
WEEKLY STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

THE ESTIMATE

THE SITUATION IN LEBANON



CORE GROUP

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Prepared By: Core Group — Strategic Analysis Unit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the week the deal that gates Lebanon arrived and named Lebanon in its strongest possible form, and the week that naming changed nothing on the ground. The United States and Iran signed the fourteen-point Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, Trump and Pezeshkian electronically on Wednesday and Trump again over a Versailles dinner, with Pakistan's Sharif countersigning Thursday as mediator and declaring it in force. Point 1 terminates military operations on all fronts including Lebanon, and the text guarantees Lebanese territorial unity and sovereignty and vests the monopoly on arms and the decision of war and peace in the state. That is the most favorable language any external instrument has carried for Beirut since the war began. It bound no one. Israel published a map placing its forces roughly ten kilometers inside Lebanon along a unilateral Yellow Line it has declared for itself, Katz committed to hold the seized belts without a time limit, Ben-Gvir said Israel cannot stop demolishing southern homes or let the displaced return, and the campaign killed eight in the Nabatieh basin between Monday and Thursday. The signed ceasefire covers Lebanon on paper and runs on a withdrawal Israel has refused.

The desk's call last week holds, with one correction that matters. We assessed the most probable trajectory as a deal landing on Hormuz, ports, and funds while the Lebanon campaign ran on, and banded it at 45 to 60 percent. The deal landed, the campaign ran on, and the open front is exactly as assessed. The mechanism is not. We expected Lebanon to be absent from the enforceable terms, and instead it is present in the text and absent from the enforcement, a configuration more dangerous than the one forecast: an inert sovereignty clause is a standing argument Tehran can use to walk and a standing lever the Lebanese state can use to demand a withdrawal, and the week armed both.

The war localized as the region de-escalated. The United States-Iran war ended, the Dahiyeh-for-Iranian-missiles coupling that fired once on 7 June did not fire a second time, and the deterrence Iran ran through ballistic salvos last week converted into a diplomatic instrument: Tehran tied its delegation's travel to Switzerland to a halt in the Lebanon campaign, Araghchi conditioned the war's end on an Israeli withdrawal, and Hezbollah's Raad warned Beirut not to underestimate Iran's capacity to deter a breach. Hezbollah fought the occupation force inside Lebanon, destroying three Merkava tanks at Ali al-Taher and holding the ridge against four days of assault, and claimed no fire across the border. The war that ran through Tehran last week runs through a contested clause this week.

The internal fault line did not harden where we watched it. The Aoun-Tehran rupture of last week partially reversed into an Araghchi-Aoun call and Gulf-advised moves to restore the severed link, and the split migrated upstream to the question of how Lebanon negotiates: the presidency is staking the file on direct talks with Israel across three Washington-mediated sessions from 23 to 25 June, and Hezbollah's bloc demands indirect negotiation and rejects the direct format outright. Before any withdrawal is sequenced, Lebanon is divided over who holds the pen.

The paramount question this cycle is whether the direct Washington talks convert the memorandum's Lebanon clause into a sequenced Israeli withdrawal, or whether the gap between the signed text and Israel's declared permanence holds the southern campaign open and makes Lebanon the front most likely to collapse the sixty-day deal from below.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ Do the 23 to 25 June Washington-mediated sessions convene as direct talks, and do they

produce any written Israeli commitment to vacate a named position, or do they reduce to consolidating a truce Israel is already breaching?

- ◆ Does the direct-versus-indirect split between the presidency and Hezbollah reach the cabinet as a contest over the negotiating mandate?
- ◆ Does a mass-casualty strike or a deeper Israeli push collapse the talks before they start, handing Tehran the pretext to refuse the Būrgenstock session and walk on the Lebanon clause?

I. MILITARY AND SECURITY THEATER

The war narrowed to a ground contest north of the Litani. With the United States-Iran war closed by signature, the fighting concentrated in the Nabatieh basin, and the week's defining engagement was Hezbollah's defense of Ali al-Taher, the strategic ridge southeast of Nabatieh that overlooks the area. Hezbollah reported detecting an Israeli armored and infantry advance on the hill's northern face, drawing it into a kill zone, and destroying three Merkava tanks with guided missiles, then striking a second force sent under smoke and illumination to recover its dead and wounded with rockets and mortars, and firing a surface-to-air missile at an Israeli reconnaissance helicopter that forced it to withdraw. After four days of attempts the IDF had not taken the ridge, and it published a control map claiming Ali al-Taher even as it continued shelling ground it said it held. The gap between the mapped claim and the contested reality is the week's clearest single measure of the campaign's friction: north of the Litani, the advance is no longer the walk it was south of it.

