
SOURCE FILE

A DEAL LEBANON DID NOT SIGN

HOW A CONTESTED IRAN-UNITED STATES FRAMEWORK RE-
OPENS LEBANON'S INTERNAL BALANCE



CORE GROUP

Date Issued: 18 June 2026

Prepared By: Core Group — Strategic Analysis Unit

KEY JUDGMENTS

KJ-01 HIGH CONFIDENCE

The memorandum's decisive effect on Lebanon is internal and contested, not a settled territorial outcome. The Iran-United States framework is reversible and deliberately ambiguous on Israeli withdrawal, and it hands every Lebanese camp a reading to exploit. That puts the internal balance, not the front line, in play as the arena where the deal's consequences land. The question the framework forces is not whether the war has ended but which way a deal Lebanon did not sign tips Lebanon's internal alignment.

KJ-02 HIGH CONFIDENCE

The memorandum cuts both ways inside Lebanon. It supplies Hezbollah a victory narrative, the prospect of unfrozen Iranian cash, and Tehran's inseparability pressure to retract the August 2025 arms-monopoly decision and abandon the Washington track. It simultaneously vindicates the sovereignty bloc's argument that an Israeli withdrawal should come through diplomacy rather than through Hezbollah's weapons, and it arrives with Group of Seven, French, and United States backing, including an announced Aoun visit to the White House. The conditioned-relief lever cuts the same way, handing Washington a means to constrain Iran's funding of Hezbollah. Which edge dominates inside the 60-day final-deal window is the unresolved question this brief turns on.

KJ-03 HIGH CONFIDENCE

The March-to-June war, more than the memorandum, reset the internal board, militarily and politically. The war gutted Hezbollah militarily while reviving its resistance narrative, left Israel holding roughly 5% of Lebanese territory that is now the standing disarmament pretext, tightened Tehran's direct grip, displaced more than 1.2 million people across confessions, and squeezed Hezbollah's patronage to a \$200 displaced-family floor. The war began on an Iranian trigger, Hezbollah's 2 March entry after the killing of Iran's supreme leader, ran while the Salam cabinet held together but deferred the August 2025 arms decision under fire, and opened in April the rival Washington negotiating track that is now the legitimacy contest. The memorandum is the terminal event that makes that residue, military and institutional, politically actionable in either direction.

KJ-04 MEDIUM CONFIDENCE

The cash channel is the swing variable, and it is contingent, not certain. Oil-export waivers are immediate to Iran under the framework, but the frozen-asset release capable of refunding Hezbollah's depleted patronage must still be negotiated inside the window and is conditioned on Iran keeping its proxies "in check." The memorandum specifies no firewall against onward transfer, and no guarantee of it either. The contest for the war-devastated Shia constituency, between Iranian cash on one side and conditioned international and reform money on the other, is the economic core of the internal fight.

KJ-05 MEDIUM CONFIDENCE

The internal contest runs through institutional levers, not the ballot box. The Shia duo holds the Amal-aligned Finance Ministry, whose required co-signature on decrees with a financial component gives it a recognized tool to stall executive action without leaving the cabinet, and it can threaten the government's confessional legitimacy by withdrawing its ministers rather than by any numerical veto. The parliamentary term's extension to 2028 removes any near-term electoral reset. These mechanics make deferral, not enforcement or retraction, the path of least resistance for the sixteen-month Salam cabinet, which is the structural reason contested drift is the most likely internal outcome.

KJ-06 MEDIUM CONFIDENCE

The most likely internal outcome over the 60-day window is contested drift. The Salam cabinet survives by deferring rather than enforcing or retracting the arms-monopoly decision while both camps test the framework. Sovereignty-bloc consolidation is the upside. A cabinet rupture over disarmament is the high-impact downside, made more dangerous by continued Israeli strikes that already contradict the framework and by a base rate of three announced ceasefires failed since November 2024, but constrained by a cabinet that survived the war intact.

I. THE BOARD THE MEMORANDUM LANDS ON

The desk assessed the 1 June de-escalation as a contested truce unlikely to hold, the third announced ceasefire to fail since November 2024, and it did not hold. This brief advances and corrects that line. The memorandum signed electronically around 15 June is the terminal event of the March-to-June war, but its decisive effect is internal and contested rather than a withdrawal settlement, and it lands on a fixed institutional board whose composition the postponement of elections to 2028 freezes, where the contest will be procedural before it is electoral.

