

LEBANON'S CENTENARY

Looking back at events and forces that have shaped the nation's destiny

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what is left of the Lebanese state?

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NEW BEGINNING

Historic flight: US-Israeli delegation arrives in Abu Dhabi

AFP Abu Dhabi

A US-Israeli delegation led by White House adviser Jared Kushner arrived on Monday in Abu Dhabi, on the historic first commercial flight from Tel Aviv to mark the normalization of ties between the Jewish state and the UAE.

The word "peace" was written in Arabic, English and Hebrew on the cockpit of the El Al flight that landed at the VIP terminal in the UAE capital where US flags flew alongside the Star of David banner.

"While this is a historic flight, we hope that it will start an even more historic journey in the Middle East and beyond," Kushner, who is US President Donald Trump's son-in-law and a key architect of his Middle East policy, said before boarding.

"The future does not have to be predetermined by the past. This is a very hopeful time."

The landmark direct flight by Israel's national carrier, numbered LY971 in a nod to the UAE's international dialing code, is due to return on Tuesday with the number 972, matching Israel's dialing code.

The agreement to normalize ties was announced by Trump on Aug. 13, making the UAE the first Gulf country and only the third Arab nation to establish relations with Israel.

Israeli National Security Adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat, who was also on the flight to the UAE, said "our goal is to achieve a joint working plan to advance relations in a very



Jared Kushner

broad range of areas.

The talks in Abu Dhabi aim to boost cooperation between the two regional economic powerhouses in areas including aviation, tourism, trade, health, energy and security.

An Israeli government statement said there would be "working

meetings of joint teams on a range of issues ahead of the signing of cooperation agreements in the civil and economic spheres."

The visit will also include a meeting between Kushner, Ben-Shabbat and UAE National Security Adviser Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed, it said.

President Trump's national security adviser, Robert O'Brien, who is part of the delegation, said earlier in Jerusalem that more Arab and Muslim countries were likely to follow the UAE in normalizing relations with Israel.

Israel's Health Ministry had late on Sunday updated its list of "green countries" with low coronavirus infection rates to include the UAE and eight other countries.

The change meant the Israeli officials and journalists traveling to Abu Dhabi would be exempted from a 14-day quarantine upon return.

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CREATIVITY

Film fest gets underway with celebration of regional talent

Aseel Bashraheel Jeddah

The sixth Saudi Film Festival will on Tuesday go live with a 6-day virtual celebration of regionally produced movies.

Bringing together Saudi talents and creatives, the event aims to support emerging filmmakers and promote movie culture in the Kingdom.

Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the annual flick fest will this year see films screened via YouTube, reaching a larger audience.

Following the opening ceremony at 6 p.m., the first day will include selected nominated movies, a symposium on the future of Saudi filmmaking at 8 p.m., and then a second group of showings.

The first batch of films will take in six features, including "And When Do I Sleep?" by Husam Al-Sayed, "Coexistence" by Haya Al-Suhail, "Remember Me" by Mohammed Hammad, and "The Village" by

Mohammed Al-Hamadi.

Later in the day there will be five screenings which will include "Breath" by Razan Al-Sagheer, and "The Red Circle" by Abdul Aziz Al-Sarhan.

Nominations fall under the categories of best feature film, documentary, student movie, and unexecuted scenario.

The winner of the best film award will receive a prize of SR40,000 (\$10,665), with the runner-up getting SR20,000 and SR10,000 going to the producer of the audience's favorite movie.

Similar rewards will be handed out for best documentaries and student films, while first place in the best long scenario section will bag SR30,000 and second spot SR20,000, with the best short scenario winner receiving SR15,000 and the runner-up SR10,000.

Applications for the festival closed on Aug. 8 with 384 submissions (105 films and 279 scripts).

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Spotlight

SPECIAL COVERAGE



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FRANCE AND LEBANON

The mandate's mixed blessing

Multiple crises confront a nation founded on a sectarian system that is now being blamed for its deep divisions

Ephrem Kossaily New York City

It was amidst the ruins of the Aug. 4 Beirut port explosion, surrounded by traumatized citizens who seemed comforted by his presence, that French President Emmanuel Macron found himself in the surreal position of having to announce that he would return on Sept. 1 to commemorate the creation of Greater Lebanon.

Macron's interaction with regular Lebanese on that day has invited re-examination of the past hundred years, during which France, despite all misgivings, was always called "the tender mother". What separates the events that led to the creation of the modern Lebanese state and those that had brought the French leader to Beirut, is much more than just the passage of 100 years.

As his ship crossed the Atlantic on its way to Paris in 1919, US President Woodrow Wilson was armed by an unwavering vision for a new world order in the aftermath of the First World War: Affairs between nations would be conducted in the open, on the basis of sovereignty, self-determination and the repudiation of military force to settle dispute.

The victorious Allies gathered at the Paris Peace Conference to set the terms for the defeated Central Powers. A question was on everyone's mind: What to do with the pieces left of the Ottoman Empire, the "sick man," and every other empire that collapsed?

Back then, in the US, there was heavy opposition to colonialism. The US would never join the fight to help maintain and expand European empires. Instead, there would be mandates given to small, well-run countries, perhaps Scandinavian countries, Wilson thought, that would not have the ambition or resources to turn the protectorates into colonies.

"But of course, as soon as Wilson got to Paris, there was no way the prime ministers of France or Britain were going to let him do that," said historian Elizabeth Thompson, author of "How the West Stole Democracy from the Arabs."

Paris and London were negotiating their own new order for the Middle East, and it could not have been more anathema to Wilson's



The proclamation of Greater Lebanon: Gen. Henri Gouraud (center) flanked by Maronite patriarch, Msgr Hoyek, and Gov. Negib bey Abussuan. Getty Images

vision. France had invested so much in Syria and Lebanon during the previous century that it insisted on creating a "friendly" entity that would anchor the French presence in the Middle East.

The new entity had to be a safe haven for the Maronite Christian minority for whom High Commissioner Gen. Henri Gouraud, a passionate Catholic, felt warmly. Fears were exacerbated by the sight of Armenian counterparts dying during the genocide perpetrated by the Turks.