Israel codified the line it has taken rather than the line it can hold. The IDF published a map on 19 June placing its forces about ten kilometers inside Lebanese territory along what it calls its Yellow Line, the unilateral post-ceasefire boundary it has declared for itself on the Gaza model, extending into Lebanese land and maritime space. This is a declaratory act, not a maneuver: it converts the belt the ground campaign has seized into a named cartographic fact and the basis for a permanent presence. Katz committed to holding the seized areas across Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, roughly 1,000 square kilometers, without a time limit, and Netanyahu, pressed by Macron that his Lebanon and Gaza policy was fueling violence, said the battle was not over and refused to withdraw. The capability picture is an army that holds a contiguous southern belt and a coastal corridor at will and pays a rising price for every meter north of the Litani. The intent picture, read from the Yellow Line map and the no-time-limit language, is consolidation of a buffer rather than a drive on Beirut, the Golani statements of last week not having acquired an order this week.

Hezbollah fought inside Lebanon and stayed off Israeli soil. The group's operations this week were defensive engagements against the occupying force on Lebanese ground, not the cross-border campaign of earlier phases. Hezbollah claimed no attacks on Israeli soil through the week, a posture that holds the most consequential restraint on the board: the long-range fire that would re-internationalize the war stayed in reserve. Its capability south and north of the Litani remains the drone and anti-armor fight, demonstrated in released footage of Ababil loitering munitions against an armored carrier near Beaufort and another near Zawtar al-Sharqiyeh on 3 June, an engineering vehicle near Majdal Zoun on 13 June, and a Namer carrier there on 14 June, and in the guided-missile Merkava kills at Ali al-Taher. The assessed intent is to make the occupation expensive while Iran carries the deterrence file diplomatically, Hezbollah holding to selective targeting of the force inside Lebanon as the negotiating track opens.

Lebanese authorities arrested a businessman who admitted importing drone-motor components folded into commercial cargo for Hezbollah, acting on a French letter rogatory, a reminder that the group's fiber-optic and loitering-munition supply runs through procurement chains the state can interdict when it chooses.

The casualty ledger held its asymmetry and crossed 3,900. Lebanon counts between 3,800 and 3,912 dead from the air campaign and ground invasion since 2 March, against 31 Israeli soldiers and one civilian contractor, and the week added a category the signature did not stop: Israeli strikes killed eight in the Nabatieh area between Monday and Thursday. A drone hit a car in Kfar Tebnit, killing two men who had entered the town to inspect their property, a predawn strike killed a young man in Zebdine, an evening artillery barrage struck a house in Qaaqaaiyet al-Jisr, and a strike on Beit Yahoun wounded two. The most significant Israeli loss came near the Litani, where a planted device struck the command team of the deputy commander of the 36th Division, killing Master Sergeant Alexander Filin and wounding seven including the deputy commander, followed minutes later by a booby-trapped drone over an evacuation vehicle. Israel said it was investigating whether the device was its own munition or one laid by a hostile party, an admission of uncertainty about its own control of cleared ground.

LAF and UNIFIL held position as the state moved to the table. The army absorbed no new strike on its uniformed personnel this week, the tripwire set after the 6 June killing of Brigadier General Sabra not having fired a second time, and it entered no new zone, the pilot-zone mechanism long stalled. The army commander joined the presidency's preparatory meeting for the Washington talks, placing the LAF inside the negotiating posture rather than the enforcement one. The institution's role this cycle is custodial and diplomatic, not kinetic: it is the body that would have to deploy into any zone an Israeli withdrawal vacates, and the talks that would produce that withdrawal are the army's principal stake in the week.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ Does the IDF consolidate the Yellow Line as a static buffer or resume the northward push the Ali al-Taher fight stalled, and does it absorb losses at a rate that contests the occupation's sustainability?
- ◆ Does Hezbollah hold to engagements inside Lebanon, or does any cross-border fire re-internationalize the war the signature was meant to close?
- ◆ Does a second deliberate Israeli strike on uniformed LAF personnel fire inside 14 days, the standing post-Sabra tripwire?
- ◆ Does Israel's own-munition uncertainty near the Litani signal a loss of control over cleared ground that raises its casualty rate independent of Hezbollah initiative?

