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Research Article

Disarming Hezbollah: A Pathway to Sovereignty or a Recipe for Renewed Conflict?

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Abstract: In August 2025, a plan backed by the United States and Gulf countries was implemented against Hezbollah, which had established dominance in Lebanon with Iranian support. The aim was to re-establish Lebanon's monopoly over its armed forces. In this study, the Layered Sovereignty Bargain (LSB) model was developed using examples such as the Provisional IRA, GAM in Aceh, FARC, Nepal's Maoists, ETA, Colombia's AUC, and RENAMO, and theories including DDR, credible commitment problems, spoiler dynamics, and the literature on hybrid armed actors and power-sharing. The model posits that the disarmament of a hybrid actor like Hezbollah is sustainable only if the political, institutional, security, economic, and regional dimensions are simultaneously addressed—with progress on each layer made conditional on progress across the others. As in many examples, the findings indicate that coercive or partial approaches risk a relapse into violence. On the other hand, an integrated framework that combines the essential elements of contemporary DDR—credible guarantees, political participation, security sector integration, economic development, and the principle of non-interference—offers the greatest hope for success.

Keywords: Non-State Armed Groups, Disarming Hezbollah, DDR, International Security and Politics

1. Introduction

In August 2025, Lebanon's Government took the unprecedented step of endorsing the objectives of a U.S.-backed plan to disarm Hezbollah by year's end. This plan, advocated by the Gulf countries and seen as a post-war stabilization effort, seeks to reclaim the Lebanese state's exclusive right to control the use of force and thereby restore its sovereignty. Government officials speak of a three-step process of demilitarization, including the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to all parts of the country, control of all weapons not belonging to the state authorities (which include Hezbollah's weapons), and withdrawal of Israeli forces from the border positions they occupy since the 2023 war. If successful, the disarmament could re-establish Lebanon's sovereignty, remove a 'state within a state' military force from the country for decades, and implement the constitutionally-mandated policy of making defense the responsibility of the state alone. As President Aoun stated in his warnings, no organization in Lebanon will be able to possess weapons or get foreign support because it is up to the Lebanese state to protect the people (Elimam & Choukeir, 2025).

Nevertheless, Hezbollah's disarmament is likely to spark new violence because of Hezbollah leaders' adamant opposition to it. They denounced the decision of Lebanon's cabinet as a humiliation and surrender to US-Israeli orders when Israeli jets continue to intrude into Lebanese airspace every day. Hezbollah's ministers left the cabinet meeting in protest. Officials in Tehran reminded respectfully of Lebanese sovereignty, yet hinted that the decision whether or not to disarm was entirely up to Hezbollah (Elimam & Choukeir, 2025). There is a risk of armed resistance against disarming Hezbollah too hastily and strongly, as a matter of fact. According to US envoy Tom Barrack, President Aoun is

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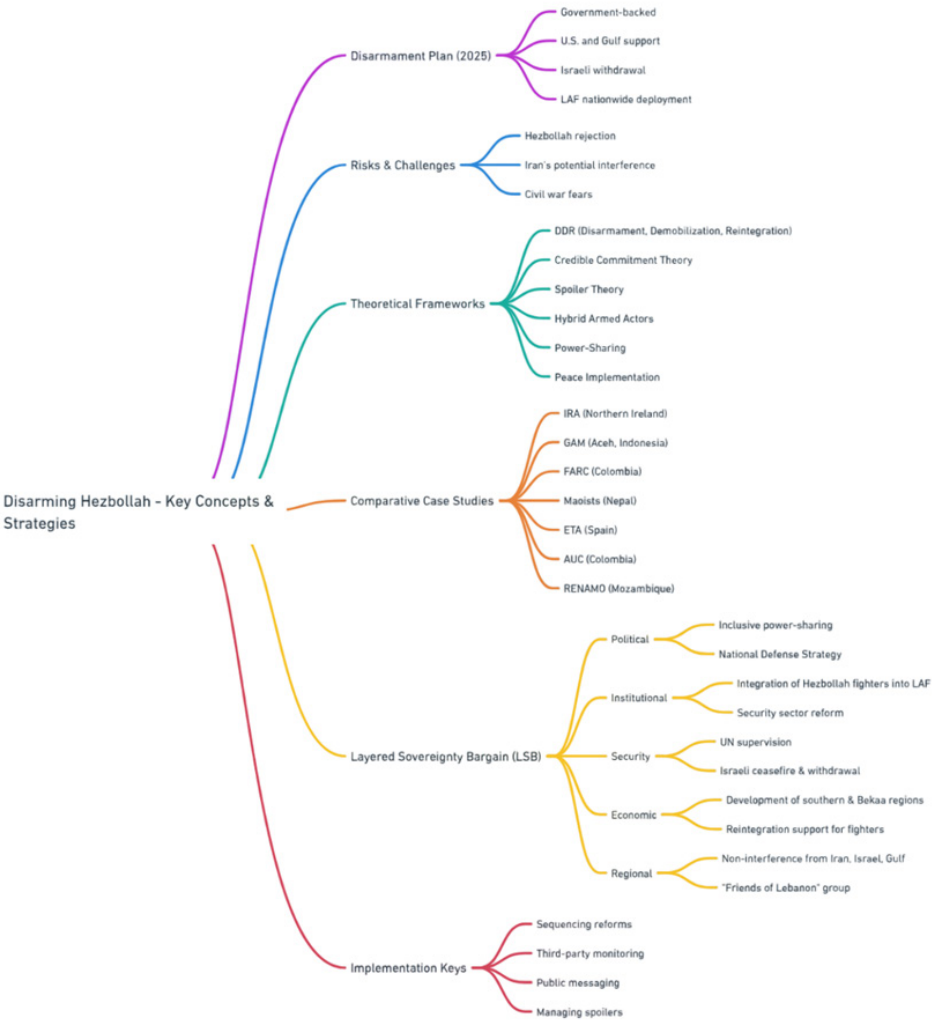
reluctant to "start a civil war (The National, 2025). Therefore, Lebanon finds itself at another crossroad, familiar with the concept of conflict resolution studies.

