

FORUM:	Advisory Panel
ISSUE:	Measures to Stabilize Lebanon's Political Vacuum and Institutional Gridlock
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Introduction

Lebanon has been, in recent years, facing one of the tensest institutional gridlocks and rapid political vacuums. Since 2022 all the way to 2025, Lebanon has been without a president. In 2026, with the backing of the gulf states and support from the United States government, Joseph Aoun, the former army general, was elected to assume the presidential position. Despite the elected head of state, the institutional gridlock has persisted due to Hezbollah's noticeable influence in the Lebanese parliament



Southern border of Lebanon after bombardment by Israeli Defense Forces

and due to the legislative and parliamentary reforms done when Lebanon faced a presidential vacancy. With Hezbollah's stance on being against the election of a president backed by the gulf states and the United States, Hezbollah continues to veto and vote down any means of reforms in the country trying to be implemented by Joseph Aoun. In addition, during the presidential vacancy, the parliament had assumed roles of the vacant president, leading the current parliament and the president to have a "dual wielding" power dynamic that causes disagreements and eventually obstructing means to pass legislations. In addition, the Lebanese parliament has been caught in deep divisions between religious and ideological factions (historically, the Maronite Christians and the left-wing Muslim faction). This deep division in the parliament has led to indecision as any means of parliamentary change fails to be implemented as no majority can be formed to come to a decisive decision. This gridlock in the nation has made it near impossible for Lebanon to respond to its economic collapse, the nation's need for reforms, and to combat national security.

In the recent decades, the Lebanese parliament has failed to elect the nation's president which causes the nation to be left up for the executive branch to assume authority with limited authority over their actions. Due to the gridlock in the parliament and the fierce disagreement to elect the president, the Lebanese ministries, the courts, and also the parliament is in a political gridlock unable to pass changes and reforms to address the ongoing issues Lebanon has been facing.



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In addition to the political gridlock, Lebanese economy has been facing a massive downfall in the last decades. Since 2019, the Lebanese pound has lost nearly all its value. Banks in Lebanon continuously fails to meet the nation's financial obligations and poverty has surged due to this economical downfall and intense hyperinflation Lebanon has been facing. Despite the Lebanese government's defaults on the foreign debts in 2020, the Lebanese economy and poverty is ubiquitous in the nation with almost 80% of the population pushed into poverty.

With the weakening of the state and the decreased legitimacy with the government, Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Shiite Islamist political party and a heavily militant group, has expanded its dominance in the government system by providing the populace with security and welfare which continues to undermine the Lebanese government's legitimacy and undermining national sovereignty of Lebanon.

With the current economic and political crisis, Lebanon has been facing regional conflicts. One instance has been the full-scale war which involved the Israeli military's invasion of the Lebanese southern border which has caused 4,000 deaths and caused more than one million displacements of Lebanese citizens. In addition, Hezbollah, utilized by Iran, has been ordered by Tehran to move Lebanon as a diplomatic partner to move Lebanon in favor of the current Iranian government.



France's diplomatic agreement to aid Lebanon and to build further diplomatic relations

With the combined economic crisis, political gridlock, and the regional conflicts, the citizens of Lebanon face immense threat which ranges from the shortage of electricity, the access to healthcare, clean water, and other necessities. With the government's failure to address the crisis, trust in the institution for the people is draining which causes mass emigration.

With the intervention of the Iranian backed Hezbollah and the United Nation's decision to see if Lebanon can be stabilized without full-scale foreign intervention, Lebanon's sovereignty is at risk of foreign nations dictating the future outcomes of the nation and for the people.

Background

Since gaining independence in 1943, Lebanon's government has been under a power-sharing arrangement where political sectors were divided among different religious groups among Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shia Muslims. This power divide fueled diversity into the nation but also caused institutional divide and hostility.