II. DOMESTIC POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The state has bet the file on direct talks and reworked its opening text. The presidency is pressing direct negotiations with Israel across three Washington-mediated sessions from Tuesday 23 June to Thursday 25 June, the start delayed from 22 June at Israel's request over a late-arriving delegation. The first session joins the military and diplomatic teams, the second is military-only, the third diplomatic-

only, and the sequencing carries a conditional the state has made explicit: if Israel honors a full ceasefire before Tuesday the delegation resumes from the second clause, withdrawal, and if not it works again to consolidate the truce. Aoun is reworking the declaration-of-intent paper, which has undergone major edits and no longer holds as drafted, to hand to the American mediator. This is the most concrete state initiative of the war, and it stakes the presidency's authority on a direct format that converts the memorandum's sovereignty language into a negotiating demand. The risk sits in the conditional: a format that resumes from withdrawal only if Israel halts first hands Israel a veto over the talks' substance by continuing to fire.

Aoun reframed reconstruction as investment and tied Lebanon's stability to Europe's. Receiving a joint Qatari, French, and British ministerial delegation, the president said Lebanon needs investment rather than aid, cast the diaspora as central to recovery, and argued there can be no stability in the region or in Europe without stability in Lebanon. The framing is a bid to convert the diplomatic attention the deal generated into capital flows conditioned on the reforms the state is pursuing, and it pairs with the Saudi import-ban lift of last week as the second external economic signal on the government's side of the internal ledger. The presidency is building the case that the state-rebuilding course, not the resistance posture, is what unlocks the reconstruction Lebanon cannot fund itself.

Hezbollah accepted the deal and rejected the format. Mohammad Raad, head of the parliamentary bloc, declared that Israel's war to crush the resistance had failed, called on Lebanese authorities to adopt a framework for indirect negotiations, demanded Israel comply fully on land, sea, and air and begin withdrawal within sixty days, and rejected direct negotiation outright. Qassem, marking Ashoura at Nasrallah's grave, urged authorities to seize what he called a decisive opening from a deal that includes Lebanon, set mutual security as the basis of any talks, and rejected disarmament as an Israeli prescription. The position is a convergence and a split at once: Hezbollah and the state now agree the memorandum applies to Lebanon and both demand the withdrawal, but they divide on the instrument, the presidency staking the file on direct talks and Hezbollah insisting on an indirect format that denies Israel the recognition a direct table confers. Raad's warning to the state not to underestimate Iran's deterrent capacity is the coupling restated as a domestic argument: the group is telling Beirut that the force behind any withdrawal demand is Iranian, not Lebanese.

Washington tightened the financial vise as the talks were set. The US Treasury expanded its 20 March sanctions to designate Lebanese officials and a business network it accused of obstructing the peace process and delaying Hezbollah's disarmament, naming Marada's Sleiman Frangieh for trading on his alliance with the group, Hezbollah political council deputy chief Mahmoud Qmati for coordinating cash smuggling from Iran, and a web of front companies across Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Oman. The State Department called Hezbollah the single greatest obstacle to Lebanon's recovery. The action lands as the direct talks open, pairing the diplomatic track with financial pressure on the actors the state would need to bring inside any disarmament sequence, and it strengthens the presidency's hand against Hezbollah's allies while the format fight is live. Justice Minister Nassar's rejection of foreign interference and call for the state monopoly on arms tracked the same line, the cabinet's institutional voice aligning with the presidency's negotiating posture.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ Does the cabinet ratify the presidency's direct-talks mandate, or does the direct-versus-indirect split force the negotiating format onto the cabinet table as a contest?
- ◆ Does Israel halt its fire before Tuesday, the condition that would let the delegation open from

the withdrawal clause, or does it continue striking and reduce the talks to truce consolidation?

- ◆ Does the Treasury designation of Frangieh and Qmati move any named actor, or harden the bloc behind the indirect-negotiation demand?
- ◆ Does Aoun convert the Qatari-French-British delegation into a named reconstruction or investment commitment inside the month?

III. DOMESTIC SECTARIAN LANDSCAPE

The Shia community's institutional actors carried the deal's opening, not a mobilization. The week's Shia politics ran through the negotiating posture rather than the street. Raad's call for indirect negotiation and Qassem's Ashoura address at Nasrallah's grave framed the memorandum as a vindication of the resistance and a decisive opening, holding the community's position unified behind the withdrawal demand and the rejection of disarmament as an external prescription. Amal moved nowhere apart from Hezbollah, Berri's negotiating line and the bloc's holding together. The Dahiyeh rallies of last week did not recur at scale, the constituency's energy channeled into the diplomatic claim that Iran's deal delivered Lebanon a sovereignty clause the state should now enforce. The displacement burden, concentrated on the Shia south, continues to argue inside the community for keeping the weapons until the withdrawal is real, and the inert clause hands that argument its strongest evidence: the text says sovereignty, and the strikes continue.