This assessment rests on three linchpins. First, the memorandum's frozen-asset relief actually reaches Hezbollah and refunds its war-depleted patronage, rather than being withheld under the proxy-restraint conditionality or stalled inside the 60-day window. Second, the sovereignty bloc converts international backing and the diplomatic-track logic into durable arms-monopoly progress through the cabinet, rather than being blocked by the duo's institutional levers and isolated as the Christian-Druze sovereignist alignment frays. Third, the withdrawal ambiguity resolves toward an actual Israeli pullback in the window, rather than Israel's indefinite presence persisting as Hezbollah's standing pretext against disarmament. Each linchpin is contingent, and the indicators in Section VI specify the developments that would force a rethink.

A. The sovereignty government and its institutional limits

The Salam cabinet formed on 9 February 2025, after Joseph Aoun's January 2025 election to the presidency ended more than two years without a head of state. Nawaf Salam, an independent jurist and former president of the International Court of Justice, leads a twenty-four-minister government built around an arms-monopoly and disarmament agenda. That government has now held together for sixteen months, including through the entire March-to-June war. It is not a fresh formation testing its cohesion. It is a seasoned cabinet that has already survived the most violent stress the system has faced since 2006.

The cabinet set its arms agenda before the war. In the sessions of early August 2025, it tasked the Lebanese Army with drawing up a plan to bring all weapons under state control, the decision Hezbollah now demands be retracted. The Army command under General Rodolphe Haykal presented that plan in September 2025, and the cabinet accepted it. The Army then reported completing a first phase in the south by early 2026, before the war overtook further implementation. The August 2025 decision is therefore not an abstract tasking. It is a partially executed program that the war froze and that the memorandum has now reactivated as a live June 2026 question.

The institutional limits decide everything downstream. The Shia duo, Hezbollah and Berri's Amal, sits inside the government rather than outside it, holding five of the twenty-four seats.

That is short of the one-third-plus-one that under Lebanese practice would let a bloc veto decisions requiring a two-thirds cabinet majority, and the cabinet was deliberately formed without granting the duo that formal blocking share. The duo’s real influence runs through two other channels. The first is the Finance Ministry, held by Yassine Jaber, an Amal nominee, whose signature is required on decrees that carry a financial component, a recognized lever to stall executive action without collapsing the government. The second is the confessional-legitimacy lever: a coordinated withdrawal of the Shia ministers would strip the cabinet of its national-pact character and push it toward caretaker paralysis, a threat the duo can hold over any move against Hezbollah’s weapons without casting a single veto. The extension of the parliamentary term to 2028 removes the one external pressure that would otherwise force a resolution, an election. The board is fixed, and the contest plays out on it.

FIGURE 1
The internal field: who reads the deal which way

Actor	Reads the memorandum as	Arms-monopoly decision	Washington direct track	Net effect of war + memorandum
President Aoun	Instrumentalization	Enforce (defers in practice)	Legitimate	Strengthened
PM Salam	Instrumentalization	Enforce (defers in practice)	Legitimate	Strengthened
Hezbollah (Qassem)	Victory	Retract	Illegitimate	Exposed militarily, strengthened narratively
Amal (Berri)	Victory-adjacent, hedging	Defer	Ambivalent	Holds the finance lever
Lebanese Forces (Geagea) †	Instrumentalization	Enforce	Legitimate	Strengthened
Kataeb (Gemayel) †	Instrumentalization	Enforce	Legitimate	Strengthened
FPM (Bassil) †	Mixed	Defer; disarm only on a parallel Israeli withdrawal	Rejects a Washington blueprint	Exposed seam
PSP (Jumblatt) †	Instrumentalization	Enforce	Legitimate	Pragmatic, exposed
Lebanese Army	Executor, not a position-holder	Implements the cabinet’s decision	Neutral	Capacity-constrained

External backers (not given equal billing). The United States, the Group of Seven, and France back the state’s arms monopoly and an Israeli withdrawal through diplomacy; Iran backs retraction and treats the Lebanese and Iranian tracks as inseparable.

