Negative: Lebanon

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

The AFF plan removes US military aid to Lebanon, most likely for its support of the terrorist group Hezbollah, which is a political party in the Lebanese government and is also classified as a terrorist organization. This NEG brief shows Hezbollah isn’t really a threat and that US support for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is net beneficial even if they have occasionally collaborated with Hezbollah. Keep in mind that the politics of the Middle East are so complex that sometimes the US and Hezbollah and the LAF have common enemies (e.g. ISIS). If LAF aids Hezbollah while fighting ISIS, is that really a bad thing? In addition, Lebanon is on the brink of collapse right now. The only institution capable of holding the country together is the LAF. If we cut off aid, Lebanon will probably collapse.

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Negative: Lebanon Sanctions

TOPICALITY

1. Aid not trade

US arms to Lebanon are "assistance" and "grants" - that's "aid" not trade

US State Department 2022. (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs) 21 Sept 2022 "U.S. Security Cooperation With Lebanon" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-lebanon/

In FY 2021, the United States provided $236 million in combined Department of State and Department of Defense (DoD) military grant assistance.  This included $187 million in Foreign Military Financing, $3 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET), and $46 million in DoD-authorized funding.

INHERENCY

1. Lebanese government isn't controlled by Hezbollah

Hezbollah lost power in the last elections

Voice of America News 2022. " Lebanon's New Parliament Faces Problem of Hezbollah's Weapons" 24 May 2022 (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://www.voanews.com/a/lebanon-s-new-parliament-faces-problem-of-hezbollah-s-weapons-/6586948.html

Now that Hezbollah has lost control of Lebanon’s parliament, the reformists, independents, and anti-Hezbollah forces in Lebanon’s newly elected parliament may be angling to take on the longstanding issue of the group’s weapons, analysts say. The Iran-backed Hezbollah political party is also the only militia to have not disarmed after the end of Lebanon’s 1975-1990 civil war, and its weapons cache reportedly outguns that of the national army. Samir Geagea heads the Lebanese Forces and opposes fellow Christian, Michel Aoun, Lebanon’s president, and his alliance with Hezbollah. Geagea’s party won 19 parliamentary seats in a recent election that saw Hezbollah lose its majority in Lebanon’s parliament.

Hezbollah suffered a major defeat in the May 2022 elections

Hanin Ghaddar 2022 (Friedmann Fellow at The Washington Institute's Geduld Program on Arab Politics) 16 May 2022 " What Hezbollah’s Parliamentary Loss Means for Lebanon" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) ,https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/what-hezbollahs-parliamentary-loss-means-lebanon

On May 15, Hezbollah suffered a major defeat in Lebanon’s parliamentary election, losing not only its majority control of the legislature but also all of its non-Shia-Muslim allies. Despite low turnout, threats of violence, financial difficulties, and growing national despair, the people voted for change, choosing reforms over Hezbollah and its [ever-growing military arsenal](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/strategy-contain-hezbollah-ideas-and-recommendations).

Paradox: Hezbollah being a political party in the government means they have to moderate their radical ideology to gain power

Michael Young 2018 (s*enior editor at the Carnegie Middle East Center*) 8 May 2018 “Lebanon ≠ Hezbollah” <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/76280?lang=en>

There will be no sudden victories against Hezbollah, but nor is Lebanon a branch of the party as some people continue to insist. Whether now or in the future, Hezbollah’s greatest enemy will remain the Lebanese state, and what the elections showed is that Hezbollah, paradoxically, knows it has to be a part of that state to better escape it.

Hezbollah is suffering major setbacks. Many Lebanese are turning against it

Prof. Daniel Byman 2016 (senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution; professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service) 17 Oct 2016 “Is Hezbollah Less Dangerous to the United States?” <https://www.lawfareblog.com/hezbollah-less-dangerous-united-states>

But a closer look suggests that Hezbollah is also facing problems on every front. In Lebanon, the group’s effort to portray itself as a champion of all Lebanese against the United States and Israel has suffered major setbacks. It no longer transcends Lebanon’s sectarianism and is now squarely on one side of the region’s communal conflict. Lebanese Shi’a still see the group as its champion, perhaps even more than before given the sectarian nature of the fighting in Syria, but many Lebanese favor the Syrian opposition and see Hezbollah as tyranny’s ally.

Hezbollah under pressure from high casualties and is now under attack by other jihadists

Prof. Daniel Byman 2016 (senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution; professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service) 17 Oct 2016 “Is Hezbollah Less Dangerous to the United States?” <https://www.lawfareblog.com/hezbollah-less-dangerous-united-states>

Hezbollah has tried to portray its war in Syria [as part and parcel of its struggle with Israel](http://www.wsj.com/articles/hezbollahs-syria-gambit-strains-local-allegiances-1471512601), but it has largely failed at this. Having lost more than 1,000 fighters in Syria, it is also [under pressure from the families of the fallen](http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2015/1004/Is-Syria-s-long-war-wearing-down-key-Assad-backer-Hezbollah) to justify the sacrifice. Meanwhile, Sunni jihadists have conducted terrorist attacks on Hezbollah neighborhoods, bringing the war to Lebanon itself and shattering the group’s sense of invulnerability.