The Aoun-Tehran thaw reordered the sovereigntist calculation. Where last week the presidency's rupture with Tehran aligned the Christian sovereigntist camp with Aoun's confrontation of Iran, this week's Araghchi-Aoun call and the Gulf-advised moves to restore the severed link, possibly including acceptance of the Iranian ambassador's credentials, removed that alignment's sharpest edge. The sovereigntist position now confronts a presidency it backs against Hezbollah and a presidency that is simultaneously reopening the Tehran channel on Gulf advice, a tension the Christian blocs have not yet voiced. Bkerke and the Lebanese Forces issued no escalatory move, and the restraint is consistent with their standing posture of pressing the arms question through the presidency and the state rather than the street. The thaw is the week's quiet reordering: the internal fight is no longer the state against Iran, it is the state and Iran tacitly aligned on the withdrawal demand while they contest who speaks for Lebanon at the table.

The Sunni community's stake stayed with the state and its reconstruction bet. Salam's government and the presidency carried the Sunni institutional weight into the negotiating posture, and the investment framing Aoun put to the visiting delegation speaks directly to the Sunni commercial class that the Saudi import-ban lift began to reengage. Dar al-Fatwa stayed off the alignment question. The community's wary neutrality persists, anchored now by a material stake in the state-rebuilding course that the reconstruction diplomacy is meant to fund. The first strike on central Sidon last week did not produce a Sunni institutional move off neutrality this week, the community absorbing the blow without realigning.

The Druze held their silence into a third week. Jumblatt and the PSP issued no public move while the negotiating track was set, the community's geography keeping it outside the campaign's current axes. The silence remains positioning: the PSP's weight would matter most if the direct-versus-indirect split reaches the cabinet, where Jumblatt's bloc can swing the coalition on the negotiating mandate. The next Druze signal is the one to watch for the internal alignment fight's direction.

Displacement hardened from emergency into a foreclosed return. More than 1.049 million people remain displaced despite the ceasefire, over 130,000 of them in 632 collective shelters strained by overcrowding, and the obstacle to return shifted this week from danger to policy: Ben-Gvir's statement that Israel cannot stop demolishing southern homes or let the displaced return, paired with the Yellow Line map, converts the displacement from a wartime flow into a structural foreclosure. The cross-confessional dimension that emerged last week with the Tyre evacuation persists, with a returnee finding his Tyre apartment reduced to rubble a week after the city was ordered emptied and struck. The friction indicators to watch are the host-community strain where the southern displaced have resettled and the political use of a return that the demolition policy forecloses. The demographic argument the displacement feeds now has an Israeli policy statement behind it, not only a pattern of strikes.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ Does the Aoun-Tehran thaw produce a sovereigntist backlash, a Bkerke or Lebanese Forces statement against reopening the Iran channel, or does the camp hold its silence?
- ◆ Does the direct-versus-indirect negotiating split divide the Shia institutional bloc from the presidency in a way the street amplifies?
- ◆ Does the demolition-and-no-return policy produce an organized cross-confessional return demand, or a host-community friction incident, inside 14 days?
- ◆ Does the PSP break its silence as the negotiating mandate moves toward the cabinet?

IV. DIPLOMATIC AND REGIONAL VECTORS

The instrument that gates Lebanon was signed, and Lebanon is its weakest clause. The fourteen-point memorandum signed this week terminates operations on all fronts including Lebanon and guarantees Lebanese sovereignty, territorial unity, and the state's monopoly on arms, but it mandates no Israeli withdrawal, and Israel has refused one regardless of the text. The contradiction is structural and is the deal's most exposed seam. Araghchi insists the war has not ended without an Israeli withdrawal from the south and tied the Iranian delegation's travel to Switzerland to a halt in the Lebanon campaign, charging Israel with 84 ceasefire violations in two days. The signing ceremony at Bürgenstock slid even as the document took force, the White House citing logistics and a delayed Iranian delegation. Lebanon thus sits inside the one provision both Tehran and Beirut can invoke and neither Israel nor the text can compel, and the deal's durability over its sixty-day window turns in part on whether that provision is enforced or abandoned.