† Established 2025 bloc position; the June-2026 read on the memorandum is not yet stated. The status of the FPM–Hezbollah understanding is absent from the evidence base.

B. The war that reset the board (March to June 2026)

Lebanon entered active hostilities on 2 March 2026, when Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel in response to the killing of Iran's supreme leader and Israel answered with a ground invasion of the south. From that date to mid-June, the Lebanese health authorities recorded a cumulative toll that reached 3,884 dead and 11,856 wounded, including 247 children killed. More than 1.2 million people were displaced from the south, Beirut's southern suburbs, and the Bekaa, of whom roughly one million remained displaced in mid-June. Israel holds approximately 5% of Lebanese territory and reports killing more than 2,500 Hezbollah operatives, against thirty Israeli soldiers and four civilians over the same period.

The territorial outcome is the disarmament pretext. The occupied ground gives Hezbollah a standing argument that it cannot discuss its weapons while Israeli forces sit on Lebanese soil, and it gives Tehran a reason to declare the Lebanese and Iranian tracks inseparable. The war gutted Hezbollah as a military organization and at the same time revived its resistance narrative, the inversion that now shapes the internal calculus. The displacement fell across confessions, not only on the Shia south, which widens the political stake well beyond Hezbollah's own constituency.

C. The war's internal arc (March to June 2026)

The war began on a decision Lebanon did not make. Hezbollah opened the front on 2 March in response to the killing of Iran's supreme leader, so Lebanon entered the war on Tehran's *casus belli* rather than its own. That sequence is the empirical floor under Salam's later assessment that Tehran's grip on Hezbollah is unprecedented and more direct than before. The internal-political reactions of the first weeks, whether the cabinet condemned or accommodated the unilateral entry and whether the confessional camps closed ranks or fractured, are thin in the evidence base, and the desk holds that read at the leadership tier rather than asserting a unanimity or a rupture it cannot document. What is anchored is the trigger and the consequence: an Iranian decision pulled Lebanon into a war that then remade its politics.

The cabinet's wartime conduct set the precedent the memorandum now tests. The sixteen-month Salam government held together through the fighting and neither enforced nor retracted the August 2025 arms-monopoly decision under fire. Deferral is therefore not a new option the memorandum creates. It is the cabinet's proven wartime reflex, which is why deferral outranks both enforcement and retraction as the likely response to the new pressure.