Arab world has massively turned against Hezbollah

Prof. Daniel Byman 2016 (senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution; professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service) 17 Oct 2016 “Is Hezbollah Less Dangerous to the United States?” <https://www.lawfareblog.com/hezbollah-less-dangerous-united-states>

If Hezbollah’s prestige is suffering at home, it is plummeting in the broader Arab world. In 2006, after Hezbollah forces fought the Israeli army to a draw, polls showed the group’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, was the most popular man in the Arab world. Egyptian newspapers ran full-page ads comparing him to Gamal Abdel Nasser, the lion of Egyptian nationalism, using the anniversary of Nasser’s defiance of the West during the 1956 Suez Crisis to draw the connection. Today, polls in several Arab countries show that [almost 90 percent of their populations disapproves of Hezbollah](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hezbollah-labeled-terrorist-by-gcc-states-but-what-do-their-people-think), a staggering about-face. The [Arab League](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/arab-league-labels-hezbollah-terrorist-group-160311173735737.html) and the [Gulf Cooperation Council](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/gcc-declares-lebanon-hezbollah-terrorist-group-160302090712744.html) recently declared Hezbollah a terrorist group, prompting a storm of accusations and counterattacks. Twisting Hezbollah’s name, which translates as the “Party of God,” many Sunni critics have begun referring to it as the “[Party of Satan](http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Muslim-scholar-Hezbollah-is-the-party-of-Satan-316018).”

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. A/T “Hezbollah biggest terror threat to US / killed more Americans before 9/11 than any other”

Actually… no they didn’t. They didn’t even exist until 1985. Critics are counting incidents they didn’t do

Sharmine Narwani 2017 (commentator and analyst of Mideast geopolitics, based in Beirut) Hezbollah is Not a Threat to America” 3 Nov 2017 <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/hezbollah-is-not-a-threat-to-america/> (ellipses in original)

Two weeks ago, at a State Department briefing on the Hezbollah “threat,” National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas J. Rasmussen tried to [paint a picture](https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/10/274726.htm) of an organization that was directing “terrorism acts worldwide” and posing a threat “to U.S. interests” including “here in the homeland.” “Prior to September 11,” Rasmussen claimed, “I think everybody knows Hezbollah was responsible for the terrorism-related deaths of more U.S. citizens than any other foreign terrorist organization.” This was news indeed. A check with a State Department spokesperson confirmed that the “deaths of more U.S. citizens than any other foreign terrorist organization” claim was in reference to the following incidents: “Hezbollah is responsible for multiple large scale terrorist attacks, including the 1983 suicide truck bombings of the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut; the 1984 attack on the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut; and the 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847, during which U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem was murdered,” explained the spokesperson in an email. The 1983 attack on the Beirut barracks took the lives of 241 Americans. The 1983 U.S. embassy bombing killed 17 Americans, and the 1984 attack on the relocated embassy facilities killed two Americans. Hezbollah has officially and consistently denied involvement in these suicide bombings and was not even established as an organization until 1985. Some write off this important discrepancy by arguing that the bombings would have been conducted by one of Hezbollah’s “precursor organizations,” albeit without providing evidence to prove the point. The U.S. secretary of defense at the time of the bombings, Caspar Weinberger, told PBS[almost two decades later](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/weinberger.html), in 2001: “We still do not have the actual knowledge of who did the bombing of the Marine barracks at the Beirut Airport… and we certainly didn’t then.”

Secretary of State John Kerry admitted in 2016: Hezbollah is not plotting against us

Sharmine Narwani 2017 (commentator and analyst of Mideast geopolitics, based in Beirut) Hezbollah is Not a Threat to America” 3 Nov 2017 <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/hezbollah-is-not-a-threat-to-america/> (brackets in original)

“Hezbollah is not plotting against us,” former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told a small group of anti-government Syrians on the sidelines of the UN’s General Assembly plenary session a year ago. Kerry’s comments were caught on an audio tape acquired by the [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/09/30/world/middleeast/john-kerry-syria-audio.html?mtrref=t.co&_r=3). Asked why the U.S. fights extremist Sunni groups and not Shia ones, he [replied](https://theconservativetreehouse.com/2017/04/04/president-trump-has-it-wrong-on-syria-assad-did-not-use-chemical-weapons-deep-state-neo-cons-misleading-the-president/):
The reason for [airstrikes against the Sunni Extremists] is because they have basically declared war on us, and are plotting against us, and Hezbollah is not plotting against us— Hezbollah is exclusively focused on Israel, who they’re not attacking now, and on Syria, where they are attacking in support of Assad.

Hezbollah aren’t our friends, but they aren’t much of a threat to America. They’ve got their hands full with other enemies

Prof. Daniel Byman 2016 (senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution; professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service) 17 Oct 2016 “Is Hezbollah Less Dangerous to the United States?” <https://www.lawfareblog.com/hezbollah-less-dangerous-united-states>

We should be under no illusions: Hezbollah remains formidable, and it is no American friend even though it is fighting the Islamic State and other jihadist groups. Hezbollah’s anti-Americanism, however, is tempered by the many other threats the group faces. In a turbulent Middle East, the names on its list of enemies may change in their rankings. But given that the Middle East’s Sunni jihadist problem and sectarian competition show no signs of abating, Hezbollah is likely to have its hands full. And that’s good news for America.