A locust wave decimated the mountain crops and resulted in famine which, compounded by the Allies' blockade of Beirut's coast, killed tens of thousands. Emotions, then, were running high on the first day of September 1920.

"Macron reappeared on the explosion site to extend sympathy and promises of help, almost exactly 100 years later," Thompson said. "Macron is to be lauded: In 2017 in Algeria, called colonialism a crime against humanity, and urged France to apologize.

"But I have heard no mention of an apology for actions the French took in Lebanon 100 years ago, even as the League of Nations awarded them the mandate.

"When World War I ended, the French came with sacks of grain and declared themselves the saviors of the poor Lebanese. Then, they installed a sectarian regime: Access to political office and representation was defined along the lines of what religion you belong to.

Then again, sectarian politics

was thriving long before Greater Lebanon. In the preceding system, known as Mutasarifiya, sectarian institutions had already emerged in an attempt to create a balance among communities.

"What the French mandate did, however, was anchor that sectarianism, continuing a pattern that was prevalent under the Ottomans," said Michael Young, author of "The Ghosts of Martyrs Square" and a senior editor at Carnegie Middle East Center.

"When, in 1943, the Lebanese

came to an agreement on their National Pact, a lot of what the French had introduced during the mandate became custom. For example, the president is Christian, the prime minister is Sunni and the speaker of the parliament Shia."

Lebanese poet Henri Zoghail, who has advocated for a secular state in the country for years, believes "sectarianism in religion is good, for every religion has its sects. But sectarianism in the state is a disaster.

"The French Revolution began way before 1789 when the nobility and the clergy were tyrannizing society. When the revolution matured and the Bastille was stormed, the clergy were put in their place, and politicians in theirs. The people became the source of power. The people were the 'word of God.' Only when the same happens in Lebanon, will we be delivered from this monster called sectarianism."

Young makes a key distinction between sectarianism as it had



The Maronites lost power. The Sunnis lost power. Now Hezbollah and the Shia. We shall see where they're going.

been prior to the 1975 Lebanese civil war, and the version that was to then emerge after the conflict ended.

"When the war ended in 1990, you had a new order established by the Syrians and the Saudis, who came to a kind of consensus over Lebanon, that became known as the Taif Accord, and that eventually brought the nomination of Rafik Hariri as a prime minister," he said.

"Today, we have a dominant military force called Hezbollah that is not allowing for the consolidation of a sovereign state. Tensions will continue until this issue is resolved. And on top of it, Hezbollah is an armed group that is not loyal to Lebanon. It is loyal to a foreign power."

Young said, in conclusion: "Our agenda is always tied to someone outside of Lebanon. Every community has been weakened by it. The Maronites lost power. The Sunnis lost power. Now Hezbollah and the Shia. We will see where they're going."

Now is the time to build a stable, prosperous, tolerant Lebanon

BAHAA HARIRI

As Lebanon marks its 100th anniversary, the crisis engulfing it is forcing all Lebanese to reflect on what we need to do to put us on the path to becoming a stable, prosperous, tolerant nation.

Lebanon was founded after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and a brutal famine that killed half the population of Mount Lebanon. What followed was a major inflection point and a total revision of government.

Today, Lebanon faces a massive economic and humanitarian crisis. Our system is broken. We are now at another major inflection point that needs a response as radical and all-encompassing as the one 100 years ago.

The tragic explosion in the Port of Beirut on Aug. 4 was a symptom of the terrible disease afflicting Lebanese society. The parasitic elites were repeatedly warned about the danger lingering in the waterfront warehouse, yet they abandoned ordinary people.

By prolonging the process of government formation and blaming everyone but

themselves, the ruling regime of warlords and militias are biding their time to reassert themselves.

This is unacceptable. The same system controlled by the same people will only yield the same results, and these results have forced our country to its knees.

Where do we go from here? We must start with an empowered and revolutionary interim government. Interim governments are often only entrusted to collect garbage from the streets, but we need one that can remove all the garbage that litters our country's political system.

Vested interests will seek to undermine an interim government by suggesting that it does not have a mandate for radical reform. What more clear and present mandate is needed than the young people marching in the streets or the families sitting in ruined homes?

A new interim leadership of talented, dedicated and independent experts must receive local and international backing to pursue a radical agenda that stretches from



Bahaa Hariri is the eldest son of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri

turning the lights back on to guiding Lebanon through wholesale constitutional reform.

The most immediate task will be to rebuild Beirut and secure an emergency deal with the International Monetary Fund to restore public finances. We are desperate for the international community to provide financial and development assistance with transparent and accountable delivery to ensure it reaches the people who need it.

International partners such as French President Emmanuel Macron will be critical allies for this, and we will need their long-term engagement to support us through the process. The interim government must then methodically purge the system of the vested interests and corrupt officials that have strangled Lebanon to date.

Militias such as Hezbollah are a clear and present danger to the country and must be disarmed and dismantled, freeing the government from the poisonous "state within a state." All institutions — the judiciary, security services and even the port authorities — must

be cleaned up, with factional interests replaced by meritocracy.

Most importantly for Lebanon's future, the interim government should oversee a process of constitutional reform. The process can take its mandate from the peace agreement that ended Lebanon's civil war, which called for such constitutional reform but remains unfulfilled by the warlords who have come to dominate the country.

By agreeing on a new, non-confessional constitution that protects minorities and enshrines the rights and freedoms of the Lebanese people, the Lebanon that we love will return. This Lebanon can be a neutral country in the region, maintaining good relations with all our Arab neighbors and welcoming citizens and investment.

We are at a critical juncture in our history. We have the chance now to change the direction of Lebanon's future. We must seize this chance and create hope that Lebanon's next 100 years will be more peaceful and prosperous than its first.

Greater Lebanon Centenary

OPINION

Let trusted third parties help

International partners can assist the people of Lebanon rebuild and reform their country, and make the right decisions

HERVE DE CHARETTE

As French President Emmanuel Macron visits Beirut for the second time in weeks, the situation in Lebanon is painful. The collapse of the banking system has ruined many, and poverty and corruption are widespread.