Would the disbandment of such a powerful force lead to the reestablishment of a sovereign and peaceful state, or would it collapse into violence? In order to find an answer to the following question of 'under what conditions does the disarmament of a powerful hybrid armed actor produce a durable restoration of state sovereignty rather than renewed conflict?', this paper attempts to provide a theoretically rigorous and empirically relevant study (as seen in Figure 1 below). With respect to the term hybrid armed actors, they are defined as groups that operate as armed actors, political parties, and social service organizations, possessing their own military power while embedding themselves in the structures of the state (Cambanis et al., 2019). The study uses structured, theory-guided process tracing in the Lebanon case, combined with most-likely / most-similar cross-case comparison across seven historical cases (Provisional IRA; GAM/Aceh; FARC; Nepal Maoists; ETA; AUC; RENAMO), to identify causal mechanisms and boundary conditions for the Layered Sovereignty Bargain (LSB) model. The use of the most-likely design involves testing whether a theory holds in cases in which it is most expectedly true, while the most-similar cross-case comparison design allows the comparison of cases with equal background factors to identify causes of interest (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Cases were included first of all if the armed actor functioned as a territorially rooted, politically salient non-state armed group with an organized military capability. Secondly, if the episode involved an explicit disarmament/demobilization effort (negotiated or imposed) with observable outcomes (successful, partial, or relapse). Thirdly, if the case offers leverage on at least one LSB layer (political/ institutional/ security/ economic/ regional). Lastly, if comparative leverage across outcomes (at least one apparent success, one apparent relapse, and intermediate/ partial outcomes).

The study examines Hezbollah's disarmament dilemma using a multi-method approach. First, the study uses theories from security studies that may explain why armed groups disarm, the factors influencing their disarmament, and how to make them disarm, as well as the dangers associated with it. Second, the study conducts a comparative historical analysis of seven cases of disarmament and discusses how each provides insight into how Hezbollah's disarmament could be approached. These seven cases include Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland; GAM rebels in Aceh, Indonesia; FARC in Colombia; Maoists in Nepal; ETA in Spain's Basque region; AUC paramilitaries in Colombia; and RENAMO in Mozambique. Each of the aforementioned cases is either a relatively successful case or a cautionary tale, and the study clearly explains why other cases (such as Sri Lanka's LTTE and Afghanistan's Taliban) do not apply in this situation.

From these considerations, the study develops an innovative analytical model, the Layered Sovereignty Bargain (LSB), specifically designed to address Lebanon's particular case. It is hypothesized that in order to achieve a sustainable disarmament bargain in such a case, it will not be sufficient to address one dimension of the issue; all five of them need to be involved in the bargain. Thus, the study expects that only by taking into account the interactions among political, institutional, security, economic, and regional factors can Lebanon negotiate and implement a lasting disarmament deal that would allow it to consolidate state power without going to war. It will be based on existing knowledge of best practices in disarmament processes in other countries, while taking into account the specific features of the Lebanese case. The resulting theoretical framework leads to a multidimensional study of whether it is possible to restore sovereignty through the disarmament of Hezbollah or, on the contrary, whether mismanaged disarmament can result in a new round of confrontation.

Figure 1
Disarming Hezbollah



Note. Prepared by the author

1.1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The topic of this study connects to several strands of academic literature on conflict resolution and international security. In total, six relevant frameworks are identified. These include (1) DDR paradigms, (2) credible commitment problems in civil conflict termination, (3) spoiler theory, (4) hybrid armed actors and state sovereignty, (5) power sharing and political integration of rebels, and (6) peace agreement implementation problems.

1.1.1. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs are an essential part of post-conflict peacebuilding. It refers to the process of shifting former combatants from their violent way of life into civilian life. The disarmament process includes weapon collection or destruction, and demobilization includes dismantling of armed groups, and reintegration enables the ex-fighters to gain the skills required to re-engage within society, either through employment, education, or provision of security (Piedmont, 2012, pp. 101-102). Modern doctrine for disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating individuals from armed groups, especially as outlined in the UN's Integrated DDR Standards framework, regards these three activities not as discrete stages that need to be sequentially followed but as interrelated processes that are necessary to be tied with other activities in the domains of peacebuilding and security sector reforms (UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR [UN IAWG-DDR], 2014). The disarmament process is no longer seen as a process of simply gathering arms; rather, it symbolizes the handing over

of the monopoly of force to the state. Demobilization usually includes a discharge ceremony from armed organizations, an identification process, and transitional support. Reintegration is the longest and costliest process, involving three aspects of activity – economic, social, and political - each of which can collapse independently of the others and adversely affect the others. Next-generation or second-generation DDR programs refer to DDR processes used even in situations of ongoing violence or when the armed group has not been defeated (Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015). Practice has proved that DDR can be successful only if incorporated into a holistic approach covering the political, security, and socio-economic aspects simultaneously. The reintegration of ex-fighters is extremely important as they should have an incentive to lead a productive life without their weapons, which could mean having a job opportunity in addition to other elements (such as community acceptance, psycho-social assistance, etc.). Otherwise, deprived or ostracized from society, ex-combatants might take up their weapons once again (Schmitt et al., 2021, p. 8).