Hezbollah has evolved significantly – many of them are renouncing violence and turning to legitimate political process

Sharmine Narwani 2017 (commentator and analyst of Mideast geopolitics, based in Beirut) Hezbollah is Not a Threat to America” 3 Nov 2017 <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/hezbollah-is-not-a-threat-to-america/>

Obama’s Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan introduced a more nuanced image of the group to a Washington think tank audience in 2009:
Hezbollah started out as purely a terrorist organization in the early ’80s and has evolved significantly over time. And now it has members of parliament, in the cabinet; there are lawyers, doctors, others who are part of the Hezbollah organization … And so, quite frankly, I’m pleased to see that a lot of Hezbollah individuals are in fact renouncing that type of terrorism and violence and are trying to participate in the political process in a very legitimate fashion.

2. Hezbollah isn’t running Lebanon

Hezbollah is dangerous, but their control over Lebanon is exaggerated

Halim Shebaya 2018 (Beirut-based political analyst and multi-disciplinary researcher) 20 May 2018 “Memo to Israel: Lebanon is not Hezbollah, Gaza is not Hamas” <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/memo-israel-lebanon-hezbollah-gaza-hamas-180520122815960.html>

Indeed, one has to be very naive to claim that Hezbollah is merely a resistance movement and that its arsenal has no bearing on internal affairs or elections (both parliamentary and presidential). But claims that Lebanon is now "hostage" to Hezbollah (and [Iran](https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/country/iran.html)) are exaggerated. They are music to the ears of Israel which promotes this line to justify whatever war crimes its army will commit in any future conflict in the name of "self-defence" and "war on terrorism".

Majority of Lebanese reject Hezbollah’s agenda, and foreign media exaggerate Hezbollah’s influence

Michael Young 2018 (s*enior editor at the Carnegie Middle East Center*) 8 May 2018 “Lebanon ≠ Hezbollah” <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/76280?lang=en>

To limit a reading of Lebanon’s elections to Hezbollah would mean missing the myriad other dimensions that came into play on Sunday. Indeed, the elections underlined precisely why Lebanon, in its sheer complexity, cannot equal Hezbollah. However, it’s also undeniable that foreign media outlets [had eyes only for what the vote meant for the party](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-election/hezbollah-allies-gain-in-lebanon-vote-underscoring-iran-sway-idUSKBN1I804D), and that this will resonate in foreign capitals, where Lebanon’s fate is being considered. However, to assume, as Naftali Bennett did, that “Hezbollah = Lebanon,” means deleting that large proportion of Lebanese, very likely a majority, who simply reject the party’s agenda.

Hezbollah’s power is limited because they’re a political party and opposition will develop if they go too far

**Analysis: The Affirmative forgets that in addition to having some terrorists, Hezbollah is also a political party with fairly elected seats in Lebanon’s parliament. Demanding that Lebanon sanction Hezbollah is like demanding the U.S. government sanction the Republican Party.**

Michael Young 2018 (s*enior editor at the Carnegie Middle East Center* ) 8 May 2018 “Lebanon ≠ Hezbollah” <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/76280?lang=en>

It’s undeniable that this means the party has tremendous leverage in the Lebanese state. Yet the “Hezbollah = Lebanon” mantra fails to consider that Hezbollah has to constantly adapt to change in order to retain its dominance in the system. And the details matter when looking for ways to limit Hezbollah’s margin of maneuver. The party has the means to intimidate, but it also knows that constantly resorting to intimidation will quickly mobilize opposition to its agenda in Lebanon’s sectarian context. That is why its preferred stance is to function within state institutions when it can do so, which also means constantly keeping a lookout for ways that these institutions can somehow be used against the party.

3. Lebanese Army not controlled/influenced by Hezbollah

LAF is Lebanon's most popular state institution because they're stable, non-sectarian, and unifying influence

Cate Brown and Thanassis Cambanis 2022 (Brown - researcher for Century International. Cambanis - Senior Fellow & Director of Century International) 27 July 2022 " Why the United States Should Pay the Lebanese Army’s Salaries—Before It’s Too Late" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://tcf.org/content/commentary/why-the-united-states-should-pay-the-lebanese-armys-salaries-before-its-too-late/

The LAF may not have a completely clean record, but it has proven to be a reliable partner. The Lebanese Civil War ended with a delicate sectarian power-sharing formula. Each major position in the government is reserved for a specific sect, with an overall 50-50 split between Christians and Muslims. The LAF commander is always a Maronite Christian, but the leadership and rank and file of the military is diverse, making the post-Lebanese Civil War military perhaps the most genuinely cross-sectarian body in the country. Military commanders have worked hard to earn their place as “[Lebanon’s most popular state institution](https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/80182),” as policy analyst Aram Nerguizian has written. Over the last twenty-odd years, the LAF has proved a reliable security partner and a viable candidate for unifying sectarian interests and advancing state-building in Lebanon. It has remained neutral during historic crises, including after the 2005 assassination of Rafik Hariri, the 2008 clashes between Hezbollah and the Future Movement (a Sunni political party), and the 2019 protests.