The explosion on Aug. 4 in the Port of Beirut completed the disaster by bringing down much of the capital's public infrastructure and crippling public services. People are desperate. This situation is unprecedented in Lebanese history, even compared with the civil war.

This bleak picture hides a worse reality, which can be summarized in three points:

- Financial stability, on which Lebanon's prosperity was based, is a distant memory.
- The country is deeply torn between clans and rivalries — religious, economic or political. The institutions have lost their legitimacy, and in actual fact the state exists no more.
- Lebanon is a defenseless prey in the Middle East, not to mention the 2.5 million foreigners taking refuge on its soil.

We understand the despair of the Lebanese, many of whom believe that Lebanon does not have the means to get by on its own. But rather than giving in to pessimism, I believe it is possible to draw up a project and implement it. It should include three main elements:

- First of all, a new economic and financial order, capable of restoring confidence, developed with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund and including the necessary safeguards against corruption.
- Next, new political institutions, with a new method of voting for the election of parliamentarians where confessionalism is no longer the main reference. The legitimate attachment of the Lebanese people to the diversity of their religions can be recognized and expressed in another way in the new constitution.
- Finally, all militias, including Hezbollah, will have to be integrated into the armed forces, reconfigured for this purpose if necessary, in order to restore and guarantee the unity of Lebanon.



Herve de Charette served as a French minister three times: In 1986-1988, 1993-1995, and 1995-1997 as minister of foreign affairs. He was mayor of Saint-Florent-le-Vieil from 1989 to 2014, and MP for Maine-et-Loire between 1988 and 2012.

Such a project may be unrealistic. As things stand, there is little hope that the political forces involved can go down this road together. Rather, one imagines a gradual drift of the country towards a kind of "Somaliaization," which could be the prelude to a new civil war.

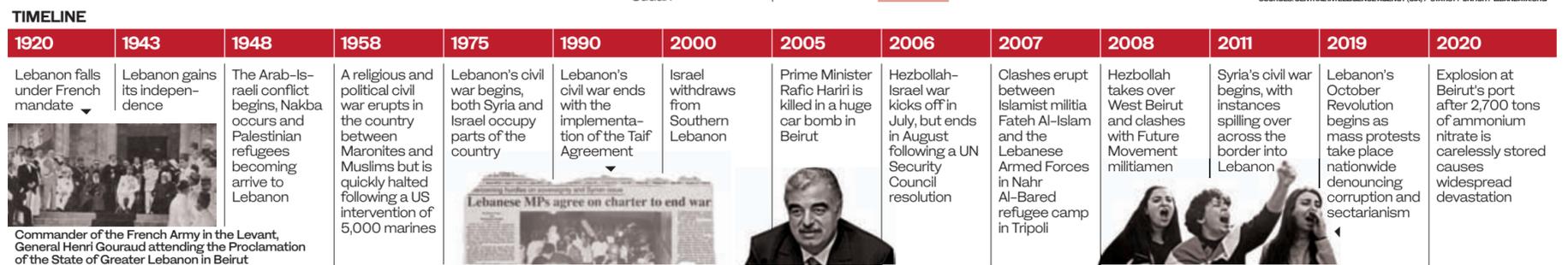
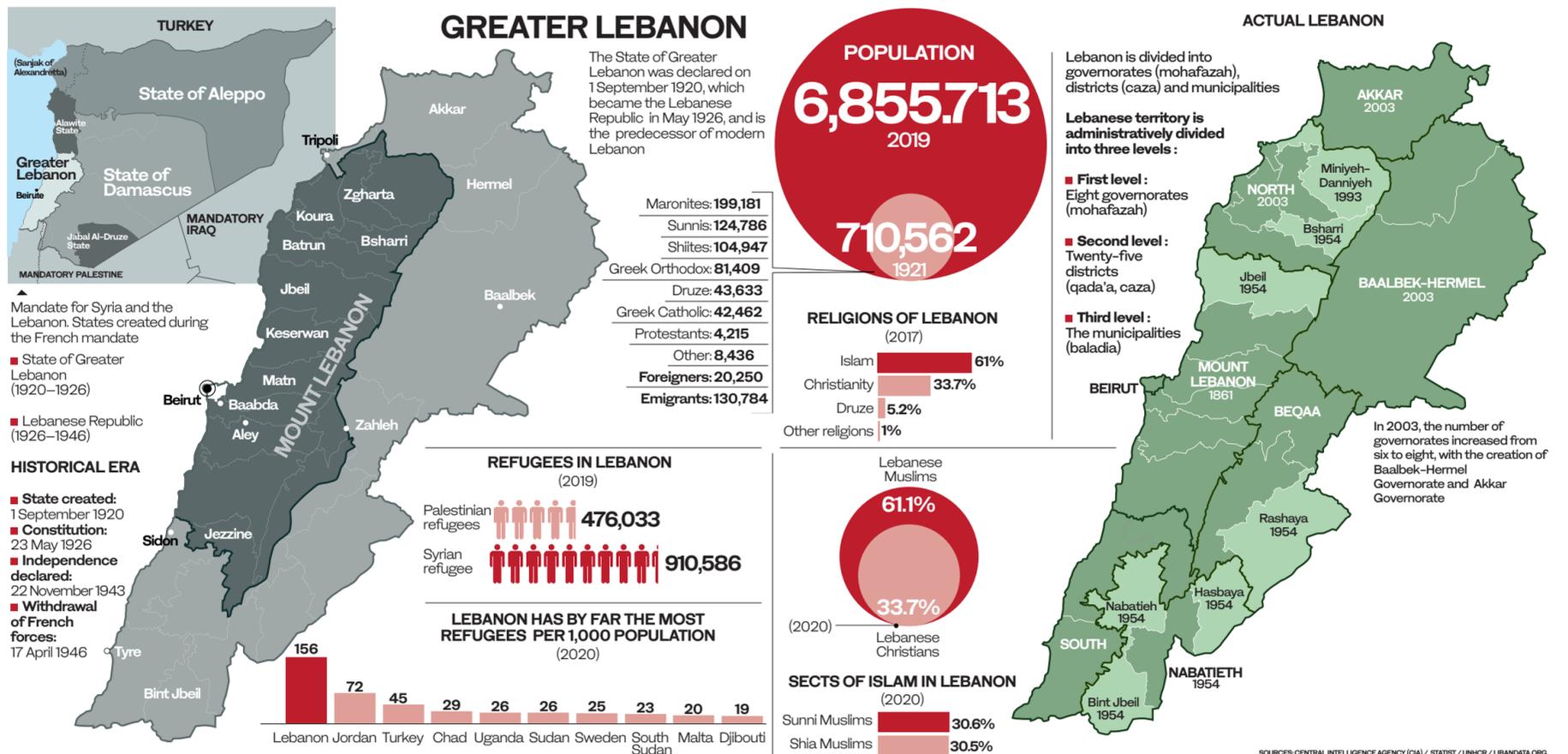
Yet there will be no possible future for Lebanon without confronting this terrible equation with the three unknown variables mentioned earlier: Economic and financial for one, political and institutional for another, and finally security. Lebanon will probably not be able to do it alone, but that is the challenge.