It is particularly important to recognize that DDR is more than just a technical operation aimed at gathering weapons, but rather a political process that can work only when there are strong incentives in place, together with the promise of safety and decent standing for commanders and combatants (von Dyck, 2016). Successful DDR programs are typically included in the peace agreement framework and associated with necessary institutional measures (including military integration and development initiatives). For example, the UN has its standards for integrated DDR, which highlight the necessity of national ownership and coordination between DDR and SSR, among other things. According to one NATO evaluation, the failure to develop an effective DDR program could prevent SSR and significantly impede peacebuilding efforts (von Dyck, 2016). All in all, disarmament should be matched by enhanced state capacity and community resilience.

In relation to Hezbollah's fighters, one needs to consider the ideological aspect and social background of their activities since they are embedded in the local population and perceive themselves as the protectors of their community (Norton, 2007). Therefore, it is crucial to create incentives for disarmament and prepare the community and the state to integrate these fighters into the social environment (such as providing them with alternative jobs or integrating them into the LAF).

1.1.2. Credible Commitment Problems

A central theoretical hurdle in any disarmament process is the credible commitment problem. It is known that combatants in a civil conflict tend to favor continuing violence rather than accepting a peace agreement that would oblige them to disarm, since in such circumstances, they would be extremely exposed to being cheated by their opponents (Arı, 2022). Weapons serve as an insurance policy that allows them to feel secure; handing them over in exchange for an agreement without guarantees appears 'unthinkable'. Even, it can be claimed that "negotiations fail because civil war adversaries cannot credibly promise to abide by such dangerous terms" as disarmament in the absence of a neutral enforcement mechanism (Walter, 1997, p. 335). Due to this credibility deficit, it is very difficult to resolve conflicts peacefully. Without a neutral third party that can provide the necessary guarantees, parties become wary of disarmament and thus refuse to disarm, leading to failed negotiations.

There are at least two methods used to address this problem and facilitate the disarmament process. First, security guarantees provided by an external party are indispensable for overcoming distrust. It is possible for a neutral party or peacekeeping forces to monitor the Agreement, which was effectively implemented in El Salvador and Sierra Leone, where, as part of the peace agreements, it became necessary to involve the UN in the process of disarmament supervision (Nsia-Pepra, 2014). Secondly, inclusive political institutions and power-sharing provide stability in the long run by incorporating former rebels within the government framework and minimizing the danger of exploitation. The implications of credible commitment theory highlight that observers alone will not suffice; rather, a military force must remain present to assist domestic institutions. Complete disarmament immediately might also be problematic; a little capability retained helps balance things out and discourages cheating (Zahar, 2008). For example, according to Hezbollah, it is important for them to retain weapons until

the threat of Israel is nullified and state protection increases. The proposed 2025 plan entails disarming Hezbollah gradually while Israelis withdraw, along with international monitoring, ensuring that both parties get their concessions. This study assesses the feasibility of this plan for satisfying Hezbollah's security demands without its weapons storage.

1.1.3. Spoiler Theory and Peace Process Risks

Spoilers are individuals or groups that attempt to undermine the peace process to protect their interests through violence. The spoiler theory developed by Stephen Stedman categorizes spoilers into internal spoilers, who act as if compliant, and external spoilers, who refuse involvement. They can be classified according to their intentions as limited spoilers who have concrete demands, total spoilers who are unwilling to accept compromise, and greedy spoilers who vary their intentions based on benefits (Stedman, 1997; Reiter, 2016b). The attitude of the leadership or uncompromising followers plays a role in how pacification may occur. Effective management of spoilers requires a combination of inducement, socialization, and coercion. Inducement seeks to resolve issues through compromise, whereas socialization establishes behavioral standards through rewards. Coercion includes using any kind of threat or compulsion towards those who are not cooperative. According to Stedman, general pacification may encourage stubbornness, and excessive coercion may elicit a response, so an effective approach must be designed depending on the type of spoilers (Reiter, 2016b).

To apply spoiler theory to the analysis of Hezbollah disarmament, it is necessary to identify who may pose a threat to the process. In the first place, it may become the spoiler itself if it sees the disarmament as unjust or harmful to the community, then it would delay the process or back out unless its requirements are met. On the contrary, the emergence of splinter factions within Hezbollah is another possibility. In case Hezbollah's leadership reaches an agreement on its disarmament, some more radical factions or Iran-backed factions can secede to carry out their armed struggle against the enemy. Such groups can act as greedy spoilers who make demands during the process of implementation or as total spoilers who refuse disarmament. Also, Israel can contribute to the spoiling of the disarmament process by attacking Hezbollah preemptively in case it gets tired of the negotiations or if there are radicals among the Israeli policymakers who consider such talks a cover-up for military operations against Hezbollah. The identification of Hezbollah's internal structure and its semi-autonomous groups enhances analysis of potential spoilers. Hezbollah does not form a unified body. Along with its leadership composed of both political and military officials, the group includes the Jihad council, the specialized fighting units that were autonomous during operations, intelligence and security services operating independently from the main body, local militias in the south and Beqaa Valley regions that were historically formed through strong family and tribal connections, and the socio-economic infrastructure responsible for providing welfare services to the public (i.e., Jihad al-Bina' and its affiliates) (Hamzeh, 2004). All these groups are motivated differently to accept or oppose disarmament. While political elites can agree to disarm if their political and economic interests are preserved, middle-ranking members and fighters whose social status and livelihoods are tied to armed struggle are susceptible to becoming internal or greedy spoilers in Stedman's classification system (Stedman, 1997). Local leaders and their clan allies might refuse to give up any weapons kept in homes or in public buildings based on the belief that there is no protection from an Israeli attack or a possible Sunni jihadist attack. New groups with divergent ideologies, whether ideological rejectionist groups associated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or opportunistic groups led by local warlords, can be formed under different names, so that Hezbollah's leaders distance themselves from them while the social base remains loyal. A disarmament strategy would have to consider these local social and political dynamics by engaging local leaders and fighters through a process that ensures weapons are collected without leaving any shadow of Hezbollah. The disarmament process would entail close observation of the clan networks and mapping of the internal environment.