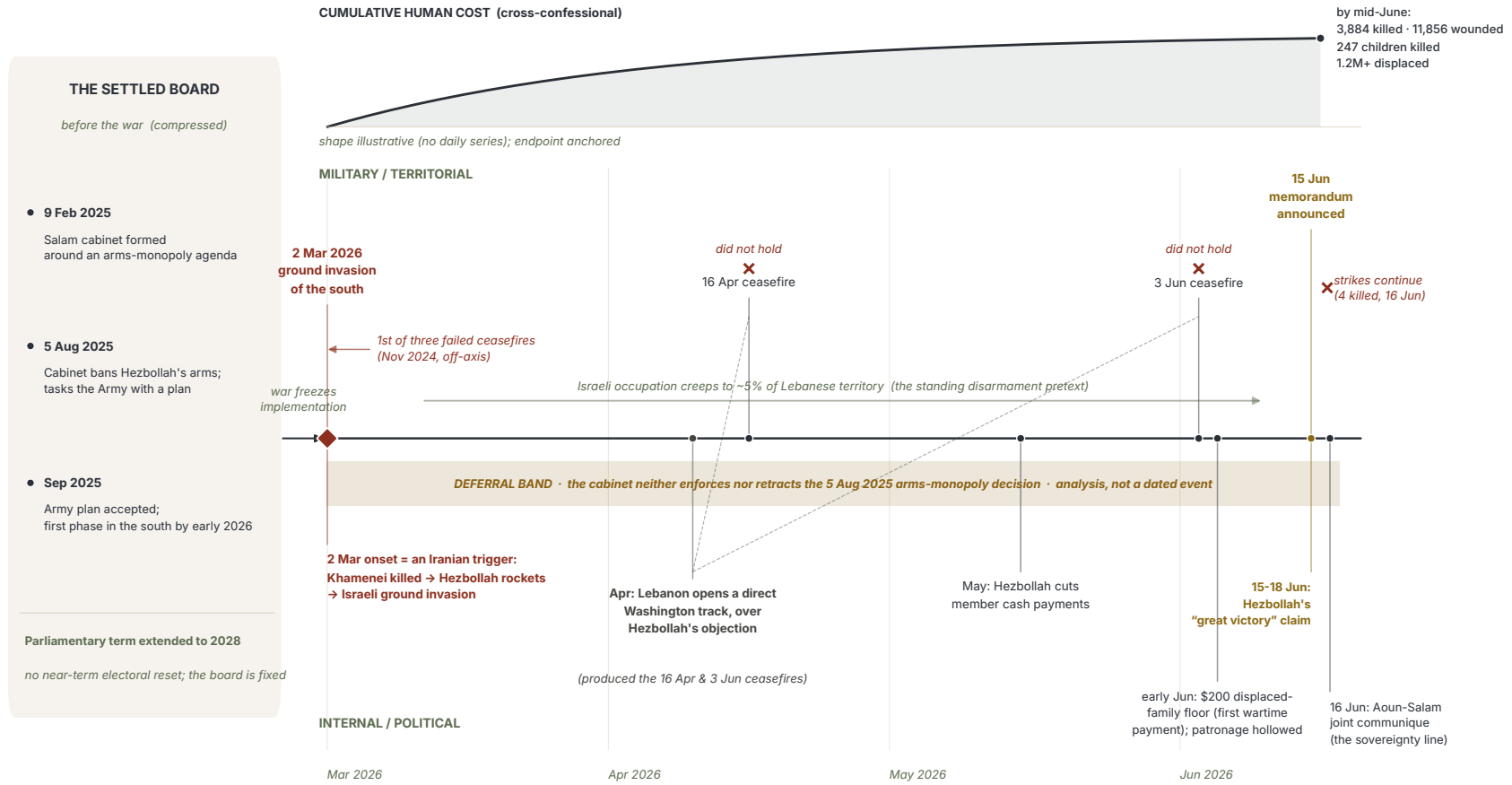
The two-track legitimacy contest was born in the war, not in the deal. About five weeks into the fighting, in April 2026, the sovereignty government opened its own direct negotiating channel with Israel in Washington, under United States pressure and over Hezbollah's refusal to recognize it. Two of the three announced ceasefires of the period, on 16 April and 3 June, were products of that track, and both failed on the ground. The memorandum did not create the split between Beirut's channel and Tehran's. It inflamed a split that opened in April.

The war hollowed Hezbollah's patronage machine. The group cut back cash payments to its members in May 2026 and offered displaced families only \$200 in aid in early June, its first such payment during the war. Iran transferred roughly \$1 billion to Hezbollah across the first ten months of 2025, and has assured the group it will receive more once Iranian assets are unfrozen. The wartime squeeze is what made Hezbollah's own constituency financially contestable, which is why the cash channel is the swing variable the memorandum activates.

FIGURE 2

The board, and the war that reset it

A pre-war institutional decision, frozen by a war, reactivated by the memorandum (2 March - 18 June 2026)



Source: Ministry of Public Health / NNA casualty totals through 17 June 2026; UNICEF child figures; cabinet, Army and ceasefire chronology; Core Group analysis.

II. THE CONTESTED FRAMEWORK

The memorandum is a fourteen-point document, signed electronically around 15 June with a formal ceremony set for Burgenstock on 19 and 20 June, mediated by Pakistan and Qatar. Its first point names Lebanon and commits both parties and their allies in the current war to the immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon, and to ensuring Lebanese territorial integrity and sovereignty, with the final deal required to confirm those Lebanon provisions. Lebanon's inclusion was Iran's insistence and a last-minute insertion in the closing days of the talks. The framework is not a settlement. It is a reversible, status-quo arrangement: Point 9 commits both sides to maintain the status quo pending a final deal, Iran holding its nuclear program at current levels and the United States adding no new sanctions and no new forces, with a sixty-day window to negotiate the final text, a clause letting either side walk away at any time, and a requirement that a binding United Nations Security Council resolution endorse whatever follows. Trump called it very solid and not final in the same breath, and threatened to start the process again if Iran does not comply inside sixty days. The arrangement is a pause with an exit, not a peace.

