis al-Nuwwab, 1927-1984, al-Mujallad al-Awwal 1926-1966*, pp. 258-273.

<sup>183</sup> For more on this dynamic, see Attié, pp. 48-51; Irene L. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 160-166; Hudson, pp. 275-281.

The initial phase (October 1952 – February 1953) featured a new round of negotiations between the EDB and the government. This is indicated by an exchange of letters in which both parties called for negotiations while defining the issues at stake.<sup>184</sup> The negotiations were to conclude with agreement on expanded production capacity, a revisiting of the current electric utility rates, and general principles for amendment of concessionary agreements. The EDB highlighted the impact on company finances of the government-imposed price reductions, specifically noting a twenty-six percent drop in revenues.<sup>185</sup> The company further noted that many factories had in fact persisted in refusing to pay their electric utility bills despite the decreed retroactive reductions. For its part, the government responded by highlighting the “exceptional circumstances” of recent developments that “forced the government to find a means of coping with the difficulties it faced.”<sup>186</sup> The government also acknowledged the “financial and infrastructural efforts” of the company throughout 1952, and pledged to support the company through “collaboration ... in the spirit of understanding and on the basis of common interests.”<sup>187</sup>

The negotiation phase lasted until the end of February. Unable to reach agreement through the first round of exchanges, the EDB sent a letter to the government warning

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<sup>184</sup> See “Lettres du président-général de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics”; “Le ministre des Travaux Publics de la République libanaise au président directeur général de la Société Électricité de Beyrouth” [“The Minister of Public Works of the Lebanese Republic to the President of the Beirut Electricity Company”], published as Annex 6 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp 123-124.

<sup>185</sup> The EDB claimed that such a decrease in revenue was more than double than that recommended by the the ad-hoc government committee to investigate electricity prices. That committee had found not fault on the part of the EDB, yet recommended a 12.5 percent decrease in revenue to help off-set the cost to consumers. On the EDB letter, see “Lettres du président-général de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics.” For the report by the committee of inquiry to investigate electricity prices, see “Rapport de la Commission d’Information nommée par arrêté n° 1843 du 22 décembre 1951, remis fin février 1952.”

<sup>186</sup> “Le ministre des Travaux Publics de la République libanaise au président directeur général de la Société ‘Électricité de Beyrouth’”

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p.126.

that failure of negotiations undermined the confidence of the company in its own financial future.<sup>188</sup> Consequently, the company argued, it was neither able to make dividend payments to its shareholders nor able to continue construction on the Zouk Mkayel power plant.<sup>189</sup> However, such a conclusion to the negotiation phase should not obscure its key features. First, the electricity price reductions had a significant impact on the profit margins of the EDB. Second, some sectors of Lebanese society—most notably industrialists—pressed for additional reductions through continuing to refuse to pay their electric utility bills. Most notable, however, is that the government made no indication of seeking to nationalize the company and in fact sought to de-escalate the dynamic with the EDB by deflecting responsibility for the reductions on the protest campaign, the political opposition, and the instability they combined to produce.

Despite such conciliatory gestures, the initial phase of negotiation gave way to one of escalation. This phase lasted throughout the month of March 1953. It was during this period that the remaining elements of the PSF escalated their opposition to the government, declaring that their grace period for Sham'un to deliver on his promises of reform had ended without anything more than half-hearted attempts.<sup>190</sup> Members of the PSF consequently presented an ultimatum to Sham'un. They asked the president to distance himself from the failed policies of the four-person technocratic cabinet headed by Khalid Shihab. The PSF claimed Shihab “was fit for normal circumstances but not for

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<sup>188</sup> See “Lettre n° 332, du 23 février 1953, du président-directeur général de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics” [Letter No. 332 of 23 February 1953 from the President of the Company to the Minister of Public Works], published as Annex 77 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 274-275.

<sup>189</sup> See “Lettre n° 332, du 23 février 1953, du président-directeur général de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics,” p. 274.