Disarmament involves both coercion and inducement of Hezbollah members and other stakeholders. While the proposal promises a rebuilding conference along with economic benefits and political

inclusion if Hezbollah gets rid of its arms and addresses the key concerns, such as Israel's occupation and prisoner release, the threat of Israel's attacks looms large. Incentives must be provided to encourage the hardliners in Hezbollah to abandon resistance. A strategy to help manage hardliners is to engage in community dialogue.

1.1.4. Hybrid Armed Actors and Layered Sovereignty

Hezbollah is often described as a "hybrid actor", blurring lines between state and non-state, political party and militia, social service provider and armed resistance movement.[1] For example, it is difficult to classify Hezbollah only as either an insurgency or a political party due to the fact that it provides certain social services, is active politically (taking part in the elections and having its own parliamentary bloc and representatives in the Government), and maintains its own paramilitary force (Azani, 2013; Cambanis et al., 2019; Hamzeh, 2004).

Being a hybrid armed actor gives Hezbollah several advantages. One of them is that the organization works in several areas simultaneously. Its provision of social services and security, its participation in elections, and maintenance of a paramilitary force helped it compete with the Lebanese Government and even surpass it in some spheres, such as defense and foreign policy, creating a phenomenon known as a 'layered sovereignty' in Lebanon (the official state and the so-called resistance state) (Azani, 2013).

Thus, disarming a hybrid actor is always more complicated than disarming a defeated rebel force. Hezbollah operates within the current political system, representing an important sector of the population (Shiite). In addition, the issue of disarming Hezbollah is more complicated than simply getting rid of an outlaw organization and dissolving it. It is necessary to separate Hezbollah's political structure from the state apparatus and integrate all of its elements into the Lebanese Government.

Recently, Hezbollah's hybridity seems to be under pressure, especially after the 2023 war. The Israeli attacks of late 2024 were particularly brutal, even reportedly eliminating Hezbollah's long-term leader Hassan Nasrallah along with other elites in their command apparatus. With the loss of Nasrallah and a significant number of the organization's elite fighters, alongside a strong Lebanese government, Hezbollah's image of invincibility is becoming tarnished (Alexander, 2025). Under Prime Minister Nawaf Salam's Government, Lebanon is actively removing references to resistance from its policies and focusing on ensuring compliance with UNSC Resolution 1701 – namely, there should be no weapons outside state control (Young, 2025a). It is claimed that Lebanon's state consolidation directly confronts Hezbollah's military wing (Alexander, 2025) and is narrowing the space that the group historically enjoyed. Additionally, Hezbollah finds itself with fewer options for action since its legitimacy has been harmed by the devastation that it inflicted on Shi'ite neighborhoods and an unsatisfied citizenry.

Scholars studying hybrid actors highlight the importance of legitimacy, support, and state fragmentation for the success of this type of organization (Cambanis et al., 2019; Staniland, 2012). It appears that at present, all three factors are becoming increasingly hard to obtain for Hezbollah due to various reasons. Specifically, it seems like Hezbollah's main backer, Iran, faces certain limitations due to the fall of its ally's regime in Syria and the position of Gulf countries regarding militia movements. On the domestic front, many people, including some Shi'as, denounce Hezbollah for dragging Lebanon into wars. In this situation, disarming Hezbollah could be possible now more than ever before, yet it also exacerbates Hezbollah's survival fears. A hybrid organization would become more aggressive when faced with existential threats. Therefore, it is crucial to remember that Hezbollah's disarmament should guarantee its relevance in the future and let it evolve into a political organization like the IRA/Sinn Féin instead of undergoing a drastic transformation in its identity. The idea of a layered bargain comes into play to resolve the issue of layered sovereignty, and it is vital to have a layered deal that considers Hezbollah's involvement in politics, institutions, military, economy, and the region.

[1] The concept of *a hybrid armed actor* should be distinguished from *hybrid warfare*. The former refers to an organizational type—a non-state entity that blends military, political, and social-service functions while remaining embedded in a formal state (Cambanis et al., 2019). The latter denotes a mode of conflict that combines conventional military means with irregular tactics, information warfare, and economic coercion (Hoffman, 2007). While hybrid armed actors often employ hybrid-warfare tactics, the two concepts belong to distinct analytical registers: one typological, the other operational.