The asymmetry of what the framework commits runs against Lebanon, and it is visible provision by provision. Read each Lebanon-relevant point on two axes, when it bites and whom it benefits, and the pattern is uniform. The oil-export waivers under Point 10 are immediate and they benefit Iran: the United States Treasury issues waivers for Iranian crude, petroleum products, derivatives, and the associated banking and transport from the moment of signing, with a thirty-day window for the full removal of the naval blockade. The frozen-asset release is conditional and it benefits Iran: Iran's restricted assets become fully available on implementation, but the release procedures are deferred into the sixty-day window and gated on Iran keeping its proxies in check. The reconstruction commitment, at least \$300 billion developed with regional partners and topped up by pledged Gulf money, is directed at Iran's own economy. Point 1, the only provision that names Lebanon, is the one tagged contested and ambiguous, and it carries no money. Neither Lebanese reconstruction nor Lebanese economic relief appears anywhere in the fourteen points. The deal that names Lebanon, by Iran's own framing, three times, funds Iran, not the country on whose soil the war was fought. Iranian oil output had fallen 19% in the month before the deal, the pressure that explains why Tehran took its benefit front-loaded and concrete while leaving Lebanon's back-loaded and contested.

The Lebanon clause is ambiguous by construction, and the ambiguity is the load-bearing fact of the whole framework. One sentence about Israeli withdrawal carries four irreconcilable readings, and none has yet been tested against an event. United States officials state the framework does not call for an Israeli withdrawal. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi calls Israel's continued presence a violation and holds that, without an Israeli withdrawal from the territory occupied in this war, the war has not fully ended, the formulation that makes the Lebanese and Iranian tracks inseparable. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz states that Israel will stay indefinitely in southern security zones despite all current and future pressures,

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel will remain as long as necessary, and a far-right Israeli minister calls the agreement not binding on Israel at all. Berril holds, on the reading Hezbollah relayed from Iran, that the deal contains a phased sixty-day pullout and that withdrawal sits within the framework of the agreement. Four readings of one clause, held by the four parties whose conduct will decide it, with no mechanism in the text to adjudicate between them. The contestation is not a flaw the parties will resolve in drafting. It is the substance of what each side agreed to leave open.

The fracture between Washington and Jerusalem widens the ambiguity rather than closing it. Trump has stated he is not happy with the way Israel has handled itself in Lebanon and that Israel has fought Hezbollah too long, while Israeli ministers reject the framework's application to them outright. Whether the United States converts that displeasure into pressure that produces an actual Israeli pullback is, on the present evidence, unresolved, and it is the external variable on which the third linchpin turns. The desk does not assess that a stated displeasure equals an enforced withdrawal.

III. TWO TRACKS, ONE COUNTRY

A deal Lebanon did not sign enters Lebanese politics through two competing tracks, and both domestic camps have already claimed it. Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem called the memorandum a great victory for Iran and a pivotal point for Lebanon, thanked Tehran for linking the Lebanese arena to the deal and for forcing Israel to halt its aggression, and urged the Lebanese authorities to abandon the Washington talks as mere concessions, while insisting that disarmament is a purely internal Lebanese matter outside any negotiation. Aoun welcomed the memorandum but insisted Lebanon's negotiations with Israel are independent of the Iran-United States deal, stating that for the first time Lebanon is conducting its own negotiations and that nobody negotiates for it, a direct rebuke of his own prior charge that Iran was using Lebanon as a bargaining chip. Salam, who has called Tehran's insistence on inserting Lebanon a move to broadcast that Lebanon is nothing more than a card in its pocket, made the sovereignty argument sharpest, and added the reading that gives it weight: Iran's grip on Hezbollah is unprecedented and more direct since Nasrallah's killing, which reduces the party's own autonomy.