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With the unstable government, Lebanon has faced a devastating civil war which lasted for near 15 years which resulted in around 150,000 casualties and displacement of millions of people. One of the vital reasons for the start of the Lebanese Civil war was its constitution. In the constitution, it states that there will always be a Christian president and a Sunni Muslim prime minister. The growing Muslim and Leftist population felt underrepresented in the nation of Lebanon. With further hostility between the Christians and the Muslims, the nation of Lebanon splat into two distinct factions: The Christian Right-Win g militias and the Muslim leftists. The devastating conflicted lasting 15 years ended with the Taif Agreement in 1989 which reconciled the Lebanese political system which ended up repealing the constitution saying that the president must always be Christian and granted more authority to the Muslim prime minister and splat the parliament seats equally between the Christians and the Muslims.



Right-wing troops of Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil war (1975-

After Lebanon returning to peace after a devastating internal conflict, a new militant paramilitary gained popularity after the civil war. Despite its grassroots presence during the Lebanese civil war, it was not a major force till near the end of the conflict. After the Taif Agreement which caused disarmament of the Muslim Leftists and Right-Wing Christians, Hezbollah was able to maintain their arms by stating it was a national resistance movement.



Lebanon during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990)

In 1992, the Hezbollah, originally only recognized as a paramilitary group, entered mainstream Lebanese politics in the post-war parliament of Lebanon and secured noticeable seats. With nearly two decades of warfare against the Israeli military force in Southern Lebanon, Hezbollah emerged victorious in the May of 2000 with Israeli troops withdrawing. This achievement gained Hezbollah mass popularity and support.



Taif Agreement led by gulf states to end the Lebanese civil war

With the devastation of war and the presence of Hezbollah undermining the current governance, Lebanon has been steadily facing a national crisis which is still present till this day.

Hezbollah still continues to involve itself in war against Israel and its alignment with Iran has caused instability in Lebanon.



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Problems Raised

Leadership Vacuum and Institutional Paralysis

As mentioned, since 2022, Lebanon has been without a president due to the repeated fails for the parliament to elect a president. The current executive branch of Lebanon current assumes position of the president due to the seat's vacancy but due to the limited authority, the branch has failed to address reforms, improve its diplomatic relationships, and has hardships to implement long-term policies that could affect Lebanon. With the absence of clear leadership Lebanon has faced national insecurity.



Mix of Hezbollah, Anti-Israeli, and Muslim Leftist mob near the southern border of Lebanon

Without the president, the parliament finally elected their president in 2025 for almost over two years without one. President Joseph Aoun was elected who is the trusted head of the military and secured a mass vote due to the growing Hezbollah crisis and foreign interventions. Joseph Aoun's victory as president was heavily backed by the United States of America and Saudi Arabia to weaken Hezbollah in the region.

With the return of the president, Lebanon has finally engaged in diplomatic talks with other nations and have had direct engagement with U.S, discussing to disarm Hezbollah and pushing Israeli troops out of the southern border. However, due to deep institutional and parliamentary gridlock, Lebanon has yet to undergo vital reforms.



The parliament (House of Representatives) located in the capital city, Beirut

Despite the president elected, Lebanon's parliament and the judiciary branch has been in a political gridlock due to the persisting division amongst party members and religious differences. Along with the gridlock, Hezbollah continuously refused to disarm and tries to act as the de facto government, undermining the Lebanese sovereignty.

Along with the Hezbollah threat, Lebanon faces the economic threat of collapse. With Lebanese currency losing near all its value in 2019, the national banks froze deposits which prevented citizens to access their property which caused a loss of trust amongst financial institutions. In addition, due to the



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devastations caused by conflicts, the welfare of the nation collapsed, which now heavily depends on NGOs for help or from Hezbollah's welfare system.

Finally, despite the return of the presidency, the legacy left on by the executive branch causes political gridlock in political cabinets due to the limited authority given and due to the mistrust created from political elites protecting patronage networks.

Economic Downfall

According to the Institute of International Finance, it is projected for Lebanon's GDP to shrink around 12% by 2026 due to destruction caused by war, significant reduction in tourists and halted reconstruction.

In addition to the shrink in national GDP, Lebanon faces extreme inflation with 15.3% of consumer prices rising in March of 2026 which also has its roots due to the war and the current rise of oil and gas prices.