1.1.5. Power-Sharing and Rebel Inclusion

One robust finding in peace studies is that peace agreements tend to be more durable when they include power-sharing arrangements that incorporate former warring parties into the post-conflict governance structure (De Bruin, 2022; Uzonyi, 2022). Power-sharing can be political (e.g., coalition government, electoral guarantees for former rebels), military (e.g., integrating rebels into national armed forces at certain ranks), territorial (e.g., regional autonomy or federalism to give local self-rule), and economic (e.g., sharing of state resources or jobs among factions). By institutionalizing a balance, power-sharing allays the fears of losing sides and helps overcome the credible commitment problem by giving ex-combatants an institutional stake in the new order (Jung, 2012). The studies (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2008) highlight that the more dimensions of power-sharing a peace accord has, the less likely it is that conflict will recur. In other words, multiple mechanisms provide redundancy – even if political trust falters, a military integration clause or economic opportunities can keep parties invested in peace (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2008).

In Lebanon's case, the country is already a consociational democracy (Salamey, 2009) where there is already a system of power-sharing between sects (Maronites, Sunnis, Shias, and others). Hezbollah and its supporters control a substantial parliamentary bloc and occupy ministerial posts. Nevertheless, Lebanon's power-sharing model did not stop Hezbollah from having an armed wing – most likely because Hezbollah believed that political power would not provide sufficient security to its community against Israel's actions. The lesson from power-sharing theory is the idea of credible inclusion, and it is crucial to convince rebels that inclusion indeed grants them influence and safety (Jung, 2012).

Inclusion for Hezbollah may be seen in formal involvement in decisions related to national security (which can be achieved through the National Defense Strategy agreed upon by all sides involved) and even a guarantee for the political clout of the Shiite community not to be weakened if Hezbollah disarms. As far as practical suggestions about including Hezbollah, one proposal considered by Lebanese policymakers is creating within the LAF a border patrol force which would comprise Hezbollah militants so that they retained their role in fighting against Israel yet became subordinated to the state. It is power-sharing within the armed forces. In addition, guarantees for the economic and political development of the Shiite areas (South Lebanon and Bekaa) and for their representation in the Lebanese Parliament (traditionally, the Speaker of Parliament has been a Shi'ite; now, an Amal member, Nabih Berri) can be seen as a way to reassure Hezbollah supporters.

As it is known from the theory of power-sharing, however, it carries potential risks such as the entrenchment of wartime identities in the political system, as well as the emergence of incentives to spoil the agreement by granting every group a possibility to veto decisions (DeBerge, 2024). The case of Lebanon demonstrates that the establishment of strict sectarian quotas sometimes leads to political paralysis in the country. Still, an improved mechanism of power-sharing, when Hezbollah remains an exclusively political organization, and its members become involved in security functions on a consensus basis, appears to be an absolute must for Hezbollah's willingness to disarm (Berti, 2011). It is important to stress that in the 2025 plan, there is no suggestion concerning the exclusion of Hezbollah from the political process in Lebanon – the focus is only on disarming Hezbollah. By being assured that disarmament means neither political isolation nor weakening of their own political power, Hezbollah's leaders would get a better position in terms of gaining recognition from the outside world, similar to that of Sinn Féin after the IRA's disarmament (Milton-Edwards, 2007). The theoretical expectation is that if Hezbollah's constituents see that they can protect their interests via ballots and institutions rather than rockets, the rationale for retaining arms diminishes.

1.1.6. Peace Implementation and International Oversight

However, no matter how good an agreement looks on paper, its implementation can still fail due to various issues and changing circumstances. According to peace implementation studies, after the signing of a peace accord, negotiation and adaptation are necessary to handle any emerging issues and spoilers (Reiter, 2016a; Vuković et al., 2024). Peace implementation itself is usually a flexible

and dynamic process that requires adaptability on the part of the parties (i.e., treating the Agreement as a 'roadmap' rather than a binding contract) and comprehensive mechanisms for monitoring (Subedi, 2018; von Dyck, 2016). Common factors in successful disarmament implementation may include transitional security (such as temporary peacekeeping operations or joint patrols), laws and constitutional reform (as a means of enshrining the changes in law), elections (for resetting political mandates according to new terms), and post-conflict justice (i.e., amnesty or accountability depending on the nature of war crimes) (Rodriguez-Castellon, 2024; Subedi, 2018; von Dyck, 2016). All of these, however, can be potential barriers to successful implementation. For instance, early elections may prove disruptive if combatants have not been demobilized or if political institutions are not yet in place. Proper sequencing of measures becomes essential – some scholars recommend 'sequencing the peace,' for instance, by postponing elections until the security situation stabilizes and violent spoiler behavior is not incentivized (Rettberg & Dupont, 2023).

The problem of sequencing and contingencies comes into focus when applied to the specific case of Lebanon. As the disarmament process is planned in stages in the US proposal, how would an occurrence such as a border clash or political assassination affect it? From the perspective of peace implementation, there should be a plan and appropriate structures in place to handle violations and keep the process on track. Constant communication and discussion (for example, through a national monitoring committee involving representatives of both Hezbollah and the Government) can prove crucial for navigating potential crises.

International agents can often act as implementation guardians, ensuring compliance and applying pressure or providing assistance where necessary. In the case of Lebanon, for instance, an increased UNIFIL mandate or another dedicated UN special mission may prove necessary for overseeing disarmament sites, inspecting weapon stockpiles, and monitoring Israeli withdrawal efforts, all tasks that the warring sides are unlikely to delegate to each other on their own. As it stands, the ICRC's responsibility for prisoner exchanges and the outside donors' role in funding rebuilding are already contemplated in the plan. It is essential, however, to ensure that aid commitments are fulfilled (rather than quietly retracted after the fact). Experience from previous failed negotiations often proves that either side believed they had been wronged by the implementation, justifying their decision to resume hostilities. Thus, it is imperative that an implementation plan set specific milestones for achievement and ensure transparency in reporting.