Washington broke with Israel over Lebanon in public and routed the pressure into the talks. Trump objected to Israeli strikes that risk collapsing the Lebanon ceasefire, criticized Netanyahu at the G7, and floated allowing Syria to act against Hezbollah, the sharpest public break with Israel on Lebanon tactics to date. French diplomats entered the Lebanese channel after the signing, advising Beirut to open the coming round from where the accord left off and arguing the text's ceasefire and sovereignty language amounts to an endorsement of an Israeli withdrawal, and reported mounting American pressure on Israel to pull back from the five positions it still holds. The diplomatic convergence behind a Lebanese withdrawal demand is real and broad, spanning Washington, Paris, and the Gulf mediators. Its yield is

the question: the same Washington that broke with Israel in public has not compelled a halt, and the campaign killed eight in the days after the break.

Iran's hold on Lebanon converted from kinetic to diplomatic. The deterrence Tehran ran through ballistic salvos last week did not recur, the United States-Iran war having ended by signature, and Iran's instrument on Lebanon is now the deal itself: the withdrawal precondition Araghchi attached, the delegation-travel linkage, and the resource flows to Hezbollah the memorandum does not touch and Iranian officials say continue. The Aoun-Araghchi call and the Gulf-advised reopening of the Beirut-Tehran link give Iran a diplomatic seat in Lebanon's post-war arrangement it did not hold a week ago, and the regional umbrella forming around Lebanon's settlement now runs partly through Tehran rather than around it. The coupling that was a missile exchange on 7 June is a negotiating position on 19 June, and that conversion is the most important regional shift of the week for Beirut: Iran's protection of Lebanon now costs Tehran nothing and buys it a voice at the table.

Syria declined the role Washington offered it. Trump's G7 suggestion that Israel let Syria deal with Hezbollah drew a flat refusal from Damascus, with al-Sharaa calling the reports unfounded and saying Syria preferred to help end the conflict rather than be drawn into it, and Deputy Prime Minister Mitri confirming Lebanon had received Syrian assurances of non-interference. The eastern border, which the American floating of Syrian participation threatened to convert into a second front last week, stayed a humanitarian seam this week, the Jordan Hashemite Charity's eighth aid convoy transiting Syrian territory with Damascus easing its passage. The non-interference assurance removes, for now, the encirclement argument Hezbollah would have drawn from a Syrian role.

The Gulf umbrella thickened around the state. The Qatari, French, and British ministerial delegation to Aoun, the Saudi import-ban lift carried over from last week, and the Gulf and Arab advice to Beirut to restore the Tehran link mark a coordinated external bet on the Lebanese state's negotiating posture. The same Gulf capitals that mediated the United States-Iran deal and carry its reconstruction expectation are the actors most invested in a Lebanese settlement that does not reopen the regional war, and their pressure runs toward the withdrawal the direct talks will demand. The test remains whether any Gulf capital attaches a named Lebanon commitment, a deposit or a reconstruction pledge, to its diplomacy, the import-ban lift still the only material datum on that line.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ Does the Bürgenstock implementation session convene with the Iranian delegation present, or does Tehran hold its travel hostage to the Lebanon campaign and stall the deal at its first test?
- ◆ Does Washington convert its public break with Israel into an observable halt of the southern campaign, or does the pressure stay rhetorical while the strikes continue?
- ◆ Does any Gulf capital attach a named Lebanon commitment to its mediation inside 14 days?
- ◆ Does Iran's diplomatic seat in Lebanon's arrangement translate into a moderating instruction to Hezbollah, or into a hardening of the withdrawal precondition that risks the deal?

V. HUMANITARIAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRAIN

The displacement caseload stabilized in number and worsened in prospect. More than 1.049 million people remain displaced, over 130,000 in 632 collective shelters now strained by overcrowding, and most cannot or will not return amid renewed airstrikes, successive displacement orders across the south and Nabatieh, infrastructure damage, and the absence of safety guarantees. The number is roughly steady against last week, but the prospect of return darkened: Ben-Gvir's demolition-and-no-return statement and the Yellow Line map convert the caseload from a population awaiting a ceasefire into a population a declared policy works to keep out. The signature that was meant to enable return arrived in the same week as the clearest statement yet that return will be prevented.

The medical and child-protection toll deepened beneath the diplomacy. Official data record between 3,433 and 3,912 killed and from 10,395 to 11,873 wounded since March, children about 9 percent and women 12 percent of casualties, with 190 documented attacks on the healthcare sector as of 1 June that killed 128 and injured 332. Unicef counts 247 children killed and 992 wounded across the war, an average of twelve children killed or maimed each day, and more than 770,000 children in deep distress. The southern medical system that last week's Tyre evacuation pushed toward failure absorbed continued strikes in the Nabatieh basin this week, the attrition of facilities and personnel running underneath the negotiating track that dominated the headlines.