4. War with Israel unlikely

Hezbollah and Israel have mutual fear of massive losses, so peace breaks out

Prof. Daniel Byman 2016 (senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution; professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service) 17 Oct 2016 “Is Hezbollah Less Dangerous to the United States?” <https://www.lawfareblog.com/hezbollah-less-dangerous-united-states>

The border has been mostly quiet since the 2006 war. Ten years of calm is an eternity in the Middle East, and even the last tremendous clash seems more a result of Hezbollah’s miscalculation about where Israel’s redlines were, rather than an actual desire to take on the Israeli military juggernaut. For the last decade, Israel has been preparing for another round with Hezbollah, and the group’s leaders, no fools, rightly fear [the destruction Israel threatens to unleash](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/ten-years-after-last-lebanon-war-israel-warns-next-one-will-be-far-worse/2016/07/23/58d7a6ca-4388-11e6-a76d-3550dba926ac_story.html). But Hezbollah’s military skill and rocket forces also give Israel pause: peace holds because of mutual fear, not a lessening of tensions.

Hezbollah reputation is collapsing and they’re busy fighting other jihadists – bigger threat to them than Israel

Prof. Daniel Byman 2016 (senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution; professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service) 17 Oct 2016 “Is Hezbollah Less Dangerous to the United States?” <https://www.lawfareblog.com/hezbollah-less-dangerous-united-states>

Hezbollah’s reputation is collapsing because of its prominent role in the Syria conflict. Most of the Arab world is Sunni, and many governments are responding to popular concern for their coreligionists and their own hostility to Hezbollah’s backer Iran, which presents itself as a champion of the region’s Shi’a Muslims. Hezbollah is particularly hated by the region’s Sunni jihadists, whose forces have [clashed repeatedly](http://www.newsweek.com/war-between-hezbollah-and-isis-lebanon-404244) with Hezbollah in Syria and regularly threaten dire consequences against the group. The enmity is fully reciprocated. Nasrallah recently declared the jihadists [a more difficult problem](http://www.vox.com/world/2016/9/27/13074560/hezbollah-israel-nasrallah-wahhabism-evil?utm_campaign=jenn_ruth&utm_content=chorus&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter) than even Israel.

5. Status Quo policy is net beneficial – even if it risks helping Hezbollah, it’s worth the risk

US aid to Lebanese army pays big dividends. Even if they colluded with Hezbollah, we should still support them

NEW YORK TIMES 2019. (journalists Edward Wong, Vivian Yee and Michael Crowley) 1 Nov 2019 White House Freezes Military Aid to Lebanon, Against Wishes of Congress, State Dept. and Pentagon https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/01/world/middleeast/lebanon-military-aid.html

In December, Jim Mattis, who was defense secretary at the time, described the Lebanese Army Forces as “legitimate” and a partner of the American military. “They are helping to keep the situation stable right now,” he said, speaking of a flare-up in tensions between Hezbollah and Israel, two longtime enemies. Other top American officials have given similar assessments. David Schenker, the State Department’s new assistant secretary of near eastern affairs, [argued in an August 2017 paper](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/u.s.-security-assistance-to-lebanon-at-risk) that, although the Lebanese military had been “colluding” with Hezbollah, it had helped stabilize the country and repel militant Sunni influence. Earlier that year, General Joseph L. Votel, then the leader of United States Central Command, [told the Senate Armed Services Committee](https://www.centcom.mil/Portals/6/Documents/Votel_03-09-17.pdf) that the Lebanese army had “demonstrated tremendous return on investment in recent years,” and that Washington should consider increasing its support.

6. Hezbollah is net beneficial in Lebanon

Hezbollah is the only one capable of fighting ISIS and the only one helping poor Lebanese citizens

Andre Vitchek 2016 (journalist) 8 Apr 2016 “Lebanon is being forced to collapse” <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/338899-lebanon-isis-security-collapse-west/>

What seems to irritate them the most, though, is that Hezbollah (an organization that is placed by many Western countries and their allies in the Arab world on the “*terrorist list*”) is at least to some extent allowed to participate in running the country. But Hezbollah appears to be the only military force capable of effectively fighting against ISIS - in the northeast of the country, on the border with Syria, and elsewhere. It is also the only organization providing a reliable social net to those hundreds of thousands of poor Lebanese citizens. In this nation deeply divided along sectarian lines, it extends its hand to the ‘others’, forging coalitions with both Muslim and Christian parties and movements.