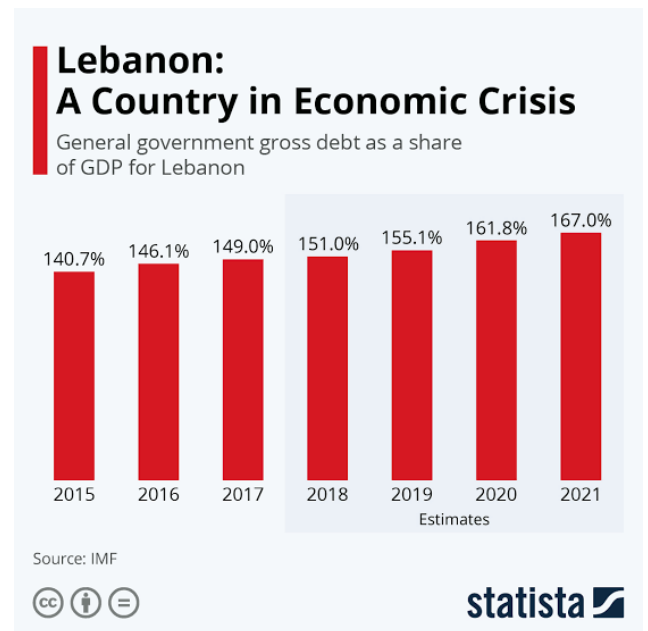
Not only inflation, but Lebanon also faces hyperinflation. Despite the current reforms and the foreign debt defaults, the Lebanese pounds has plummeted. Currently, the Lebanese pound is traded for around 87,700 per USD. Regarding the debt defaults, Lebanon still faces new, mass foreign debts which causes Lebanon to be restricted to international capital markets.

Previously mentioned, due to the national economic shock, the national bank in Lebanon holds deposits made by citizens which prevents access to property, fueling mistrust in the financial institution and the system of Lebanon.

In addition to plain economic crisis, there has been mass socio-economic changes as well. Currently, around 80% of Lebanese people live under the poverty line without access to basic goods. Along with the poverty issues, the nation faces an obstruction in development as foreign investors delay projects and investments due to the current instability in the nation.

International Actions

U.S Assistance to Mediate Foreign Relations



The graph portraying Lebanon's debts in context of the Lebanese Gross Domestic Products

Since Lebanon has faced regional conflicts and proxy wars, the United States has played a major role in mediating the diplomatic relationships between Lebanon, Israel, and other regional institutions. In 2025, U.S was able to convince the Israeli troops to withdraw from the southern border of Lebanon and helped discuss the disarmament of Hezbollah.

With U.S intervening on diplomatic relationships, this gave the president, Jospheh Aoun, legitimacy and helped the Lebanese Armed Forces to assert their sovereignty over Lebanon.



Israeli Defense Forces in the Southern Region of Lebanon

In conclusion, with the help of U.S mediated diplomatic talks, Lebanon has managed to resist getting into further conflicts in the southern border of Lebanon and has been able to receive financial and diplomatic support which has helped Lebanon gain substantial legitimacy among the global world and amongst its people.

IMF and International Financial Support

With the collapse of the Lebanese economy due to war related issues and institutional gridlock, the IMF with Gulf States has helped Lebanon create reforms while offering financial aid.

Such programs and reforms posed by these institutions were the goals of stabilizing the Lebanese pound which has lost near all its value, reforming and restructuring the national banks so it will allow citizens to access their property, and to help Lebanese economy to gain confidence along with the citizens gaining trust in such financial institutions once more.



Destruction caused by Israeli attacks in Lebanese territory

Despite the slow implementation of such reforms due to the current political and institutional gridlock, this has pushed Lebanese traditional elites to consider further reforms in Lebanon.

With the help of the International Monetary Fund and other states, Lebanon has been given a chance to reconstruct its economy and to build long-term stability.

Key Players



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Hezbollah

Hezbollah is both a militant and political force in Lebanon, heavily backed by Tehran. Hezbollah in Lebanon heavily rejects western influence and completely rejects the legitimacy of the State of Israel. Currently, with heavy financial backing and substantial support, the Hezbollah operates with its own military and has its own welfare systems within Lebanon.