2. Comparative Vignettes of Disarmament Episodes

Historical experience offers insights into disarmament initiatives. This section presents seven comparative vignettes of armed non-state groups that have undergone disarmament or demobilization in various contexts. These seven cases have been selected because they resemble Hezbollah in terms of the nature of these groups and their disarmament processes. Cases like those of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and the Taliban in Afghanistan cannot be considered since they do not reflect disarmament efforts but rather the end of such groups' operations through defeat and military intervention. The focus here will be on cases where disarmament was part of an active peace effort.

2.1. Northern Ireland (IRA)

One major example of disarmament success is that of the Irish Republican Army's (IRA's) decommissioning following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which established a power-sharing arrangement in Northern Ireland. As stipulated by the Agreement, the IRA agreed to put its weapons "beyond use" and handed over weapons, including rifles and machine guns, mortars and rocket launcher systems, and explosives. The process was long and marked by a lack of trust between both sides. According to Walsh (2017), in September 2005, General John de Chastelain of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning confirmed that the IRA had gotten rid of all of its weapons. The IRA's last weapons were literally sealed away in concrete bunkers and exploded while

IRA members looked on to affirm the completion of this act of decommissioning. One of the most crucial aspects of this disarmament exercise was the sequence of events. IRA was not ready to begin decommissioning immediately upon signing the 1998 Good Friday agreement – it demanded that political reforms take effect first: police reforms, prisoner releases, British troop withdrawal, and the willingness of unionists to work together with Sinn Féin in Government. Moreover, the IICD helped IRA conduct decommissioning privately to save face, reporting only on progress (Walsh, 2017). Through patience and privacy provided by the IICD, along with good-faith actions taken by the two governments involved, the credible commitment problem was ultimately solved. This example shows that even a group that was previously implacable towards its enemies could disarm if the political payoff was high enough (IRA's leaders felt confident that their demands would be satisfied politically in a power-sharing Northern Ireland government). In LSB terms, the case of the IRA illustrates the importance of independent verification of the disarmament process, the feasibility of gradual disarmament over many years, and the need for political inclusion. Like the IRA, Hezbollah must feel confident about its role in the political future before it disarms. In the LSB language, the Northern Ireland conflict sheds light on issues at the political and security levels.

2.2. Aceh, Indonesia (GAM)

The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) fought a secessionist war against Indonesia until a peace agreement (the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding) was reached in 2005, ending the civil war. GAM offered to lay down arms in return for autonomy and withdrawal of Indonesian forces from the region. Disarmament of 840 weapons took place in four months after GAM handed over the guns to the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM). Also, 30,000 troops from other parts of Indonesia were withdrawn (Dijkstra, 2013). Some of the key ingredients responsible for successful disarmament in Aceh include the natural disaster (tsunami) of 2004, which created a situation of mutual hurting stalemate, the involvement of mediators such as Martti Ahtisaari, and a peace agreement involving the provision of political and economic incentives to GAM (Dijkstra, 2013, p. 80; Thorburn, 2012). GAM was progressively disarmed across different phases, each phase monitored and coupled with troop withdrawals, creating an atmosphere of trust. Extensive provisions were made for amnesty and the reintegration of GAM members into mainstream society, thereby demonstrating that disarmament in highly distrustful situations is possible when the root cause is addressed, and compliance is ensured. The case of Aceh offers important lessons on how to disarm Hezbollah. For example, Hezbollah may learn that reciprocity and assurances such as withdrawal of Israeli troops, similar to the withdrawal of Indonesian troops in Aceh, and a plan allowing Hezbollah to play a part in the national security of Lebanon, similar to giving Aceh autonomy, make disarmament acceptable. Another lesson is that regional diplomacy is important, as neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Thailand played a role in monitoring the disarmament process, just as Arab or Muslim nations could monitor the disarmament of Hezbollah to legitimize the process.

2.3. Colombia (FARC)

Latin America's oldest insurgent group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), agreed on a peace pact in 2016. Over 7,000 members of FARC were assembled in demobilization areas under UN supervision. The UN mission reported collecting 7,132 individual weapons plus thousands of explosives and munitions, which were securely stored and later melted down into peace monuments (Meger & Sachseder, 2020). In June 2017, FARC's leader proclaimed "goodbye to arms, hello to peace," marking the termination of the 53-year civil war (Kraul, 2017). Such disarmament was possible because of careful preparation. The tripartite mechanism (Government, FARC, and UN) supervised the ceasefire and handing over of the weapons, while individual cases were recorded meticulously (Fernandez Osorio & Pachón Pinzón, 2020). Moreover, the Agreement provided political incentives to the FARC, such as recognizing it as a political party with guaranteed representation in Parliament for two periods.

Nevertheless, the Colombian experience is also considered a warning. There were shortcomings in

implementing the plan, particularly regarding ex-combatant protection, which resulted in setbacks. As of 2020, more than 200 former FARC fighters have been murdered by criminals or paramilitary groups, raising alarm among other ex-soldiers (López et al., 2023). Besides, some FARC fighters refused peace and resumed their rebellion activities under "dissident" factions. Such results indicated issues with credible commitments because not all pledges (e.g., rural reform, safety guarantee) were made by the state, providing dissidents a reason to desert the initiative. Nonetheless, the Colombian Government declared that the FARC war ended, and it will not go back to warfare (DeMeritt et al., 2019; Meger & Sachseder, 2020). Lessons for Hezbollah: Security assurances for ex-combatants must be iron-clad. Lebanon should strive to ensure that Hezbollah's foot soldiers do not find themselves at risk of reprisals (from Israel or local adversaries). An international guarantee (in the Colombian case, from the UN and supporting nations) is key to ensuring both sides comply. Finally, the FARC experience reveals that the process of rehabilitation takes time, and creating alternative employment opportunities and preventing splinter groups may take many years, which Lebanon and its allies must consider (such as employment programs or absorption of Hezbollah's welfare systems into official channels to keep ex-combatants and sympathizers engaged in peaceful pursuits). In the context of the LSB approach, the FARC example highlights the consequences of failing to address even one component. The political deal (allocation of parliamentary seats) was fulfilled, yet shortcomings in security and economic aspects (murders of demobilized combatants and lack of rural reform initiatives) led to a partial recurrence through dissident factions.

