



A Strategy to Win in Lebanon

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July 2026

Lebanon is America's next foreign policy win — if Washington acts now. The US has committed blood and treasure to neutralize Iran's ability to project power and destabilize the Middle East. Lebanon is now the clearest opening to convert those investments into strategic gains and permanently dislodge the Islamic Republic from its most important regional foothold. Securing a sovereign Lebanon, achieving a lasting Israel-Lebanon peace, and dismantling Hizballah — the blueprint of Iran's proxy model — would irreversibly weaken Tehran's threat and consolidate a new regional order led by America's partners before Iran has a chance to reverse its losses. [MEI's new report](#) lays out how.

Why It Matters for the US

- **The US has an opportunity to help a willing Lebanese partner defeat Hizballah, dealing Iran a strategic loss at a low cost and without American combat troops.**
- **Hizballah has never been weaker.** It is militarily degraded, its leadership decimated, its supply routes constricted, and its legitimacy shattered after fighting Iran's wars at Lebanon's expense. Most Lebanese now see it as an Iranian occupation, not a resistance. But Tehran is racing to rebuild it. This window will close without decisive US action.
- **Washington has a reliable partner in the Lebanese state.** The Lebanese government outlawed Hizballah's military activities, deepened ties with the US, and is negotiating peace with Israel. The Lebanese want Iran out and are asking for American backing to help them prevail, not American soldiers fighting on their behalf.
- **The strategic payoff will benefit America and its regional partners.** Removing Hizballah will cripple Iran's Axis of Resistance and curtail its malign influence, from terror to narcotics, across the region. Hizballah's loss will signal the failure of Iran's attempt to export its revolution, undermine the Iranian regime's legitimacy at home, and may embolden other regional governments to take the necessary risks to reclaim their sovereignty.
- **A historic Israel-Lebanon peace is on the horizon.** An end to this conflict, maintained by a Lebanese state with a monopoly on force, will stabilize one of the most combustible frontlines in the Middle East.

Policy Considerations

- **Organize US military, financial, and diplomatic support into a single campaign to restore Lebanese sovereignty.** Only a campaign the Lebanese own can defeat Hizballah and prevent its resurgence. The campaign should put Lebanon in the lead

with America firmly behind it and bring in regional partners to build a broad coalition.

- **Increase US assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).** Disarming Hizballah requires more US support than currently envisioned, delivered through the Operation Inherent Resolve model that the US used to defeat ISIS without American combat troops. The US should provide advisors and trainers, backed by intelligence, logistics, special forces, and fire support (air, artillery, helicopters), and calibrate its assistance to reinforce the LAF leadership's commitment to disarming Hizballah.
- **Target Hizballah's financial and political networks to prevent its reconstitution.** Sanction the exchange houses moving Iranian funds to Hizballah, the compromised judges shielding it, and Hizballah's allies who penetrate and obstruct state institutions from within.
- **Build up Lebanon's capacity to regulate the economy.** Support the Lebanese state to secure full control over its ports, airport, and border crossings; encourage Beirut to establish an independent Competition Authority mandated to break up monopolies; press Lebanon's Central Bank to license compliant foreign banks and supervise money boutiques; expand Treasury assistance to the Special Investigation Commission to audit unregulated money transfer business and prosecute illicit cash flows; and back judicial reform by providing assistance for judicial salaries and training.
- **Condition increased external assistance for Lebanon's recovery on disarmament and reforms.** The US should work with international donors to back an integrated, Lebanese-owned recovery plan channeled through a ring-fenced trust fund with an independent board and strict procurement rules. Disbursement of funds should be tied to the achievement of milestones, as defined by the IMF's June 2026 Diagnostic.
- **Implement the verification mission established by the June 2026 Trilateral Framework Agreement.** To build confidence in the process and advance toward the twin goals of restoring Lebanese sovereignty and assuring Israel's security, the US should provide intelligence support and operational advice to ensure the Israel Defense Forces have withdrawn and that the LAF has prevented Hizballah from returning.
- **Mediate Lebanon's border disputes** to remove a barrier to peace and consolidate Lebanon's sovereignty.
- **Make peace between Israel and Lebanon.** Build on the Trilateral Framework Agreement to engineer a permanent peace, guaranteed by the US.

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