The supply lines held and the external energy shock reversed. The airport, port, and the Syria crossings stayed operational, and the strain that came through prices last week eased at its source. The Hormuz closure that drove the energy layer of last week's read reversed with the signature: the blockade lifted, 12.5 million barrels crossed the strait in a single night, Iranian tankers resumed export, and Brent fell about 5 percent to near 79 dollars, a three-month low. For Lebanon, which imports effectively all of its fuel by sea, the closure-pricing risk that threatened the generator economy and the bakery diesel chain has receded, and the question shifts from a fresh shock to whether the standing war premium already embedded in the April inflation print, transport at 33 percent year on year and housing and energy at 26 percent, now unwinds as the strait reopens. The transmission read carries a forward caveat: Iran's negotiator has said the strait will not return to its prewar state and intends to charge for passage once the sixty-day free-transit window lapses, so the relief Lebanese importers see this month is leased, not permanent, and a post-window Hormuz toll dispute is the energy tripwire to carry into the Section VI watch.

The macro frame stayed stable and the price floor stayed sticky. The lira held at 89,500 to the dollar, Banque du Liban's gold holdings remain the balance sheet's anchor, and the Saudi market reopening gives Lebanese agriculture an export channel for the first time in five years. Against that stability sits a structural finding the week surfaced: Lebanese crisis prices rise fast and fall slowly or not at all, with 1.24 million people, nearly one in four, facing crisis or emergency food insecurity even as the external shock that helped drive food costs reverses. The economy is stable on paper and the household price burden is not unwinding with the oil price, the gap between the macro frame and the consumption reality widening rather than closing. An Ogero general strike Tuesday signals the public-sector wage and service strain underneath the stability.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ Does the demolition-and-no-return policy produce a measurable second displacement wave

or foreclose a return corridor that aid agencies were planning, inside 14 days?

- ◆ Does a southern hospital suspend operations under continued strikes in the Nabatieh basin, the system-failure threshold carried from last week?
- ◆ Does the Hormuz reopening transmit to Lebanese pump and generator prices, and does the April premium unwind or stay sticky on the household side?
- ◆ Does Iran signal a post-window Hormuz toll regime that would reprice Lebanese fuel risk after the sixty-day free-transit clause lapses?

VI. INDICATORS AND WARNINGS

Military Indicators

- The IDF resumes a northward push beyond the Yellow Line it mapped on 19 June, or consolidates the line as a static buffer with no further advance.
- Hezbollah fire crosses the border onto Israeli soil for the first time since the signature, re-internationalizing the war.
- A second deliberate Israeli strike on uniformed LAF personnel inside 14 days, the standing post-Sabra tripwire.
- Israeli daily losses in the Nabatieh basin sustain above the Ali al-Taher rate, contesting the occupation's cost.

Political Indicators

- The 23 to 25 June Washington-mediated sessions convene as direct talks, or collapse to indirect format or to truce consolidation.
- A written Israeli commitment to vacate a named southern position emerges from the talks, or the delegation opens from withdrawal rather than from truce consolidation.
- A Hezbollah-aligned minister moves against the direct-talks mandate, or the cabinet takes up the negotiating format as a contested vote.
- Beirut formally accepts the Iranian ambassador's credentials, marking the Tehran thaw's institutionalization.

Sectarian Indicators

- A Bkerke or Lebanese Forces statement against the Aoun-Tehran reopening, or continued sovereignist silence.
- The PSP breaks its three-week silence as the negotiating mandate approaches the cabinet.
- A cross-confessional return demand or a host-community friction incident over the foreclosed-return policy.

Diplomatic Indicators

- The Bürgenstock implementation session convenes with the Iranian delegation present, or Tehran withholds travel over the Lebanon campaign.
- Washington's public break with Israel converts into an observable halt of the southern campaign, or stays rhetorical.
- A Gulf capital attaches a named Lebanon commitment, a deposit or a reconstruction pledge, to its diplomacy.

Humanitarian Indicators

- A southern hospital suspends operations under continued strikes.
- Lebanese pump or generator prices move on the Hormuz reopening, in either direction.
- Iran announces a post-window Hormuz toll regime, the energy tripwire that would reprice Lebanese fuel after the free-transit clause lapses.