2.4. Nepal (Maoist Insurgents)

In Nepal, Maoist insurgents ended a protracted civil war in 2006 by signing a Comprehensive Peace Accord and joining the transitional Government. Rather than disarm immediately, Nepal adopted the approach of weapons management, whereby both the Maoist Army and the Nepalese Army placed a specified number of firearms in secure containers, monitored by the UN. By April 2007, the Maoists had deposited 3,475 weapons, whereas the Nepalese Army had locked 2,855 weapons to balance out their armaments[2] (Upreti, 2012). The Maoists were allowed to keep 96 weapons for the protection of their leaders during the transition period. Full-scale disarmament took place in 2012 when a new constitution was almost drafted[3]. Concurrently, a power-sharing strategy and integration were carried out; thus, the Maoists were granted access to the interim Government and could integrate up to 6,500 former combatants into the national Army. Eventually, 1,450 Maoist troops joined the Army in 2012, while others voluntarily retired and received financial compensation[4]. This deal of exchanging military strength for political power has made the Maoists a legitimate political party in Nepal (Von Einsiedel et al., 2012).

There are numerous lessons to be drawn from Nepal's experience for Lebanon's potential for a successful DDR process. Firstly, the 'lock up guns, do not destroy immediately' strategy can be used by the Lebanese Government if Hezbollah is suspicious about a quick and total disarmament process. Specifically, perhaps the heavy weaponry owned by Hezbollah could be temporarily locked under UN seal in certain locations in southern Lebanon and later be destroyed when the time comes that all other required political prerequisites are in place. Secondly, there is symmetry in the concessions made in Nepal, meaning that the state and the rebels made corresponding concessions one after another (for example, the Nepalese Army also limited its weaponry in the same way as the Maoist organization did). It would be difficult for the Lebanese Government to make concessions to Hezbollah regarding LAF operations, as there is no clear adversary within the Lebanese military in this case; however, there is still room for symbolism in this matter. For instance, the Lebanese Army could refrain from certain actions or maneuvers when Hezbollah disarms its weapons.

[2] For UN report about Maoists Hand Over Keys of Arms Containers to Nepal: https://blog.com.np/2011/09/01/maoists-hand-over-keys-of-some-not-all-arms-containers-to-nepal/

[3] For UN report: https://news.un.org/en/story/2007/04/215232

[4] For reports about People's Liberation Army: https://www.c-r.org/accord/nepal/peoples-liberation-army-post-2006-integration-rehabilitation-or-retirement

2.5. Basque Country (ETA)

ETA, a Basque separatist organization in Spain, illustrates the idea of unilateral disarmament without signing a peace treaty. After years of violence and a failed negotiation effort in 2006, ETA announced a ceasefire in 2011 but retained its arms and hoped for dialogue. By 2017, under pressure of falling popularity and police forces, ETA fully disarmed by giving away 120 firearms, three tons of explosives, and countless bullets[5] (Ubasart-González, 2019). The disarmament was conducted in France. However, the Spanish and French governments viewed it as nothing more than a step that gave ETA "nothing in return" besides the opportunity to avoid arrest because Spain promised not to offer amnesty and give any political benefit to ETA. In 2018, the group officially ceased to exist. Therefore, the example of ETA shows that if the balance of costs and benefits of maintaining weapons for the organization shifts, it is possible to surrender them unilaterally. By 2011, the organization understood that keeping the arms meant risking criminalization, while disarmament was beneficial for the future political life of the group, even if there were no concessions offered publicly (Murua, 2017).

It is extremely doubtful that such a shift in environment will happen for Hezbollah. Nevertheless, ETA demonstrates that civil society and third-party involvement in verifying the disarmament procedure can be important. Local civil society actors (Artisans of Peace) and foreign representatives (Ram Manikkalingam, among others) participated in the disarmament of ETA. In the Lebanese context, if the dialogue between the state and Hezbollah fails, it is possible to imagine some well-respected Lebanese civil society representatives and/or third-party mediators conducting negotiations of unilateral disarmament. Finally, ETA provides another example of the need for an effective perception of an armed group; without it, the point carries little weight. Once unarmed, ETA loses leverage over other actors, but it also ceases to be considered a threat. Perhaps the latter was beneficial for the whole region. Thus, Hezbollah might consider what consequences it will face in the long run if it maintains the arms forever, since most of the Lebanese people start to view the weapons as an obstacle to normalcy. From the perspective of the LSB model, ETA demonstrates how the regional and political layers move independently of the agreed-upon deal.