7. No weapons diversion

End Use safeguards are in place and Lebanon is in full compliance with all requirements

US State Department 2022. (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs) 21 Sept 2022 "U.S. Security Cooperation With Lebanon" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-lebanon/

With Lebanon, as with other allies and partners around the world, the United States conducts [End-Use Monitoring (EUM)](https://www.state.gov/end-use-monitoring-of-u-s-origin-defense-articles/) to mitigate the risk of unauthorized transfer or use of U.S. technology and equipment.  EUM is used to verify the end-use, accountability, and security of defense articles, services, and training provided under grant-based assistance, FMS programs, and DCS from initial request, through delivery, employment, and eventual disposal.  The LAF continues to comply fully with all EUM reporting and security requirements.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Lebanon collapse

Link & Brink: Lebanon is on the brink of collapse and maintaining US support for the LAF is critical to prevent it

Nicholas Blanford 2020 (nonresident senior fellow with the Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security) The US military assistance program to the Lebanese Armed Forces must endure 30 Apr 2020 https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-us-military-assistance-program-to-the-lebanese-armed-forces-must-endure/

Other than for its competition with Hezbollah, maintaining US support for the LAF is increasingly critical as Lebanon undergoes its worst economic and fiscal crisis following the end of the sixteen-year civil war in 1990—a crisis exacerbated by the Coronavirus-enforced shutdown. [**END QUOTE**] The Lebanese lira, officially pegged since the mid-1990s at 1,507 to the US dollar, has plummeted since February on the parallel market, reaching LL4,000 to the dollar by April 27. Unemployment is soaring and businesses are shuttering every day. Banks have arbitrarily imposed capital controls, limiting the amount of money account holders can access and banning international transfers. [**THEY GO ON TO SAY LATER QUOTE**:] When the long-expected economic crisis began to bite in October 2019, Lebanese from across the country staged mass protests against the current cross-sectarian political leadership. Although the coronavirus shutdown ended the protests, they are beginning to re-emerge and are spurring violence as tempers flare and frustration mounts. The LAF is the one state institution that can prevent chaos from taking over the country. If the LAF was to disintegrate, Lebanon would face a disastrous security situation, where Hezbollah would be the sole effective military force in the country.

**[END QUOTE. HE CONCLUDES LATER AT THE END ARTICLE SAYING QUOTE:]**
The US military assistance program has been a solid success in Lebanon and the LAF deeply appreciates the partnership. That partnership must endure as Lebanon faces an ominous future.

Brink: Strengthening the LAF is key to Lebanon's stability. The country is weak right now and bad guys will take advantage of any instability

Cate Brown and Thanassis Cambains 2022 (Brown - researcher for Century International. Cambanis - Senior Fellow & Director of Century International) 27 July 2022 " Why the United States Should Pay the Lebanese Army’s Salaries—Before It’s Too Late" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://tcf.org/content/commentary/why-the-united-states-should-pay-the-lebanese-armys-salaries-before-its-too-late/

For decades, Lebanon has been a model of dysfunction; going forward, it can also be a model for revived governance. The United States should accelerate funds to the LAF in advance of the Lebanese presidential elections this fall, to shore up Lebanon’s strongest national institution before political gridlock or economic deterioration further destabilizes the state. In the absence of strong institutions, hybrid actors or foreign adversaries are likely to capitalize on Lebanon’s instability. Iran is already poised to strengthen its political and economic engine should Hezbollah surge in a weakened state, while both China and Russia have been investing more deeply in economic and political partnerships in the Middle East.

Link: LAF is critical to holding Lebanon together because the LAF is not sectarian

Cate Brown and Thanassis Cambains 2022 (Brown - researcher for Century International. Cambanis - Senior Fellow & Director of Century International) 27 July 2022 " Why the United States Should Pay the Lebanese Army’s Salaries—Before It’s Too Late" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://tcf.org/content/commentary/why-the-united-states-should-pay-the-lebanese-armys-salaries-before-its-too-late/

The White House made the right decision more than six months ago, [when it increased its support for the Lebanese Armed Forces](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/29/us-plans-to-reroute-67-mln-in-aid-towards-lebanons-armed-forces) (LAF), following a [precipitous devaluation of the Lebanese lira](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/26/lebanese-pound-value-drops-to-lowest-level) that has left soldiers without a living wage and hamstrung the military’s basic activities. The LAF performs critical functions that go far beyond the role of militaries in typical countries: It provides vital domestic policing of sectarian feuds; it monitors and deters the active threat posed by the Islamic State and similar groups; it patrols the country’s porous borders; and in times of crisis—like the present—it is responsible for crowd and riot control. Further, the military is perhaps the sole institution in Lebanon that welcomes members of all sects and serves the national interest rather than the agenda of a single warlord or sect.

Link & Brink: US support for the LAF is the only long-term solution to Lebanon's instability

Cate Brown and Thanassis Cambains 2022 (Brown - researcher for Century International. Cambanis - Senior Fellow & Director of Century International) 27 July 2022 " Why the United States Should Pay the Lebanese Army’s Salaries—Before It’s Too Late" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://tcf.org/content/commentary/why-the-united-states-should-pay-the-lebanese-armys-salaries-before-its-too-late/

American aid to the LAF won’t solve all of Lebanon’s problems but it will stop the hemorrhaging of state capacity in one critical area. Eventually, Lebanon’s economic crisis will end, and when it does, the United States should position itself to boost an effective central state—the only long-term solution to Lebanon’s instability.

Brink: Lebanon is extremely vulnerable. More pressure leads to Lebanon becoming a “failed state.”