<sup>190</sup> See *al-Anba'*, 27 February 1953.

revolutionary circumstances.”<sup>191</sup> One of the issues the PSF raised was the continuing electricity problems, and most notably the rationing that the company had put into effect as of 5 September 1952.<sup>192</sup> Soon enough, the PSF launched a multi-pronged media attack on various members of the government, including cabinet ministers, chairs of various parliamentary committees, and the speaker of parliament.<sup>193</sup>

It was in this context of increasing opposition to Sham‘un, and more notably the impending collapse of his appointed cabinet, that the government escalated its dynamic with the EDB. On 2 March 1953, the government issued a letter to the EDB demanding that the company resume construction on the Zouk Mkayel power plant, and threatened to “ensure proper service by all means.”<sup>194</sup> The EDB responded by pointing out that this was the first time in several months that the government had directly mentioned the Zouk Mkayel plant despite repeated attempts by the company to prioritize reaching agreement on the issue.<sup>195</sup> Indeed, this fact is borne out in the exchange of letters between the two parties that constituted the negotiation phase. The EDB ended its letter by invoking its right to arbitration. It was at this juncture that both the government and company seem to have entrenched themselves even deeper into their divergent positions. Seeking to avoid compromising on the Zouk Mkayel plant, the government proposed that the EDB

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<sup>191</sup> See *al-Nahar*, 2 March 1953.

<sup>192</sup> In fact, the nationalization of the EDB was an original component of the PSF demands of Sham‘un as president. See *al-Anba*, 10 October 1952.

<sup>193</sup> See, for example, *al-Anba*, 13 March 1953.

<sup>194</sup> See “Lettre n° 559, du 2 mars 1953, du ministre des Travaux Publics au président-directeur général de la Société” [Letter No. 559 of 2 March 1953 from the Minister of Public Works to the President of the Company], published as Annex 78 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 275-276.

<sup>195</sup> See “Lettre n° 398, du 2 mars 1953, du président-directeur général de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics” [“Letter No. 398 of 2 March 1953 from the President of the Company to the Minister of Public Works”], published as Annex 79 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 276-279.

temporarily purchase electric power from the Nahr al-Bared Electricity Company (NBEC) so as to ensure an adequate supply of electric current to the former's subscriber base while negotiations on the power plant continued.<sup>196</sup> The EDB rejected the proposal, insisting that the government agree to compensate the company for any purchases made from the NBEC.<sup>197</sup>

Faced with a rapidly escalating opposition that sought to undermine the basis of Sham'un's mandate,<sup>198</sup> the government on 19 March 1952 established provisional control over the EDB.<sup>199</sup> Such an act was limited to the production and distribution of electricity in Beirut and its suburbs. The provisional control did not apply to the Nahr al-Safa power plant, high voltage transmission system, or the distribution of electric current to certain mountain towns. Such measures thus reflected a poorly planned symbolic gesture rather than an intentional strategy to nationalize the company.<sup>200</sup> Two facts in particular justify

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<sup>196</sup> See "Lettre n° 615, du 4 mars 1953, du ministre des Travaux Publics à la Société" ["Letter No. 615 of 4 March 1953 from the Ministry of Public Works to the Company"], published as Annex 80 in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 280.

<sup>197</sup> See "Lettre n° 431, du 6 mars 1953, de la Société au directeur général du Contrôle" ["Letter No. 431 of 6 March 1953 from the Company to the Director General of Monitoring"], published as Annex 81 in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 281.

<sup>198</sup> As Jumblatt put it in a speech given in Sham'un's presence, "We said to this one be and so he became, and we told that one stop and so he stopped." See *al-Nahar*, 14 March 1953.

<sup>199</sup> For the text of the decree establishing provisional control, see Order No. 757 of 19 March 1953 ("al-Sulta al-Mu'qqata 'Ala Intaj wa-Tawzi' al-Taqa al-Kahruba'iyya fi Bayrut wa-Dawahiha" ["Provisional Control on the Production and Distribution of Electric Energy in Beirut and Its Suburbs"]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 11 (1953). For the letter from the government notifying the EDB of provisional control, see "Lettre n° 760, du 20 mars 1953, du directeur général du Contrôle signifiant l'arrêt n° 757 à la Société" ["Letter No. 760 of 20 March 1953 from the Director General of Control Notifying of Decree No. 757"], published as Annex 84 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 284-285. For the response from the EDB protesting provisional control, see "Lettre n° 1, du 24 mars 1953, du représentant de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics" ["Letter No. 1 of 24 March 1953 from the Representative of the Company to the Minister of Public Works"], published as Annex 87 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 287-288; Annex 88 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 288-289.