It was not wrong of our Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian to tell the Lebanese: "Help us help you." But the present situation is such that recovery from the crisis can only be successfully achieved with the help of the international community. Lebanon will need the political backing and friendly support of external partners who could be described as "trusted third parties." In other words, let the trusted third parties help the Lebanese make the right decisions.

This requires a dual architecture: First, the major powers must encourage and support the proposed approach, and then the countries of the region will have to be involved in the development of the project, which will necessarily have to take into account the diversity of their concerns.

It is not about putting Lebanon under trusteeship; that would not be an adequate solution. Rather, it is a mediation, brokered outside Lebanon but at the service of the Lebanese, so as to help the local political forces find the right compromises that will allow Lebanon to restart on a new basis, and which should also be recognized, even guaranteed, by the main countries of the region.

Now and before, Lebanon can count on the support of France. We should welcome the bold and courageous initiatives already taken by Macron. Our country is thus in the best position to conduct the international mediation that I suggest. In a precedent, in 1996 France showed its capacity for initiative in Lebanon in very difficult conditions. Why not in 2020?



INTERVIEW

France can prevent Lebanon from sinking, if Lebanese do their part

Lelia Mezher Beirut

Lebanon finally saw the light on Nov. 22, 1945, almost 25 years after the declaration of Greater Lebanon by Gen. Henri Gouraud.

That same year, it became a founding member of the UN.

In 1947, one of its most brilliant politicians, Charles Malek, helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, alongside Rene Cassin, Peng Chung Chang, and John Humphrey, under the lead-

ership of Franklin D. Roosevelt's widow, Eleanor.

This golden age has now become a memory. Lebanon in 2020 is nothing less than a failed state, a country that, according to Nassif Youssef Hitti, a Lebanese diplomat, academic and former minister of foreign affairs and emigrants, "is the least regionally and internationally influential and the most influenced by foreign powers."

Hitti told Arab News en Francais

the date of Sept. 1 certainly had a "sentimental" dimension related to "the importance of the creation of this entity" that became the modern Lebanon.

On the other hand, the Greater Lebanon proclamation centenary comes at a time when Lebanon must be prevented from "sinking like the Titanic."

He added: "A confrontation with the current authorities is more than necessary today. You have to show will and foresight. These elements are essential in a country where nearly 52 percent of the population lives below the poverty threshold and where, instead of social uplift, there is now social decline."

"We must have the mindset and go for it. To say that we are

a country of coexistence is no longer enough. Today everything is politicized. Structural and comprehensive political, economic, and financial reforms are needed and must be initiated. Time is our sworn enemy."

According to Hitti, a government must be immediately formed, with a plan of action and a roadmap with a clear agenda. "Political actors must be transparent and held accountable."

What about France's role in Lebanon, as French President Emmanuel Macron visits Lebanon for the second time in less than two months? Is not the French intervention mainly driven by the historical link that exists between the two countries? "There is certainly a sentimental

dimension. For Paris, we must save this country, a model of coexistence and of unity in diversity."

However, the strategic importance of Beirut and its stability should not be understated.

"This stability is important, not only for the Middle East, but also for the entire Mediterranean. Lebanon's deep stability is important for obvious strategic reasons. In case you need reminding, this former head of Lebanese diplomacy (Hitti) resigned as minister of foreign affairs in the wake of an awkward statement made by then Prime Minister Hassan Diab, in response to remarks made by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian."

Le Drian, during a visit to Beirut, had harshly criticized Lebanese officials for their inaction. In response, Diab claimed that Le Drian "lacks information" about

the reforms undertaken by his government. Despite the chill cast by this statement, Macron was the first international leader to go to the bedside of Beirut after the massive explosion of Aug. 4 that damaged nearly half of the city.

So, was Paris in a position to prevent Beirut from sinking? It was, but Hitti said: "We must fulfil our duty. I am very much counting on the role of France. This country is a friend, and a friend is someone who tells you the truth as it is. During my tenure as minister, I was very open to criticism. France can play a supporting role, only if we shoulder our responsibilities."

How did Hitti perceive Lebanon in 2021? He called for "a new social contract, a drastic reform of the political system, which could put an end to sectarian logic and the reign of tribal leaders."



Greater Lebanon Centenary



FRANCE-LEBANON TIES

'Because it is you, because it is us'

The two countries share an enduring bond — as French leader Emmanuel Macron's tribute shows

Antonio Munioz Paris

The symbolism could not have been stronger. On Sept. 1, 1920, French Gen. Henri Gouraud, representing the French mandate authority, proclaimed the State of Greater Lebanon from the Pine Residence in Beirut. On that day, Lebanon set out on its path toward independence, which it gained — for better or worse — 23 years later, on Nov. 22, 1943.



