

Mission

The Harvard-MIT Lebanese Affairs Think Tank (LATT) is an independent forum for developing innovative strategies to promote Lebanon's political sustainability, economic advancement, social equity, and progressive role on a regional and international level.

Background

LATT was founded in October 2005 by a group of nonpartisan Boston-based students and professionals from diverse Lebanese backgrounds. The timely initiative came in response to the series of historical developments sweeping Lebanon at the time. Widely unsatisfied by the status quo and aspiring for change, LATT's founders loudly called from Harvard and MIT for an open dialogue to address Lebanon's most pressing challenges.

Vision

LATT strives for a prosperous Republic of Lebanon that is sovereign, free, independent, and for all Lebanese regardless of affiliation. Through promoting constant dialogue on national priorities, the think tank aims to pave the way for a modern trans-confessional Lebanon that upholds pluralism, tolerance, justice, and consensual democracy, and is no longer hindered by inter-communal tensions nor weakened by regional conjunctures. In encouraging novel solutions individualized for the case of Lebanon, LATT intends along the way to explore a national Lebanese identity through translating factors of difference to sources of richness in a culture of co-existence governed by the law and founded on the respect for human rights of a diverse yet equal Lebanese citizenry. By strengthening Lebanon's institutions, promoting its knowledge-based economy, and tapping its vast human capital, both locally and globally, LATT envisions a progressing Lebanon in a progressing Arab world.

Strategy

By leveraging impartial, forward-looking policy research, LATT aims to capitalize on Lebanon's past mistakes, the aspirations of its new generations, and the comparable experiences of other consociational systems around the world. The think tank intends to achieve its mission through:

1. Identifying critical challenges facing Lebanon and incorporating those into a flexible action plan and constantly reprioritized scope of topics

2. Assimilating the requisite sources of information, literature, and expertise pertaining to the addressed topics
3. Analyzing the challenges at hand in light of the current state of affairs, past initiatives, and other parallel efforts in progress
4. Formulating original, Lebanon-specific solutions and evolving shared conceptual insights into pragmatic initiatives with feasible implementation roadmaps
5. Building consensus around proposed recommendations through vigorous public dialogue and iterative improvements of the developed strategies
6. Disseminating final findings to the Lebanese public, media, policymakers, and others through effective communication channels

Organization

LATT is currently governed by a flat Steering Committee of Harvard and MIT students. The committee is in the process of developing LATT's membership and organization policies. (You can join the lebanon-thinktank@mit.edu mailing list to stay up-to-date with LATT events and announcements.)

Scope of Topics

LATT intends to address the following critical challenges over the next few months:

- Transcending confessionalism and incentivizing national integration
- Optimal representational systems and electoral laws
- Privatization landscape and best strategies
- Balance of power between the religious establishments and the State
- Roles of and relationships between the State leaders
- Equitable economic development and administrative decentralization
- ...