WEEK-AHEAD STRATEGIC WARNING

The most dangerous convergence of the next seven days runs through the 23 to 25 June Washington talks and Israel's conduct ahead of them. The state has staked its authority on a direct format that resumes from the withdrawal clause only if Israel halts first, which hands Israel a veto over the talks' substance simply by continuing to fire, and a high-casualty strike or a deeper push in the Nabatieh basin before Tuesday would both collapse the talks and hand Tehran the pretext to withhold its Bürgenstock delegation and walk on the Lebanon clause it has made its precondition. The second danger is the inverse: talks that convene and produce nothing harden the direct-versus-indirect split into a domestic crisis, with Hezbollah able to argue the direct format yielded the recognition and not the withdrawal. The quieter risk underneath both is the foreclosed return, where the demolition-and-no-return policy and the Yellow Line map are converting a displaced population into a permanent one while attention sits on the table. The decisive test of the week ahead is whether the direct talks convene at all and whether Israel's fire stops long enough to let them open from withdrawal rather than from truce.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ Do the direct talks convene, and does Israel halt its fire long enough to let them open from the withdrawal clause?
- ◆ Does Lebanon become the trigger that collapses the sixty-day deal, through a strike that kills the talks or an Iranian walkout over the unfulfilled clause?
- ◆ Does the foreclosed-return policy cross from statement into a measurable second displacement or a closed return corridor this week?

VII. SCENARIOS AND RISK ANALYSIS

These scenarios are overlapping layers of one reality, not a partition: they can co-occur, each carries its own falsifiable trigger, and the bands deliberately sum above 100 percent. They are governed by two variables this cycle: whether the 23 to 25 June direct talks convert the memorandum's Lebanon clause into a sequenced Israeli withdrawal, and whether the southern front or an Iranian walkout collapses the sixty-day deal from below.

Scenario A: The Inert Clause and the Continued Campaign

MOST PROBABLE, 50–65%

The signed memorandum's Lebanon clause stays law on paper and dead in practice. Israel holds the Yellow Line and the seized belts, continues strikes and demolition, and refuses withdrawal, the direct talks convene but produce no enforceable withdrawal sequence inside the horizon, Hezbollah contests the ground inside Lebanon without crossing the border, and Iran banks its relief while working the withdrawal precondition as a negotiating lever rather than a kinetic one. This is the straight-line extension of the signed text and every actor's stated posture, and it requires no party to change course. The drivers are Israel's declaratory permanence in the Katz no-time-limit and Ben-Gvir demolition statements, Washington's break with Israel that has not become an observable halt, and a campaign no provision of the deal compels Israel to stop. The implication is codification by inertia: the belt hardens behind a Yellow Line map, the displacement settles toward permanence, and the withdrawal demand waits at the end of a war the signature did not stop. Probability assessment: 50 to 65 percent within the 14-day horizon, the most probable trajectory because it is the world as it stands on signing day. Breaking condition: a written Israeli commitment to vacate a named position moves weight to Scenario B, and a talks-collapsing strike or an Iranian walkout moves it to Scenario C.

Scenario B: The Washington Talks Convert the Clause

Unlikely, 15–25%

The direct sessions produce a sequenced Israeli withdrawal from the five positions tied to the memorandum's Point 1, the presidency's bet pays, and the southern campaign winds down under the deal's discipline with the LAF deploying into the vacated ground. The evidence for the scenario is the breadth of the diplomatic convergence behind a Lebanese withdrawal, spanning Washington's public break with Israel, the French line that the text endorses a withdrawal, and the Gulf umbrella, plus the state's reworked declaration-of-intent paper as a concrete opening text. The evidence against it is heavier and sits in this edition's Section I and IV: Israel has declared the belts permanent with no time limit, refused withdrawal to Macron's face, and mapped a Yellow Line as a basis for staying, and the same Washington that broke with Israel has not compelled a halt. Probability assessment: unlikely, 15 to 25 percent within the horizon. This is a live diplomatic channel rated below 30 percent, the desk's named bias being to under-price exactly these, so the revision indicator is committed in advance and watched: a written Israeli commitment to vacate a named southern position, or the delegation opening from the withdrawal clause rather than from truce consolidation, forces this band up immediately, and an Israeli reaffirmation of the no-time-limit hold during the talks collapses it toward 10 percent.