Reuters news service 2017 (journalist Lisa Barrington) 2 June 2017 “As U.S. targets Hezbollah, Lebanon lobbies against more sanctions” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-economy-sanctions-idUSKBN18T1S4>

“There’s one question anyone who wants to put pressure on Lebanon should remember: Do you want another failed state on the eastern Mediterranean?” Yassine Jaber, a member of parliament who led a delegation to Washington in mid-May, told Reuters. “Lebanon is very, very vulnerable economically at the moment,” added Jaber, an independent Shi’ite politician who is aligned with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri’s Shi’ite Amal movement, which was named as a target for investigation in the draft amendments first reported by Lebanese media in April.

Impact: Failed State = massive violence , conflict, and starvation

Dr. Robert I. Rotberg 2002. (PhD; President of the World Peace Foundation (1993–2010); was director of the Program on Intrastate Conflict, Conflict Prevention, and Conflict Resolution at [Harvard University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard_University)'s [John F. Kennedy School of Government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_F._Kennedy_School_of_Government) ) Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/statefailureandstateweaknessinatimeofterror\_chapter.pdf

Failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions. In most failed states, government troops battle armed revolts led by one or more rivals**. [END QUOTE]** Occasionally, the official authorities in a failed state face two or more insurgencies, varieties of civil unrest, different degrees of communal discontent, and a plethora of dissent directed at the state and at groups within the state. It is not the absolute intensity of violence that identifies a failed state. Rather, it is the enduring character of that violence (as in Angola, Burundi, and the Sudan), the fact that much of the violence is directed against the existing government or regime, and the inflamed character of the political or geographical demands for shared power or autonomy that rationalize or justify that violence in the minds of the main insurgents. [**HE GOES ON LATER IN THE SAME CONTEXT TO SAY QUOTE:]** The civil wars that characterize failed states usually stem from or have roots in ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other intercommunal enmity. The fear of the other that drives so much ethnic conflict stimulates and fuels hostilities between regimes and subordinate and less favored groups.

**END QUOTE. He goes on to say later in the same article QUOTE:**

Sometimes, especially if there are intervening climatic disasters, the economic chaos and generalized neglect that is endemic to failed states leads to regular food shortages and widespread hunger—indeed, even to episodes of starvation and major efforts of international humanitarian relief.

2. Strengthens Hezbollah

Link: US military support for the Lebanese government delegitimizes Hezbollah’s arming itself.

**Analysis: If the Lebanese military is weak, Hezbollah can use that weakness to say “See, the government can’t protect the people, so we need to arm ourselves and do it!”**

US State Department, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs 2020. “U.S. Relations With Lebanon” 28 Sept 2020 https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/

Since 2010, the United States has provided more than $4 billion total in foreign assistance to Lebanon. Specifically, the United States has provided more than $2 billion in assistance since 2010 to address both economic support and security needs. This assistance aims to strengthen strategic partners such as Lebanon’s security forces; ensure key services reach the Lebanese people; preserve the multi-sectarian character of Lebanon; and counter Hizballah’s narrative and influence. Support for Lebanon’s security agencies and other strategic partners remains at the core of our efforts to preserve stability while countering and delegitimizing Hizballah’s false narrative and justification for retaining its arms in Lebanon and in the region.

Link: US support for LAF is key to countering Hezbollah and Iranian influence in Lebanon

Cate Brown and Thanassis Cambanis 2022 (Brown - researcher for Century International. Cambanis - Senior Fellow & Director of Century International) 27 July 2022 " Why the United States Should Pay the Lebanese Army’s Salaries—Before It’s Too Late" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://tcf.org/content/commentary/why-the-united-states-should-pay-the-lebanese-armys-salaries-before-its-too-late/

The United States has been the largest state donor to Lebanon for years, giving more than [$2.5 billion in cumulative military aid since 2006](https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-lebanon/), and foreign military financing for the LAF is considered routine. There is broad-based political support for this distribution partially because the LAF is a bright example of national governance rather than sectarian fragmentation; and partially because the funding constructively fulfills the administration’s security compact with Israel, which views the LAF as a critical ballast in [countering Hezbollah and Iranian influence](https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/03/chris-murphy-q-and-a-lebanon-we-are-telegraphing-abandonment/).

Link: Allowing LAF to collapse would increase Hezbollah's power

Cate Brown and Thanassis Cambanis 2022 (Brown - researcher for Century International. Cambanis - Senior Fellow & Director of Century International) 27 July 2022 " Why the United States Should Pay the Lebanese Army’s Salaries—Before It’s Too Late" (accessed 6 Dec 2022) https://tcf.org/content/commentary/why-the-united-states-should-pay-the-lebanese-armys-salaries-before-its-too-late/

It is not conceivable to entirely eliminate sympathizers of any Lebanese faction from a Lebanese institution. But it is possible, as the LAF has done, to guarantee that leadership, policy, and operational security insulate a national institution from manipulation or control by a subnational force such as Hezbollah. Yet members of the U.S. Congress’s Republican Study Committee have opposed sending military assistance to Lebanon, arguing that [sending funds to the LAF is equivalent to propping up an “Iranian puppet regime”](https://banks.house.gov/uploadedfiles/fy23_budget_blueprint_to_save_america.pdf)—and counter to U.S. interests, including keeping Iran from becoming a nuclear power. In fact, the contrary is true—preserving the LAF, even with its flaws, is the most effective path in Lebanon toward countering Iran and stabilizing the region. The LAF has quite literally kept the peace in Lebanon, handling tasks as mundane as gas line maintenance and as critical as securing borders and deterring the Islamic State throughout Syria’s civil war. Allowing the LAF to collapse would only open up a governance vacuum for [hybrid actors](https://tcf.org/content/report/hybrid-actors/) like Hezbollah to exploit.