French President Emmanuel Macron tours a shell-shocked Beirut in the wake of the devastating port blast in the capital. AFP

One hundred years later, as French President Emmanuel Macron inspected the devastation caused by the massive explosion of Aug. 4, 2020 at the Beirut port, Lebanese people, expressing their anger at the incompetence of the Lebanon's authorities, called for the country to be placed under "French mandate for the coming 10 years." The French leader promised to return on Sept. 1 for the centenary celebrations of the creation of Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Paris stepped up its efforts to support those affected by the explosion, and to urge Lebanese leaders to begin much-needed reforms to deal with the serious economic and financial crisis facing the country.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian's July 8 cri de coeur aimed at the Lebanese authorities — "Help us help you, dammit!" — reflected growing concern in Paris over the very future of Lebanon.

Relations between the two countries go back much further than the historic date in 1920, which only consecrated ties that were several hundreds of years old. One can trace the beginning of France's links with Lebanon to St. Louis, the 13th-century monarch who recognized the Maronite nation in Mount

Lebanon and was committed to ensuring its protection.

However, it was the capitulation agreements between the Ottoman empire under Suleiman the Magnificent and the European powers, including France, ruled by Francois I, that paved the way for France in the 14th century to forge deeper relations with the Lebanese, with the aim of defending the empire's minorities, especially Christians.

In 1860, after the massacres of Christians in Mount Lebanon, the



France is almost the only power that has always worked for the stability, security and sovereignty of Lebanon.

French, under Napoleon III, intervened militarily to restore order. This allowed the creation, on a political level, of the Mutasarrifate, an administrative authority that ushered in a period of stability until the First World War.

With the end of the Ottoman empire at the beginning of the 20th century, Lebanon was put under French mandate. Since then, Paris has always played a privileged role in the land of the cedars. Beirut was

at the center of relations between these two entities, especially its port, which was largely destroyed in the Aug. 4 blast.

When the Count of Pertuis was granted the concession for the modernization of the port, he opened Beirut to the world. The city began to develop, mainly thanks to the silk trade between Lyon and the Lebanese mountains. It was the installation of mainly French-speaking religious missions in the 19th century, and the creation of schools and Saint Joseph's University that made Beirut and Mount Lebanon what they are today.

Lebanon thus became the center of a strategic vision for France, which saw it as the flagship of the Beirut-Damascus-Bagdad axis in the face of the British-controlled Haifa-Amman-Bagdad axis.

The establishment by the French of the railway that connected Beirut to Mount Lebanon, on the one hand, and Damascus to Baghdad on the other, ended up giving Beirut a new dimension by shaping it economically, politically and culturally.

France was thus actively present, long before the mandate instituted by the League of Nations in April 1920. The proclamation of Greater Lebanon was the crowning achievement of a relationship



A French patrol, part of a multinational peacekeeping force, outside the southern Lebanese village of Al-Tiri in 2006. AFP

that has been established simultaneously on religious, cultural, economic and political levels.

France's political support to Lebanon has been immeasurable, especially during the 1975-1990 war. Paris has repeatedly sent envoys to negotiate cease-fires and to unblock political crises. The July 2007 meeting at the Chateau de La Celle-Saint-Cloud to initiate a dialogue between different Lebanese political forces is a case in point.

The road map recently presented by President Macron is the latest example of this approach.

France's presence in the UN and multinational forces formed several times to intervene in Lebanon can hardly be glossed over. French soldiers paid dearly

for their country's support for Lebanon, such as during the 1983 Drakkar building attack, blamed on Hezbollah and Iran, which killed 58 French paratroopers. The assassination by the Syrians of Ambassador Louis Delamare in 1981 is another case in point.

In addition, France has been present in UNIFIL forces since 1978 and remains one of its principal contributors.

On the financial front, as the linchpin of the support group for Lebanon, France has always been a mobilizing force for donors. In recent years, various conferences had been organized to help Lebanon, notably Paris I, II and III under the leadership of former President Jacques Chirac, as well as the CEDRE conference in 2018.

It is a friendship that has been marked by Chirac's unwavering support for Lebanon, especially after the assassination of Rafik Hariri in 2005. France has always been present in the most difficult times to lend a helping hand. It is also the country that has the most leverage as it tries to talk with all parties, while other countries, especially regional ones, take more radical positions.

Paris is virtually the only power that has always worked for the unity, stability and sovereignty of Lebanon. A special friendship connects the two countries, beyond strategic and economic interests — a friendship epitomized by President Macron's words in Beirut on Aug. 6: "Because it's you, because it's us."

INTERVIEW

Lebanon can draw strength from the life of Charles de Gaulle

The connections forged by the wartime leader remain important, says former French finance minister Herve Gaymard

Randa Takieddine Paris

Tuesday marks the centenary of the proclamation of Greater Lebanon. For Herve Gaymard, president of the Charles de Gaulle Foundation, it is an opportunity to reflect not only on the history of Franco-Lebanese relations, but also on the time de Gaulle spent in Lebanon and the connections he forged with the country

"Like all French people, we are very attached to Lebanon," Gaymard told Arab News en Francais. "We have always been closely linked to its history, especially since the 19th century, after the massacres of 1860 (Mount Lebanon Civil War) and the creation of the Mutasarrifate in which Napoleon III was very involved. ... For us Gaullists, this (period) obviously has a very special resonance."

It is well known that de Gaulle

lived in Lebanon for two years, between 1929 and 1931, and that it was an important time in his life, said Gaymard, who is also president of the Savoie departmental council and a former finance minister.

"Not only did he visit Lebanon and Syria, he also went to British Palestine," he added. "At that time he already had the issue of Jewish communities and Palestinians at heart. He also visited what was known as 'Gezire,' or 'Upper Mesopotamia,' since we know that he went to the northeast of Syria when the demarcation between Turkey and Syria took place. British Mesopotamia later became Iraq. These two years were of great importance to de Gaulle."

Three events during de Gaulle's life stand out as illustrating his personal connection to Lebanon, according to Gaymard. The first

Herve Gaymard, president of the Charles de Gaulle Foundation. Supplied



was a speech (in 1931) he gave at Saint Joseph's University.

"It was no small matter for an officer who was not of high rank — de Gaulle was then almost a junior officer — to hold this astonishing conference with the Lebanese youth himself," he said. "This was the general's first Lebanese exposure."

"The second, obviously much more tragic (event), was the 1941 war (between de Gaulle's Free French Forces and the Vichy troops, a fratricidal war between the French, which the elites and the Lebanese people undoubtedly followed with great interest and sadness.