Hezbollah's military branch in Lebanon waving their banner

Despite the agreement to disarm militant groups other than the national Lebanese Armed Forces, Hezbollah has rejected President Joseph Aoun and international calls to disarm and integrate into the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Currently, Hezbollah combats Israel by direct conflict and undermining their sovereignty which hampers Lebanese and Israeli relations.

With Hezbollah, the Lebanese state is prevented from assuming full power of the state and authority which is one of the key reasons why the power vacuum persist.

Lebanese Armed Forces

The Lebanese Armed Forces are one of the new neutral groups in Lebanon with gaining respect from the western allies and Israeli government relative to Hezbollah. The Armed Forces used to operate under Joseph Aoun and since the election in 2024, they have been tasked to bring back the national sovereignty of Lebanon and prepare to replace the Hezbollah dominance as the militant group.



The official army of Lebanon (the Lebanese Defense Forces).

Despite being the national army, the Lebanese Armed Forces are extremely underfunded and are currently very reliant on foreign assistance. It is currently caught between the growing Hezbollah aggression and the political gridlock to give command.

In conclusion, the Lebanese Armed Forces symbolizes the nation's attempt to regain sovereignty but due to its limited funds and training, it is extremely ineffective in the given circumstances.

Possible Solutions

Overhaul of the Current Lebanese Institution



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The current Lebanese system is still entrenched with the president always being a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister being Sunni Muslim, and the Main Speaker of the Parliament always being Shia Muslim. Despite constitutional changes, this constant continuity of the old system hinders reforms and promotes internal fighting. By overhauling and reforming the entire parliament and the presidential system, it may help Lebanon break free from political and institutional gridlock it has been in.

Along with the parliamentary and presidential reforms, different branches such as the executive and the judicial branches would need to be reformed as courts should be separated from political interferences which currently is ubiquitous when political elites gets convicted of crimes.

It would also be sensible to strengthen and reform the Lebanese Armed Forces by integrating Hezbollah into it and in which in doing so would unify the defense forces of Lebanon.

In addition to all, corruption would need to be addressed through transparency laws and legislations that prevents political elites from assuming control.

Stabilization of the Economy and International Pacts

With the Lebanese Pound collapsing, IMF reforms and other states' intervention to stabilize the economy will be a necessary step to take to legitimize Lebanon. This can be done through financial reforms and willingness for Lebanon to cooperate with foreign intervention to alleviate the economy.



The central bank of Lebanon (Banque du Liban) located in the capital city, Beirut

First of all, Banks and debts would need reforms as banks are currently in steadfast gridlocks where deposits made cannot be accessed.

Next, it is needed for Lebanon to implement national welfare as without it, people depends heavily on Hezbollah's welfare which undermines the national government's authority.

In addition, the IMF and foreign donors have requested Lebanon to undergo certain reforms such as reforming taxation to fund for social protection, reconstruction, rather than relying on unsustainable funds; comprehensive restructuring of the banks which includes liquidating failed banks, protecting depositors and their property, and the recognition of the loss of the financial sector and requesting foreign loans and aids.

Glossary

Gridlock

Progress that is completely stuck and where no advancements can be made



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De facto

“in fact,” or “in practice” which is used to describe the reality regardless of the official or legal status of something

Integration

To combine or to merge together

Hyperinflation

A type of inflation where a nation’s currency’s value drops due to the overprinting of it.

Proxy Wars

Wars that does not typically include direct combat but rather indirect combat through alternative means

GDP (Gross Domestic Products)

It is the total dollar or market value of all final goods and services made inside a country in a set amount of time.

Sovereignty

The supreme power and authority of a country to govern itself and make its owns laws and deal with its own affairs without intervention

Vacuum

Situation where a government or a leader loses control and no new power is there to take charge

Maronite Christians

Specific type of Christian Catholics native to the middle eastern region that has been involved with the Lebanese Armed Forces

Judicial Branch

The system of courts that interprets the laws and applies them to real world circumstances.

Executive Branch

Part of the government responsible of enforcing the laws passed by the legislative branch



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