The instrumentalization the sovereignty bloc rejects also vindicates its own argument. Beirut has held for months that an Israeli withdrawal should come through diplomacy and the state's own negotiating channel rather than through Hezbollah's weapons. The memorandum, by routing Lebanon's fate through an Iran deal, hands Aoun and Salam the evidence that Hezbollah's arsenal delivered occupation and dependency, not deterrence. That argument now carries external weight it lacked. The Group of Seven, meeting in Evian on 17 June, called for an immediate robust ceasefire and backed the Lebanese leadership's effort to achieve the disarmament of Hezbollah and the state's monopoly of arms and to protect Lebanese territorial integrity with appropriate international security guarantees. Salam met Emmanuel Macron in Paris on 18 June, and the United States announced an Aoun visit to the White House, the first by a Lebanese president in over a decade.

The framework transmits into the internal balance through three channels, and the defining feature of each is that it can run in either direction. The same deal powers a push toward Hezbollah's re-ascendance and a push toward the sovereignty bloc's consolidation at once, which is precisely what makes the outcome contested rather than determined. On the cash channel, the push toward Hezbollah is a contingent Iranian relief that would refund the patronage machine, and the push the other way is the conditioned international and reform money that flows only on arms-monopoly compliance. On the narrative channel, the push toward Hezbollah is the great-victory frame, and the push the other way is the sovereignty bloc's diplomacy-vindicated frame now amplified by the Group of Seven and the White House visit. On the alignment channel, the push toward Hezbollah is a re-cohering Shia duo, signaled by an Aoun adviser reopening a back-channel to it that the memorandum catalyzed, and the push the other way is a Christian-Druze sovereignist bloc that has so far held. No channel resolves on the framework's text. Each resolves on which condition fires first, and the indicators in Section VI track exactly those firing conditions.

The cash channel is the one to watch first, because it is the most contingent and the most consequential. Two funding streams now compete for the same war-devastated Shia constituency. The Iranian stream is front-loaded but conditioned: the oil waivers are immediate, but the asset release that would actually reach Hezbollah is deferred into the window and gated on proxy restraint, and the headline \$24 billion figure attached to it is Iranian-sourced and unconfirmed by Washington. Against that sits a 2025 baseline of roughly \$1 billion transferred to Hezbollah over ten months and a wartime floor of \$200 per displaced family, the measure of how far the machine has been hollowed out and how much a restored flow would buy. A United States official states that unfrozen funds will not be released to any terror organization and that the framework incentivizes Iran to keep its proxies in check, but the memorandum specifies no mechanism for that firewall, so the path from an Iranian asset release to a Hezbollah disbursement is asserted as policy, not established as a control. The conditioned stream runs the other way: an active International Monetary Fund reform track, with Finance Minister Jaber having reaffirmed the reform commitment on 15 June, alongside World Bank and Gulf reconstruction money and a Saudi lifting of its multi-year ban on Lebanese imports, all of it gated on reform and arms-monopoly compliance. The decisive feature of the cash contest is an absence. Lebanon's own war-damage and reconstruction cost is unquantified in the evidence base and, more to the point, is addressed nowhere in the memorandum. The country on whose soil the war was fought has no reconstruction line in the deal that funds Iran's. With no reconstruction line of its own, Lebanon is left with the reform-gated money as the only path to recovery in sight, which gives the arms-monopoly condition attached to it real bite.

IV. THE INTERNAL CONTEST IT FORCES

The August 2025 arms-monopoly decision is the object Hezbollah is fighting to reverse, and its fate is the clearest single measure of which way the framework tips Lebanon. The decision did not arrive abstractly. The cabinet took it in the sessions of early August 2025, the Army command under General Haykal presented the implementing plan in September 2025 and the cabinet accepted it, the Army reported a first phase complete in the south by early 2026, and then the war froze further implementation. The memorandum reactivates a partially executed program as a live decision, and three forks are open on it. Enforcement would require the Lebanese Army to act against Hezbollah while Israel occupies Lebanese ground, which the Army lacks the capacity to do and which the occupation pretext makes politically toxic. Its trigger would be a withdrawal that removes the pretext together with the international cover the Group of Seven and the White House visit supply, and it is the edge that drives consolidation. Retraction would require the cabinet to reverse a partially executed program under Hezbollah and Tehran pressure, which the sovereignty bloc and its international backers would resist. Its trigger would be an actual Iranian cash infusion plus inseparability pressure, and it is the edge that drives re-ascendance. Deferral, neither enforcing nor retracting, asks nothing of any actor, is the same path the cabinet already took throughout the war, and is the edge that drives drift. The Army command's own statement that it cannot complete the program on the original timeline tilts the fork further toward deferral.