Link: Weak Lebanese military creates a need and justification for Hezbollah to get stronger and gain influence

NEW YORK TIMES 2019. (journalists Edward Wong, Vivian Yee and Michael Crowley) 1 Nov 2019 White House Freezes Military Aid to Lebanon, Against Wishes of Congress, State Dept. and Pentagon https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/01/world/middleeast/lebanon-military-aid.html

“We see Hezbollah as a terrorist organization,” he said, “and that is why we have worked over the years, over many years, to strengthen the institutions of the Lebanese state, such as the Lebanese Armed Forces, to ensure that there is no felt need in Lebanon to rely on any purported services that Lebanon might receive from Hezbollah. That has been our policy and that remains our policy.”

Link & Brink: Aid to Lebanese Armed Forces is key to blocking extremist elements of Hezbollah

NEW YORK TIMES 2019. (journalists Edward Wong, Vivian Yee and Michael Crowley) 1 Nov 2019 White House Freezes Military Aid to Lebanon, Against Wishes of Congress, State Dept. and Pentagon https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/01/world/middleeast/lebanon-military-aid.html

The Pentagon and State Department pressed for the aid for the Lebanese Armed Forces, congressional aides said, and officials in both departments say the military organization is an important bulwark against extremist elements and armed factions of Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Shiite group that has political and military wings.

Impact: Turn the harms

If Hezbollah is bad, the AFF plan is worse because it makes them more legitimate and stronger.

3. Masking or Justifying Israeli Abuses

Link: AFF sanctions Lebanon in the name of opposing Hezbollah

That’s what their whole 1AC was about.

Link: Equating Lebanon with Hezbollah is a propaganda ploy to turn Lebanon into a legitimate target of Israeli aggression

Halim Shebaya 2018 (Beirut-based political analyst and multi-disciplinary researcher) 20 May 2018 “Memo to Israel: Lebanon is not Hezbollah, Gaza is not Hamas” <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/memo-israel-lebanon-hezbollah-gaza-hamas-180520122815960.html>

One clear example of such dumbed-down messages is Israeli education minister Naftali Bennett's "Lebanon = Hezbollah" [tweet](https://twitter.com/naftalibennett/status/993364596403687424) after Lebanon's parliamentary [elections](https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/lebanon-parliamentary-elections-deliver-180504124439415.html) on May 6. "Israel will not differentiate between the sovereign State of Lebanon and Hezbollah, and will view Lebanon as responsible for any action from within its territory", he said in the tweet. **[END QUOTE**] It was Bennett again who in mid-May said that unarmed Palestinians protesting near the border fence in Gaza should be treated as "terrorists". By then, the government he is part of had framed the Palestinians' [Great March of Return](https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2018/05/palestinians-great-march-return-human-cost-180516110538165.html) as a "Hamas ploy". [**HE GOES ON TO SAY QUOTE:]** What Israel aims to achieve by promoting this type of rhetoric is to turn both Lebanon and Gaza into legitimate targets for its aggression in any conflict that might take place in the future.

Impact: Civilian casualties mount and war crimes are justified. Israel bombs thousands of civilians in Lebanon under the false claim that everyone is Hezbollah

Halim Shebaya 2018 (Beirut-based political analyst and multi-disciplinary researcher) 20 May 2018 “Memo to Israel: Lebanon is not Hezbollah, Gaza is not Hamas” <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/memo-israel-lebanon-hezbollah-gaza-hamas-180520122815960.html>

Israeli officials have made it a habit to regularly threaten the entire population of Lebanon (and not only [Hezbollah](https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/organisations/hezbollah.html)) with destruction, annihilation and blowing it back to the Stone Ages. This inflammatory language, in fact, describes war crimes, which Israel has repeatedly committed on Lebanese territory. In the 2006 war, the [Israeli army killed](https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/09/05/why-they-died/civilian-casualties-lebanon-during-2006-war) 1,000 civilians, and the Israeli government tried to blame it solely on Hezbollah. But as a Human Rights Watch report investigating war crimes committed during that conflict pointed out: "Responsibility for the high civilian death toll of the war in Lebanon lies squarely with Israeli policies and targeting decisions in the conduct of its military operations."

