

## Lebanon 2020 between the past and future

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One year ago, we hoped that September 2020 would be the month commemorating the passing of 100 years since the inception of Lebanon, and kicking off the new Centennial of Great Lebanon with a strategic approach. Unfortunately, this occasion has come after a devastating explosion that left the entire state in deep mourn along with economic and health crises.

The celebration came with the great pain of losing trust in the state. With respect to the Lebanese people, the Centennial of Great Lebanon was commemorated only by the visit of the French President Emmanuel Macron and his activities and speeches.

Sept. 1, 2020, was not a day to remember for Lebanese people. This occasion has divided Lebanon into two states in two eras: one in the past 100 years and another in the coming 100 years.

The identity, form and function of Lebanon as a state differ from one social group to another. There is a group of Lebanese people who aspire for political and governance reform, and they are voicing out their creeds and perceptions in many ways. But there is another group of Lebanese people that remain stuck in the past 100 years.

They celebrated the centennial starting from Sept. 1, 1920, and went through the timeline of historical events from their own perspectives.

We have watched and listened to various versions of historical narratives but didn't have a revision with a scientific analysis of the past 100 years.

This is definitely not a surprise in a country that doesn't teach a unified history to its younger generations. There have been phases of prosperity and development, armed conflicts and lost opportunities of development. However, all of them fit under the label "lost opportunities."

Lebanese people have never reflected and reviewed such experiences; thus, we have never reconciled with our past and remained drowned in the 100 years unable to think strategically without any sufferings or pain of the brutal experiences. We are now living in an unprecedented and stunning moment, where the crises in 2020 have awakened all the constituents of the state system. The damage which the past 100 years have wrought forces us to think strategically and forward rather than backward.

We are left with no choice but to think of the new centennial with new strategic approaches without turning back to the past 100 years with its classical means of governance and development.

MP Bahia Hariri was the only one that decided 10 years ago to look forward toward Sept. 1, 2020, in a strategic approach and called for reflection and analysis of the past century in order to be able to plan strategically for the upcoming 100 years in 2120.

She launched the "National Initiative for the Centennial of Great Lebanon" with a mission to enhance Lebanon's role as a state of knowledge and a cultural bridge among civilizations and nations.

Several events and conferences have been organized with representatives of all academic institutions, the public sector, the private sector, international organizations, religious entities, as well as politicians, youth and women.

Studies were conducted on the first development plan in Lebanon's history "IRFED" and all other developmental plans and strategies to build on them for setting strategic goals for the next century.

The National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism was designed in partnership with the premiership and the United Nations Development Program. The initiative also conducted surveys on young people's perceptions in order to map and analyze their needs and aspirations. Moreover, the initiative has implemented various sessions and training on how to study the Lebanese sectors and think strategically of the type of state reforms that meet the aspirations of the country's youths.

Lebanon has reached its tipping point with these crises, and Lebanese people are desperately seeking the narrow corridor toward stability. If we remain imprisoned in the past 100 years, our generation will be witnessing the failure of the state for a longer period. However, if we rise with determination to think of the new centennial and work on setting a new clear function of the Lebanese state, we can consider ourselves on the track of rebuilding our country.

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