<sup>200</sup> This is corroborated by recollections of the period. Interview with Karim Mroueh. Beirut, Lebanon, 9 January 2014.

such a reading. The first is the seizure of EDB offices without the seizure of all of its production and distribution facilities. Given that such provisional control excluded both the operational Nahr al-Safa plant and the unfinished Zouk Mkayel plant, the seizure would have little effect in terms of a coordinated production increase. Second, the government apparently made no preparations for the seizure of EDB offices. Only five days after implementing provisional control, the government sent a telegram requesting technical assistance from the EDB in the management of the relevant facilities.<sup>201</sup> The EDB responded within the week expressing its willingness to provide such technical assistance, noting that such cooperation did not constitute recognition of provisional control.<sup>202</sup> According to the documentary record, neither the government nor the EDB interpreted the 19 March 1953 institution of provisional control as an attempt toward nationalization. While both publically criticized the other, letters exchanged subsequent to the initiation of provisional control indicate that negotiations toward resolving the deadlock over the construction of the Zouk Mkayel project was a priority for both parties. Such goals and expectations, however, were subject to change.

Polarization characterized the fourth phase (April–September 1953) of the dynamics between the government and the EDB. The opposition to Sham‘un developed to include direct attacks on the president, going so far as to claim that he had failed to deliver on his promise of reform by not even replacing a single manager in a single department. The government moved to demonstrate otherwise. On 4 April 1953, the

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<sup>201</sup> See “Télégramme n° 106, du 25 mars 1953, du ministre des Travaux Publics au président-directeur général de la Société” [“Telegram No. 106 of 25 March 1953 from the Minister of Public Works to the President of the Company”], published as Annex 92 in I.C.J. Pleadings, p. 298

<sup>202</sup> See “Lettre n° 217, du 31 mars 1953, du président-directeur général de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics” [“Letter No. 217 of 31 March 1953 from the President of the Company to the Minister of Public Works”], published as Annex 93 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 298-299.

government extended its provisional control to all electricity-related concessions of the EDB.<sup>203</sup> Thus state officials seized control of all EDB production, distribution, and construction facilities.<sup>204</sup> They also froze the financial assets of the company. This represented a fundamentally different dynamic than the initial implementation of provisional control. It was in this latest phase that the government issued a pamphlet to the public justifying its seizure of EDB facilities.<sup>205</sup> The document outlined a litany of well-known problems with the company's provisioning of electric current to its subscriber. However, most importantly, the pamphlet claimed in its introduction that genuine political independence and real economic development rendered existing concessional agreements with the EDB obsolete and necessitated a redefinition of the relationship between the country and the company.

EDB managers and shareholders seem to have understood the implications of this juncture of the standoff with the Lebanese government and—by extension—the Lebanese population. Subsequent public statements and letters on behalf of the company make no references to seeking to continue negotiations. Instead, they focused on how the EDB had acted within its rights under the concessionary agreements the company had signed with

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<sup>203</sup> See Order No. 892 of 4 April 1953 (“Bast al-Sulta al-Mu’aqata ila Jami’ Imtiyazat al-Kahruba’iyya li-Sharikat Bayrut” [“Extending the Provisional Authority to All Electricity Concession of the Beirut Company”]), *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya*, No. 14 (1953).

<sup>204</sup> On 10 April 1953, six days after the decree extending provisional control to all electricity-related concessions, government officials began an inventory of all property, equipment, and locations seized. The inventory was completed approximately four months later, on 11 August 1953. For the initiation of the inventory, see “Lettre n° 658/119, du 10 avril 1953, des séquestres au représentant de la Société” [“Letter No. 658/119 of 10 April 1953 from the Receivers to the Representative of the Company”], published as Annex 98 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 354-355. For the conclusion of the inventory, see “Lettre n° 1498, du 11 août 1953, des séquestres au représentant de la Société” [“Letter No. 1498 of 11 August 1953 from the Receivers to the Company”], published as Annex 99 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 355-356.