4. Russia gains influence

Link: Russia gains influence if US support for LAF dries up

Nicholas Blanford 2020 (nonresident senior fellow with the Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security) The US military assistance program to the Lebanese Armed Forces must endure 30 Apr 2020 https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-us-military-assistance-program-to-the-lebanese-armed-forces-must-endure/

Furthermore, if the US halted its military assistance program, there are other countries—most notably Russia—that may seek to fill the vacuum. Moscow has been signaling an interest in expanding its Middle East influence from Syria into Lebanon for several years, using the LAF as its primary vehicle. The LAF is now fully invested in US and Western weapons and equipment and is uninterested in acquiring Russian systems. But if the US funding dries up, it may have little choice but to accept whatever assistance is offered regardless of the sponsor.

Link: Russia is an enemy of the US and we need to oppose their influence

Sean McFate 2018 (senior fellow, Atlantic Council) 22 May 2018 “Forget Iran. Russia is the real threat to the US in the Middle East” <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/22/forget-iran-russia-is-the-real-threat-to-the-us-in-the-middle-east.html>

Russia is increasingly emerging as an enemy of the U.S., not just a rival. The Iranian nuclear deal is secondary — what matters is Russia. Moscow is not going away and has relegated Washington to the sidelines. This is not a partisan issue — it's an American one. So, what's to be done? First, the U.S. must push back on Russian influence in the region. This does not suggest the zero-sum logic of the Cold War, but something more nuanced.

Link: Russia will use its influence to destabilize NATO and the European Union

Norman Eisen and James Kirchick 2018 (Eisen – Senior Fellow, Governance Studies, Brookings Institution. Kirchick – Visiting Fellow – Foreign Policy, Center on the US and Europe, project on International Order & Strategy, Brookings Institution ) 14 July 2018 Yes, Russia is a threat to NATO. So are the alliance’s anti-democratic members <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/07/14/yes-russia-is-a-threat-to-nato-so-are-the-alliances-anti-democratic-members/>

Moscow has gone from being a revolutionary power to a reactionary one. But its antagonism toward the United States and its allies remains. The Kremlin perceives Russia’s national interest as destabilizing Western institutions like NATO and the European Union, and the increasingly illiberal governments across the West—the sort that, during the Cold War, would have been resolute foes of Soviet influence—can today be low-hanging fruit, ripe for Russian picking.

Link: EU stability promotes US ability to maintain global security and stability

Meagan Araki, Annie Chang, Troy Lindell, Alison Wendler 2017. (members of the “Challenges to European Unity Task Force” at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, Univ. of Washington) March 2017 CHALLENGES TO EUROPEAN UNITY: OPTIONS FOR U.S. POLICYMAKERS <https://jsis.washington.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Task-Force-J-Report-2017_Lorenz.pdf>

Policies that encourage the unity between EU member states should be strongly supported. It is significant that the United States demonstrate support in this ongoing migration crisis, as it will help relieve the pressures member states are experiencing, as well as help mend existing tensions. The cohesion, stability, and cooperation of European Union serve a key interests of the United States. With these aspects, a more unified European Union can strengthen its position as a global actor, as well as strengthen its existing relations with the United States. This can further United States’ objectives of security and stability throughout the international community.

Impact: World peace & prosperity at risk without US influence. US hegemony is key to global peace & prosperity

Capt. M. V. Prato 2009 (United States Marine Corps,Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development Command,Marine Corps University) “The Need for American Hegemony” Feb 2009 http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a508040.pdf

The world witnessed a vast shift in the polarity of geopolitics after the Cold War. The United States became the world’s greatest hegemon with an unequalled ability to globally project cultural, political, economic, and military power in a manner not seen since the days of the Roman Empire. **[END QUOTE**] Coined the “unipolar moment” by syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer, the disparity of power between the U.S. and all other nations allows the U.S. to influence the world for the mutual benefit of all responsible states. Unfortunately, the United States is increasingly forced to act unilaterally as a result of both foreign and domestic resentment to U.S. dominance and the rise of liberal internationalism. **[HE GOES ON TO CONCLUDE QUOTE**:]The United States must exercise benevolent global hegemony, unilaterally if necessary, to ensure its security and maintain global peace and prosperity.

5. Crime & Terrorism will increase

US security aid to Lebanon’s Armed Forces (LAF) is very effective at reducing crime and terrorism

US State Department, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs 2020. “U.S. Relations With Lebanon” 28 Sept 2020 https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-lebanon/

The United States is Lebanon’s primary security partner and has provided more than $2 billion in bilateral security assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) since 2006. U.S. assistance supports the LAF’s ability to secure Lebanon’s borders, counter internal threats, and demonstrate it is the sole legitimate defender of Lebanon’s sovereignty. Through the provision of fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, munitions, vehicles, and associated training, the LAF has become a committed partner and greatly increased its capability as a fighting force against violent extremists. Our investment in training and equipping the LAF has paid outsized dividends for U.S. interests in Lebanon and the region by enabling the Lebanese military to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in Lebanon, carry out operations against Al Qaeda, and reassert control over Lebanese territory along its border with Syria. U.S. security assistance has included more than $235 million in civilian security assistance  since 2011. This assistance has enhanced the capabilities and professionalism of security institutions, among them the Internal Security Forces (ISF), as they work to prevent, counter, and respond to criminal and terrorist threats and their underlying causes, to secure and safeguard Lebanon’s territory and people, to interdict items of proliferation concern, and to extend rule of law throughout the country.