"De Gaulle's third Lebanese moment was as president of the Republic, or rather as the last president of the Fourth Republic. Indeed, when he returned to power at the beginning of June

1958, the summer crisis (the Algiers putsch) began in July, and everyone in Lebanon remembers it."

De Gaulle became the first president of the Fifth Republic in January 1959 and remained in power until April 1969. During this time "he forged close ties with the Middle East, and Lebanon in particular," said Gaymard.

"To us Gaullists, Lebanon is obviously of extreme importance. This is the reason why the Charles de Gaulle Foundation supports the project to establish a Charles de Gaulle Institute in Lebanon."

Regarding the situation in Lebanon, he has "no judgment to pass, especially since I love this country and its people."

De Gaulle died 50 years ago, and some might think that his ideas are relics of the past. They are wrong, Gaymard believes.

"One might be tempted to

believe that de Gaulle is ancient history but that would be a mistake. Several of the general's sayings are lessons for eternity."

He highlighted three examples of lessons from de Gaulle that remain as important today as they ever were during his time.

"The first lesson applies just as well to Lebanon as it does to France: Never despair. You should never give up or let yourself be affected or depressed by events, however painful they may be."

The second lesson is to be aware of your own strengths and how to make the most of them.

"It is true that you are nothing alone but when you have faith in your body and soul, you can move mountains," he said.

The third lesson is the importance of unity, Gaymard said, "because any country divided against itself will perish."

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Beirut was the link between East and West, and this is depicted in its architecture since the French Mandate.
Fadlo Dagher - Lebanese architect

BEIRUT

Where the streets still have French statesmen's names

Najia Houssari Beirut

After the French entered Lebanon in 1920 after the declaration of the State of Greater Lebanon, they reconfigured the capital Beirut to conform to the new political order.

Among the most visible transformations was the introduction of identity cards for residents, a move that sought to establish a Lebanese entity separated from other Arab states. In 1921, the French authorities conducted the first census of the population, and on the basis of this the Lebanese were granted a new identity card in place of Ottoman tickets. The census was boycotted by those who refused to separate from Syria.

The streets of Beirut, under Ottoman rule for more than four centuries, were referred to as haraat (alleyways), named after the families that inhabited them, leaders, princes, or even sects. The city's markets were named after the professions found in them,

according to the records of the Sharia court in Beirut.

The French mandate, however, changed the names after modifying the city's architecture. Twenty-meter streets were paved to connect the capital's neighborhoods and make life easier. And while the neighborhoods preserved the names of the families that lived in them, such as Al-Barbir, Zaroub Saba and Zaroub Al-Arawi, the mandate left its mark on modern streets by naming them after French generals and high commissioners.

Although Lebanon won its independence in 1943, some prominent streets in Beirut still bear the names of French generals from the two world wars.

Rue Gouraud is a residential and commercial street in Gemmayzeh in the Achrafieh district of Beirut. It is one of the trendiest thoroughfares, full of fine restaurants, French cafes and jazz bars.

Gen. Henri Gouraud was the

French high commissioner in Syria and Cilicia and army commander on the eastern side. Gouraud declared the State of Greater Lebanon from the porch of the Pine Residence in Beirut, and adopted the French military strategy known as "battle of annihilation." Gen. Gouraud, who

Although the street was renamed ... in 1997, the name Verdun has remained popular.

led the French forces in the famous Battle of Maysalun, lived on this street in Beirut.

A parallel street, Rue Pasteur, was named after the famous French scientist Louis Pasteur. It is also a commercial street and features shops of Lebanese innovators. Pasteur, born in 1822, was a chemist and one of the most important figures in medical microbiology. His discoveries

contributed to reducing the fatality rate of puerperal fever, and he prepared vaccines against rabies and anthrax. He was also known for inventing a method for pasteurizing milk, named for him.

The street adjacent to Beirut Municipality, Rue Weygand, bears the name of Maxime Weygand, a high-ranking officer in the Mandate-era French Army. He was the second high military commissioner appointed by France to rule Syria and Lebanon, from April 1923 to Nov. 29, 1924. Weygand, who saw action in both world wars, died in 1965.

Rue Georges Catroux is located in Beirut's Badaro residential area. Catroux was a general in the French Army (1877-1969), a diplomat who served in both world wars, and an adviser in the Legion of Honor.

Rue Clemenceau, located in Ras Beirut, is named after Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929), a statesman, doctor and

journalist who was elected twice to head the French government.

His first term was between 1906 and 1909, while his second was during the critical period 1917-1920 at the conclusion of the First World War. One of the leading architects of the Treaty of Versailles, he was nicknamed the "Father of Victory" and "the Tiger".

Avenue Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) is the waterfront road of Beirut and named after the most prominent French figure during the Second World War. De Gaulle lived in Lebanon for two years (1929-1931), and went on to serve as president of France.

Rue Verdun is one of the most high-end, lively residential streets in Beirut. It has luxury retail stores, beauty and hair salons, and several cafes. In the center of the street is the Lycée Franco-Libanais school. The French St. Joseph School was situated on this street before it moved to a new location outside the capital. Although this street

was renamed after former Prime Minister Rashid Karami following his assassination in 1987, the name Verdun has remained popular.

Rue Verdun was so named in honor of the victims of the Battle of Verdun, which took place during the First World War.

Foch Street, or Marshal Ferdinand Foch Street, is in the commercial heart of Beirut. Foch was a supreme Allied general in the First World War, and the street was named after him following the Allied victory over Germany.

Monnot Street, located on the eastern side of Beirut's central district, hosts painters and creative events, and holds concerts and plays in its famous theater, which is named after Father Ambrose Monnot, the head of the Jesuit mission to Lebanon in the late 19th century. Father Monnot contributed to the establishing schools and printing presses, so Lebanon could become a cultural and intellectual center in the Near East.



BEIRUT STREETS WITH FRENCH CONNECTIONS



ARCHITECTURE

Greater Lebanon's fading landmarks

Centennial of modern state marked by diminished collective memory of its historic urban legacy

Najia Houssari Beirut

Lebanon is celebrating its centennial as a modern state with a fading recollection of the landmarks that stood a hundred years ago.