<sup>205</sup> See Annex 94 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 300-326.

the government.<sup>206</sup> On 14 August 1953, the French government filed a case with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on behalf of the EDB.<sup>207</sup> In its filing, the French government claimed the Lebanese government had violated its concessionary agreements with the company, which the two parties concluded during the mandate period and which were recognized by the 1948 Monetary Accord. There are no documented exchanges between the EDB and the Lebanese government subsequent to the filing of the case. However, the ICJ discontinued the case exactly one year later upon the request of the French government.<sup>208</sup> A review of the Lebanese archival record indicates that on 26 March 1954 the Lebanese government—represented by the prime minister and minister of public works—and the EDB—represented by the president of its board of directors—concluded an agreement for the reclamation by the government of all of EDB concessionary contracts and their associated facilities.<sup>209</sup> The Lebanese parliament

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<sup>206</sup> Two examples of such communications are the initial letter protesting the extension of provisional control and the EDB public response to the pamphlet the government distributed to justify extending provisional control. See, respectively, “Lettre n° 28, du 13 avril 1953, du représentant de la Société au ministre des Travaux Publics” [“Letter No. 28 of 13 April 1952 from the Representative of the Company to the Minister of Public Works], published as Annex 91 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 297-298; “Commentaire et réponse au Livre Blanc” [“Comments and Responses to the White Paper”], published as Annex 95 in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 325-345.

<sup>207</sup> See “Application Instituting Proceedings” in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 8-15. For a contemporary account of the filing, see “International Court of Justice,” *International Organization* 7 (November 1953): pp. 556-557.

<sup>208</sup> The ICJ initially fixed the filing dates for the Republic of France and Republic of Lebanon as 18 January 1954 and 28 April 1954. On the 8 April 1954, the ICJ extended the filing deadline for Lebanon to 29 July 1954. On 13 July 1954, the Lebanese government notified the ICJ that a settlement had been reached and that France would be withdrawing the case. On 23 July 1954, France filed a request to dismiss. The ICJ subsequently dismissed the case on 14 August 1954. For the range of notifications establishing filing deadlines, providing extensions, and seeking to dismiss the case, see “Part 4: Correspondences” in I.C.J. Pleadings, pp. 521-539. For the order to dismiss, see “Electricite De Beyrouth” Company, France v. Lebanon, Order, 1954 I.C.J. 107 (July 29). For a contemporary account of order to dismiss, see “‘Électricité de Beyrouth’ Company Case” in Manley O. Hudson, “The Thirty-Third Year of the World Court,” *The American Journal of International Law* 49 (January 1955): pp. 1-15, p. 10.

<sup>209</sup> See “Qanun Sadir bi-Tarikh 2 Tamuz Sanat 1954 bi-Tasdiq al-Brotokol al-Ma’qud bi-Tarikh 26 Adhar Sanat 1954 Bayn al-Hukuma and Lubnaniyya wa-Sharikat Kahrubah Bayrut” [“Law Issued on 2 July 1954:

ratified the agreement on 3 July 1954, and thus authorized the disbursement of 23,500,000 Lebanese liras owed to the EDB as settlement for the buyout.<sup>210</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In tracing the debates and struggles around the EDB during early independence, this chapter advanced several points. First, the provisioning of public utilities was an important arena within which struggles to shape the political economy of postcolonial Lebanon took place. Second, the legacies of the electricity sector's development in earlier periods of state formation and economic development informed, and perhaps shaped, struggles over the EDB. Third, it was precisely the struggle over the EDB and the company's intersections with other dynamics that produced the shifts in the institutional arrangements regulating the production, distribution, and consumption of electric current in Beirut. Bottom-up mobilizations elevated the issue of public utilities to the national agenda, transforming it into a political resource in the struggle between the formal opposition and the Khuri regime. Despite coming to power in the aftermath of the protest campaign, the Sham'un regime utilized the EDB as a political resource in a broader political strategy vis-à-vis the public, his coalition partners, and key elements of the former regime. Fourth, struggles over the organization and provisioning of electricity reflected dominant tropes and norms related to nationalism, state formation, and economic development. The mobilizations also demonstrated a keen awareness of regional and global events related to those tropes. Finally, the EDB's fate in the decades

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Ratification of the Protocol Signed on 26 March 1954 between the Lebanese Government and Beirut Electricity Company"] *al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya [Official Gazette]*, No. 29 (14 July 1954), pp. 523-528.

<sup>210</sup> See "Qanun Sadir bi-Tarikh 2 Tamuz Sanat 1954 bi-Tasdiq al-Brotokol al-Ma'qud bi-Tarikh 26 Adhar Sanat 1954 Bayn al-Hukuma and Lubnaniyya wa-Sharikat Kahruba' Bayrut."

of early independence highlights the blurred nature of the political-economic divide, both at the material and discursive levels.

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