Scenario C: Lebanon Detonates the Sixty-Day Window

Unlikely, 20–35%, rising over the full window

The southern front collapses the deal before it institutionalizes. A mass-casualty Israeli strike or a deeper push kills the talks, or Tehran walks on the unfulfilled Lebanon clause it has made its precondition and withholds the Bürgenstock delegation it has already tied to a campaign halt, and the theater returns to a wider exchange before the sixty-day clock runs out. The drivers are the structural contradiction between Point 1 and Israel's declared permanence, Araghchi's withdrawal precondition and delegation linkage, and a Nabatieh-basin fight intense enough to produce the triggering casualty event. The mitigating factors are that both Tehran and Washington have banked early wins they are reluctant to forfeit, oil is flowing and the markets have priced de-escalation, and the Gulf mediators have shown they can hold the parties to the table. Probability assessment: unlikely, 20 to 35 percent within the 14-day horizon, rising over the full sixty-day window as the free-transit clause lapses and the unenforced Lebanon clause ages. Breaking condition: an Iranian refusal to attend Bürgenstock over the Lebanon campaign, or an Israeli strike that produces a mass-casualty event during the talks window, either of which converts this scenario from contingency to count-down.

Scenario D: Internal Mechanism Rupture

Unlikely, 15–25%

The direct-versus-indirect split hardens into a state crisis. The presidency's direct-talks mandate and Hezbollah's insistence on an indirect format collide at the cabinet table, a Hezbollah-aligned minister moves against the mandate, and the Aoun-Tehran thaw triggers a sovereigntist backlash that pulls the Christian blocs off their alignment with the presidency. The drivers are the format fight the week opened, the recognition a direct table confers that Hezbollah cannot concede, and a thaw with Tehran that complicates the sovereigntist camp's support for Aoun. The restraint is that the internal actors converged on the deal and the withdrawal demand even as they split on the instrument, and that the talks' outcome may settle the format fight before it reaches the cabinet. This is a re-framing of last week's alignment-rupture scenario, which was rated 15 to 25 percent on the Iran-interference axis and partially reversed into a thaw, the rupture risk migrating from whether Lebanon aligns with Tehran to who holds the pen at the table. Probability assessment: unlikely, 15 to 25 percent within the horizon, rising to 30 to 45 percent if the direct talks convene and yield the recognition without the withdrawal, the sequence that would let Hezbollah argue the format was the concession. Breaking condition: a Hezbollah-aligned ministerial move against the negotiating mandate, or a cabinet vote on the negotiating format.

Scenario E: Foreclosed Return and Humanitarian Entrenchment

Roughly even, 40–55%

The displacement converts from a wartime flow into a permanent one. The demolition-and-no-return policy, the Yellow Line map, and the mined border belt foreclose return across the southern caseload above one million, the southern medical system continues to attrit under strikes in the Nabatieh basin, and the household price burden stays sticky even as the oil price falls. This re-frames last week's humanitarian-cascade scenario: the acute three-leg convergence is less likely now because the energy shock leg reversed with the Hormuz reopening, but the structural-foreclosure outcome is more likely

because Israel has put a policy statement behind the no-return pattern. The cascade risk recedes and the entrenchment risk rises. Probability assessment: roughly even, 40 to 55 percent within the horizon for the entrenchment, the band held there rather than higher because the foreclosure is a policy in statement that a withdrawal in the talks could still reverse. Breaking condition: a measurable second displacement wave or a closed return corridor confirms entrenchment, and a sequenced withdrawal from Scenario B reverses it.

The decisive variable for the next seven days is whether the 23 to 25 June direct talks convene and convert the Lebanon clause into a withdrawal. Talks that open from withdrawal pull the field toward Scenario B and drain A and C, talks that convene and yield only recognition lock Scenario A's codification and arm D's internal sequence behind it, and a strike or an Iranian walkout that kills the talks puts Scenario C's countdown on the sixty-day clock. The two observables that resolve it first are whether Israel halts its fire before Tuesday, the condition the state set for opening from withdrawal, and whether the Iranian delegation attends Bürgenstock, the test of whether Tehran will spend the Lebanon clause it has made its price or walk on it.



CORE GROUP

ABOUT CORE GROUP

Core Group is a Beirut-based strategic foresight house. We produce decision-ready analysis and advisory for governments, diplomatic institutions, and strategic investors navigating Middle Eastern complexity. Our work integrates structured analytical products, applied strategic advisory, and analysis-informed mediation; delivered on daily and weekly cycles calibrated to the speed at which the situation changes.

We are based in Beirut. In environments where official data is systematically unreliable and remote analysis inherits every distortion in its source material, physical proximity is not a logistical convenience but an epistemological foundation of our methodology. We verify what others can only estimate.

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