The exception is the Residence des Pins (Pine Residence), the seat of the French ambassador in Beirut, which witnessed the establishment of Greater Lebanon on Sept. 1, 1920 which has stood steadfast against subsequent turmoil.

Other urban markers of that era either became extinct from natural factors and social development or were destroyed during the Lebanese Civil War. Whatever was preserved perished in the explosion at the Port of Beirut less than a month before the centennial.

The houses of Beirut's neighborhoods tell the stories of various epochs. During the first two decades of the 20th century, it was a modest city of 10,000 people with a small, natural port.

The city was surrounded by a

wall bearing many gates, which closed early each day. The names of these gates, — such as Bab Idriss and Bab Al-Burj — still resonate, though they no longer stand.

"Beirut did not start to develop until the end of the third decade of the 20th century, when the West began showing an interest in cities on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, including Alexandria, Haifa, Mersin and other Ottoman ports," said architect Rahif Fayad. Beirut's port quickly grew and saw the rise of a new mercantile class.

"The city's population boomed and had to expand beyond its walls to neighboring areas, which led to it becoming a modern, open city," Fayad explained.

Most buildings during that period were constructed with sandstone excavated from Beirut sand rocks. These old stones can still be seen in Spears Street, the wall of the American University of Beirut, and old houses still resisting modernity and destruction.

The stones were covered with limestone or cement to protect



Sursock Palace, a typical example of mandate-period design. Supplied

them from the seasons. Houses consisted of one or two floors surrounded by a garden, often overlooking the sea.

The façades consisted of three arches, with a red-sloped brick roof. The style was widespread in Beirut and other nearby coastal cities, and served specific social needs. The inner courtyard, known as "Al-Dar" (living room) was covered and surrounded by bedrooms, a kitchen, and a dining room. These were typical for Beirut's rising mercantile class.

The houses were constructed by professionals — designers and construction workers educated in Europe and the US. Italian architects were hired to design places such as the Sursock Palace, located on the eponymous street bearing the name of the aristocratic family.

With the large number of new arrivals, Beirut saw its port boom.

In 1920, with the declaration of Greater Lebanon and the beginning of the French mandate era, colonialists introduced wide streets, modern transportation — such as tramways and cars — and a new lifestyle. They tried to fashion public places in the heart of historical Beirut, but some clashed with its ancient churches and mosques.

Colonialists also introduced Haussmannian architecture, which entailed dividing the façade of a building to be adopted into contiguous buildings, forming the face of whole streets. This design is best featured in Maarad, Foch, Allenby and Wegan Streets.

This design can also be seen in areas relatively distant from the historical heart of Beirut, including

Spears, Al-Kantari, all the way to the Sursok area in Achrafieh.

"Beirut was the link between East and West, and this is depicted in its architecture since the French mandate, which introduced new stylistic elements without relinquishing Islamic characteristics," architect Fadlo Dagher said. "This blend of modern and Islamic elements is best expressed in the

Beirut was the link between East and West, and this is depicted in its architecture since the French mandate.

architecture of the Beirut Municipality building, which reflects both Ottoman and French architecture.

"This building was designed by the Greek-Lebanese engineer Youssef Aftimus (1866-1952), who began its construction during the Ottoman era and finished it during the French mandate."

The mandate period witnessed a

shift from single-family homes to multi-story buildings for commercial investment, Dagher explained.

"With the introduction of cement, buildings became five stories high, with each floor divided into two apartments, while the ground floors were left for shops," he said.

Lebanon's independence in 1943 led to further growth. The city adopted modern, vertical architecture and international style. This led to uneven development.

With the explosion that shook the city on Aug. 4, the Lebanese discovered how fragile and easily damaged their city was. According to a survey by specialized committees, 360 heritage buildings dating back to the period between 1860 and 1930 were partially or fully damaged by the explosion.

"The restoration of these buildings, with their wooden ceilings, renowned decorations, marble balconies and carved windows, primarily requires a political decision to preserve the architectural memory of the city," Dagher said.

Greater Lebanon Centenary

MANDATE PETITION

Francophilia or a sign of despair?

Young Lebanese divided over merits of petition calling for re-implementation of the French mandate

Tarek Ali Ahmad London

When the League of Nations issued a decree on Aug. 31, 1920 for the creation of Greater Lebanon under a French mandate, the Arab population was reeling from years of despair under Ottoman rule, a famine that had left at least 200,000 dead and the fallout from World War I.

A century after the proclamation of the State of Greater Lebanon, a petition calling for the French mandate (originally called the Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon) to be re-implemented for a period of 10 years has attracted more than 60,000 signatures.

It was launched around the time French President Emmanuel Macron visited Beirut on Aug. 6, two days after 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored carelessly in a warehouse at the city's port for several years exploded and damaged large sections of the city. At least 181 people died, more than 6,000 were injured and an estimated 300,000 were left homeless.

The cause of the disaster, according to most citizens, was government negligence and rampant corruption. It coincided with an unprecedented financial crisis and the deadly coronavirus pandemic. It is no surprise that many Lebanese have lost all confidence in the establishment.

"I sadly came to the realization that Lebanon, the way it is now with the government that we have, cannot run any more as an independent country," said Marita Yaghi, a 25-year-old doctor and researcher. "Not because we don't have the capabilities, not because we don't have the people, but because the people who are already in the government are just so attached to their positions.

"The mandate would be there for 10 years, 1,000 per cent temporary, just to be able to help out with the transition to an independent Lebanese-led government."

Adam Ouayda, a 22-year-old student of law at Saint Joseph University in Beirut, said: "If the mandate serves the purpose of guiding essential reforms that will allow the Lebanese state to move toward becoming a more modern state, without creating a form of economic dependency or control over Lebanon, I would be more inclined to support it."



In Beirut, General Gouraud, accompanied by General Goybet, passes before a double row of infantrymen (1920). Alamy

Below: The online petition calling for the French mandate to be re-implemented for a period of 10 years has attracted more than 60,000 signatures.