The cabinet's survival turns on the same institutional levers that the duo can pull without rupturing the government, and those levers, not cabinet arithmetic, are what make deferral procedurally easy rather than merely likely. The first lever is the Finance Ministry. Yassine Jaber, the Amal-nominated minister, holds a required co-signature on decrees that carry a financial component, so any arms-monopoly or Army-funding decree with a budgetary element can be stalled at his desk without a vote and without the duo leaving the cabinet. The second lever is confessional legitimacy. A coordinated withdrawal of the Shia ministers would strip the cabinet of its national-pact character and push it toward caretaker paralysis, a threat the duo can hold over any move against Hezbollah's weapons. What the duo does not hold is a numerical veto: its five of twenty-four seats fall short of the one-third-plus-one that Lebanese practice requires to deny a two-thirds cabinet majority, and the cabinet was deliberately formed without granting it that blocking share. The asymmetry is structural. The duo can stall and it can threaten, but it cannot force a reversal through the cabinet, which makes deferral, not retraction, its realistic ceiling and the cabinet's realistic floor. Against the Iranian cash channel, the sovereignty bloc holds the counter-channel already named, the reform-reconstruction-IMF track, the Saudi import-ban lift, and the conditioned international money, all gated on the arms-monopoly agenda the duo seeks to bury. With elections settled out to 2028, neither side can appeal to a ballot box to break the deadlock, so the contest stays inside the cabinet, where stalling beats forcing.

The swing actors decide the margin. Berri and Amal hold the finance lever and can either hedge toward an Amal-as-reasonable-alternative posture or re-cohere with Hezbollah behind the victory frame, and which way Berri leans is the single most informative tell in the system. The Christian sovereigntist blocs, the Lebanese Forces under Samir Geagea and the Kataeb under Samy Gemayel, hold to state monopoly as a constitutional demand. The Free Patriotic Movement under Gebran Bassil is the exposed seam: it backs disarmament but conditions it on a parallel Israeli withdrawal and rejects a Washington-authored plan, a position whose withdrawal-first logic partially overlaps Hezbollah's own and that the memorandum's withdrawal ambiguity therefore cuts directly into. The Progressive Socialist Party under Walid Jumblatt has backed the state's monopoly on arms and sits with the sovereigntist alignment. The current status of the Free Patriotic Movement's understanding with Hezbollah is absent from the evidence base, and the desk holds that read open rather than asserting a rupture or a revival it cannot document. The June 2026 positions of the Lebanese Forces, the Kataeb, the Free Patriotic Movement, and the Progressive Socialist Party on the memorandum specifically are likewise thin in the evidence base, and the desk carries their established 2025 bloc positions rather than manufacturing post-memorandum statements they have not made.

V. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The board state is fixed and the deal is contested. A sixteen-month cabinet that survived the war holds an arms-monopoly agenda it has not enforced, the Shia duo holds levers to stall it but not to veto it, the electoral calendar runs to 2028, and a reversible framework hands both camps a reading to exploit while continued Israeli strikes contradict the framework on the ground. Three forward paths sit inside the 60-day window to mid-August, governed by two variables: whether the frozen-asset relief actually reaches Hezbollah, and whether the sovereignty bloc can convert international backing into cabinet action against the duo's levers. The paths carry strategic-likelihood bands rather than percentages.

Contested drift

MOST LIKELY PATH

The cabinet survives by deferring the arms-monopoly decision rather than enforcing or retracting it, and both camps test the framework inside the window. The Shia duo uses the Finance Ministry co-signature and the threat of a legitimacy-stripping withdrawal to stall enforcement without leaving the government, the sovereignty bloc cannot convert its backing into cabinet action fast enough to overcome those levers, and no election forces a resolution before 2028. The internal balance is held in suspension by the framework's ambiguity and the cabinet's levers together. This path requires no actor to concede its core position, and the cabinet already deferred this same decision throughout the war, so deferral is its established reflex rather than a novel choice. It is placed most-likely rather than very likely because the framework remains open to resolution either way before mid-August. The evidence that would push it past most-likely, a binding final deal or an outright cabinet collapse,

is not present. The indicator that would shift it is the cabinet formally addressing the August 2025 decision before the window closes.

Sovereignty-bloc consolidation

LOWER LIKELIHOOD

The diplomatic-track logic, the Group of Seven, French, and United States backing, the conditioned reconstruction, and the proxy-restraint conditionality together constrain Hezbollah's windfall, and Aoun and Salam bank arms-monopoly progress past the duo's levers. Berri tips toward an Amal-as-reasonable-alternative posture and eases the finance lever, and the Christian-Druze sovereignist alignment holds. This path runs on the cash channel breaking against Hezbollah, the frozen-asset relief stalling or being withheld under the conditionality while the conditioned international money moves. It is held below the most-likely line by the speed it requires: converting backing into durable cabinet action inside sixty days, against an entrenched stall architecture, is harder than letting the deadlock persist. The indicator that would lift it is a White House visit that produces a stated United States deliverable on withdrawal or reconstruction.

Cabinet rupture and war resumption

LOWER LIKELIHOOD (HIGH IMPACT)

The withdrawal ambiguity and the framework's reversibility collapse the deal, the fourth ceasefire fails as the prior three did, the Shia ministers resign or the duo pulls its support to bring the government down over the disarmament question, and Lebanon enters caretaker paralysis amid renewed fighting. The base rate carries this path: three announced ceasefires have failed on the ground, and Israeli strikes continued after the memorandum announcement, killing four people on 16 June. The counterweight is the cabinet's own record. The sixteen-month government already survived the entire war intact, which raises the bar for a rupture the war itself did not produce. The indicator that would move it is a breach of the post-memorandum pause, by Israeli strike or Hezbollah operation, inside the window.

An alternative explanation, that an actual Iranian cash infusion plus Tehran's inseparability pressure decisively re-cohere the Shia duo and revive Hezbollah's standing inside the window, tipping drift into reversal as the duo forces a retraction of the August 2025 decision, is less consistent with the present evidence than contested drift. The cash is contingent on a conditioned release and a sixty-day negotiation that has not happened, Hezbollah is materially gutted, the United States, Group of Seven, and French backing and the Aoun White House visit cut the other way, and the proxy-restraint conditionality gives Washington a live lever it has not yet had to use. The evidence favors contested drift because the framework's ambiguity, the cabinet's stall architecture, and the absence of a near-term election make suspension easier than resolution inside sixty days.

VI. INDICATORS TO MONITOR

These indicators would shift the assessments above. Each pairs an observable threshold with the direction in which it updates the forecast, across the 60-day window to mid-August.

Observable indicator	What it signals
The cabinet formally addresses the August 2025 arms-monopoly decision: re-affirms, defers with a stated timeline, or retracts	The deferral equilibrium breaks one way or the other. Re-affirm or enforce reads toward consolidation , retract toward re-ascendancy , and continued silence holds contested drift .
The Amal-aligned Finance Ministry withholds a required co-signature on an arms-monopoly or Army-funding decree, or the Shia ministers threaten withdrawal	The duo is exercising its stall-and-threaten levers. Toward drift or re-ascendancy .
Iranian frozen assets disburse and funds reach Hezbollah-affiliated bodies	The cash channel has opened against the conditionality. Toward re-ascendancy .
Hezbollah resumes member or displaced cash payments above the \$200 wartime floor	The patronage machine is being refunded. Toward re-ascendancy .
The Aoun White House visit occurs and produces a stated United States deliverable on withdrawal or reconstruction	The consolidation channel is producing substance, not optics. Toward consolidation .
International or reform money disburses on stated conditions: an IMF program step, a World Bank or Gulf reconstruction tranche, or the Saudi import channel re-opening	The conditioned counter-cash channel is moving. Toward consolidation .
Israeli forces begin a documented phased pullback inside the window	The contested withdrawal clause resolves toward an actual pullback, removing Hezbollah's pretext. Toward consolidation .
Israeli strikes or a Hezbollah operation breach the post-memorandum pause inside the window	The fourth ceasefire is failing as the prior three did. Toward rupture . Continued strikes (4 killed 16 June) start this indicator already leaning toward breach.



CORE GROUP

Date Issued: 18 June 2026

Prepared By: Core Group —
Strategic Analysis Unit



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.