He added that if such a hypothetical arrangement served a strategic or military purpose that exploited Lebanon, he would oppose it.

While many among the younger generation in Lebanon agree with Yaghi about the political elite's determination to cling to the perks of power, not all believe the solution to the problem is a temporary French mandate.

"I do not think colonization in the 21st century should be considered as a valid option because it cancels a lot of the

country's freedoms and, at the end of the day, a mandate is just colonization in disguise," said Sara Abi Raad, a 25-year-old doctor.

Jeffrey Chalhoub, 22, agreed, saying: "Implementing the French mandate would not necessarily ameliorate Lebanon's crises, but will add to our inability to govern and develop ourselves free from outside influence."

Lebanon's students and youth have been a pivotal part of the nationwide protests that began on Oct. 17 last year, calling for an end to sectarianism and corruption. Decades of government mismanagement and negligence have culminated in the country's currency losing about 80 percent

of its value. A UN World Food Programme survey found that nearly half of Lebanese people questioned are worried they will not have enough to eat.

"I think this petition is merely a sign of despair — the Lebanese populace are so desperate, so angry and so mad at the current political system and at their ruling elites," said Karim Emile Bitar, director of the Institute of Political Science at Saint Joseph University.

"They are so fed up with the mobsters that have been governing them for the past 30 years, that this idea — which is, frankly, completely ridiculous and unrealistic — began floating around and attracting signatures."

The explosion on Aug. 4 and its aftermath was a wake-up call for civil-society groups across the country, he added.

"While politicians and the establishment have been completely complacent and inactive since (Macron's) last visit, it is as if the last visit did not happen, and they have made absolutely no progress in the formation of a new government. In contrast, civil-society groups have been quite actively trying to get their act together. They have been trying to form a wide coalition," said Bitar, who in 2017 cofounded Kulluna Irada, a civic organization advocating for political reform in Lebanon.

However, the goal of a united front to tackle the ruling elite's grip on power has proved notoriously elusive, with different factions and civil-society groups refusing to agree or compromise on some points, including social and economic issues, early legislative elections and the disarmament of Hezbollah.

"The mutual demand today, the demand that is agreed upon by most opposition groups, is a temporary government that would have legislative prerogatives," said Bitar. "This is not something new to Lebanon; between the 1950s and the 1980s, Lebanon had seven governments that had legislative prerogatives, and many people feel that today this would be an absolute necessity to prevent the current political parties from continuing to control what the government does, as they did under the (Prime Minister Hassan) Diab government."

Diab's government resigned less than a week after the explosion in Beirut but remains in place in a caretaker capacity. President Michel Aoun announced on Thursday that binding consultations will take place on Monday to decide on a new prime minister, in the run-up to another visit by Macron next week.

Analysts believe the last-minute scrambling is unlikely to bring about any genuine change and that it will be business as usual for the government. That is what happened when Saad Hariri's cabinet resigned three weeks after the October protests began and was replaced by Diab's Hezbollah-backed government.

"Today, Lebanon's entire system needs an overhaul," said Bitar. "There is a new generation of Lebanese that is demanding radical change, and the time has come to completely rethink the way Lebanon is governed, politically and economically."

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INTERVIEW

France is for a strong and sovereign Lebanon

Randa Takieddine Paris

Maurice Gourdault-Montagne served as ambassador to the UK, Germany, China and Japan between 1998-2017. He spoke exclusively to Arab News en Français on a range of topics.

On the verdict of the Special International Tribunal for Lebanon:

On Feb. 14, 2005, I was in my car when President Chirac called me, saying: "Rafik Hariri has just been assassinated. You have to come back immediately so that we can have a meeting to assess the situation and you can go to Beirut to pay tribute to him and his family."

I remember this trauma for Lebanon. A champion of Lebanese sovereignty had been assassinated and France felt deeply connected to Lebanon at that moment. We supported the creation of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

What is important is that the tribunal continues to work on the assassination attempts of (former Lebanese minister) Marwan Hamadeh and (former Lebanese deputy prime minister) Elias Murr. It is through this tenacity and stubbornness to bring about justice that we will achieve the desired goals. I think those targeted have understood that.

On the criticism

surrounding French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Lebanon in the wake of the Aug. 4 explosion and again for the centennial of Greater Lebanon:

We must keep in mind that the time of the French mandate, of colonization, is behind us. The time now is one of solidarity and common interests. It is a fact that France has a historical past with Lebanon that gives the Franco-Lebanese relationship something very singular, very special and unique.

This history is based on the fact that France has accompanied Lebanon in its independence and that, for France, Lebanon must remain a model of balance, openness, tolerance and democracy.

There obviously are external challenges. What we want, and this is the aim of President Macron's second visit, is to stand

besides Lebanon in its reforms, to lead the international community alongside Lebanon.

We want to work to make Lebanon stronger, more stable, more prosperous, so that capitals and investments can return to Lebanon, reforms take place, and the country, in its regional environ-

ment, also becomes stronger.

The region and the country need a strong Lebanon. That is our endgame. France has no other ambition and does not dictate anything in Lebanon; it only urges its leaders to assume their responsibilities."

How the problem posed by Hezbollah can be resolved:

Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese landscape. It has elected officials and the support of a demographically growing population. The whole point is to find a balance from these facts. It is also important to understand who this party is working for.

It is a Lebanese party, whose leader, Hassan Nasrallah, says that it defends the Lebanese state. At the same time, paradoxically, Hezbollah continues to stock up on weapons that it systematically refuses

to transfer to the national army, despite the demands of the international community.

This is therefore a real issue; this party, which is Lebanese and which, at the same time, pledges allegiance to a foreign state. This is an unacceptable situation. Hezbollah, like other parties, must contribute to Lebanon's reforms, leading to a strong state with its rightful place in it.

Hezbollah is a trump card in the hands of Iran, a country that destabilizes the surrounding states via its religious communities in order to defend itself. It is important for France to continue talking to Iran.

It is not by isolating Tehran that we will weaken its allies, namely Hezbollah. So, we want to continue talks with Iran because that country has a place in the region, not at any cost, rather within the framework of balances that must be defined through dialogue, and conferences where everyone has their place.