2.6. Colombian Paramilitaries (AUC)

However, demobilizations may not occur between a government and its rebels. In Colombia from 2003 to 2006, the Colombian Government arranged the demobilization of the paramilitary group United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). This was a right-wing group with considerable violent behavior and drug trafficking. Demobilized under the Justice and Peace Law of 2005, this led to the demobilization of more than 32,000 paramilitaries by 2006. Though initially viewed as successful, the demobilization showed shortcomings as many mid-level commanders re-armed themselves to become part of new criminal gangs known as BACRIM, as well as the failure of the state reintegration program that did not address economic frustrations, resulting in continued violence (Schmidt, 2023).

As far as Hezbollah is concerned, even if the two cases cannot be compared directly, Hezbollah might have splinter groups after demobilizing its military wing, which would lead to their rearmament if nothing is done to reintegrate them into society. Lebanon should establish effective measures to prevent the proliferation of arms. Such steps may include amnesty in regard to the turn in of illegal arms and punishment for any armed group outside the law, taking advantage of Hezbollah's internal cohesion in doing this.

In addition, Colombia's experience indicates that any transition requires an equilibrium between justice and reconciliation. Too lenient justice will make people lose faith in the system; too harsh measures can discourage demobilization. In Lebanon, addressing demands for accountability through truth-telling and restorative justice will be essential. In conclusion, the case of AUC's demobilization shows that, though the process itself may be imperfect, it can still be beneficial for achieving some degree of security before addressing the deeper issues. The LSB model shows the importance of the institutional and economic dimensions.

[5] For details: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/08/eta-basque-separatist-group-formally-disarms-arms-cache

2.7. Mozambique (RENAMO)

Mozambique's experience illustrates both the successes and risks of disarmament. After the civil war, the Rome General Peace Accords, signed in 1992, stipulated the disarmament of RENAMO and the government forces, and their subsequent integration into a new national army comprising 15,000 fighters on each side. RENAMO initially evolved into a peaceful opposition political party in the 1990s (Adedokun, 2019). Nevertheless, partial disarmament and lack of integration left 5,000 ex-combatants with weapons and marginalized them, thus creating mutual mistrust. By 2013, discontent led to the emergence of a rebellion conducted by the head of the opposition movement, Afonso Dhlakama (McMullin, 2004). In late 2024, many ex-fighters still received state pensions, proving efficient reintegration. The crucial role in this process belonged to the UN and its donors, including Sweden. This story teaches about the value of full disarmament, swift execution of promises, and a chance for renewed peace.

The lesson from Mozambique for Hezbollah is obvious – the plan for disarmament needs to be executed fully, right up to the last gun and the last fighter. Otherwise, either a Hezbollah-militarized wing may resurrect itself later, or another rebel group will emerge under different names as circumstances change. Besides, one cannot ignore the regional context. Namely, the renewal of peace in Mozambique was helped by increased activity on the part of the international community, which was its second chance, since it came after the failed effort made by the United Nations and involving the envoy from Argentina, who also had experience in negotiating in Colombia (Vines, 2024). Likewise, in the event of the failure of a first peace deal in Lebanon, it is likely to be followed by a more sustainable, perhaps adjusted, attempt to make the job done, with the involvement of the region and potentially more constructive relations with Iran. From the LSB perspective, partial implementation across levels in the case of RENAMO means that a dormant source of a relapse remains, waiting for favorable conditions.

Table 1

Comparative Evidence Table: Disarmament Outcomes and Key Mechanisms

Case	Country & period	Outcome (succ/part/fail)	3rd-party guarantor?
Provisional IRA	Northern Ireland, 1998→	Success	Yes (UK/ROI/Int. observers)
GAM / Aceh	Indonesia, 2005→	Success	Yes (int. observers)
FARC	Colombia, 2016→	Partial	Yes (UN verification)
Nepal Maoists	Nepal, 2006→	Mixed	Limited
ETA	Spain, 2011 (cessation)	Success (unilateral cessation)	Indirect (EU pressure)
AUC (paramilitaries)	Colombia, 2003–2010s	Failure/Fragmentation	Weak
RENAMO	Mozambique, 1992–2013 (relapse)	Partial / Relapse	Yes (ONUMOZ)

Having drawn these comparative insights, the study now reflects on how they apply to Hezbollah's current predicament. The following section analyzes Hezbollah's situation in light of the theories and case lessons, leading into the proposed framework.

3. Application to Hezbollah

The issue of disarming Hezbollah will have implications not only for the renewal of Lebanon's political and security structure but also for regional dynamics. It should be noted that, from the perspective of Sunni countries, this would deal a major blow to Iran's policy of spreading the Shia sect to neighboring countries. In this section, the applicability of lessons from other examples to Hezbollah is tested using the LSB model, taking into account both the Lebanese state's capacity and external actors' influence.

3.1. Hezbollah's Perspective and Incentives

Hezbollah's narrative for more than three decades has been that its arms are critical for the defense of Lebanon and empowerment of the Shi'a population. It has gained legitimacy as a defender of Lebanon through its efforts to end the occupation by Israel (withdrawal of Israeli troops from South Lebanon in 2000, achieved by Hezbollah). Also, Hezbollah perceives itself as a defender of the Shi'a against extremist tendencies (as it defended the Shi'a population against jihadist organizations in Syria) and a regional resistance vanguard along Iran's axis (Zreik et al., 2024). Hence, any plan for disarmament should take into consideration such perceptions. Disarmament poses a problem to Hezbollah since there is still Israel, the enemy that has overwhelming power, which can attack Lebanon. Moreover, Sunni jihadism may return in a stronger form. Most critically, giving up its weapons will put it in an unfavorable position in Lebanese politics, with its interests being subjected to decisions by other political forces or even foreign states (Elimam & Choukeir, 2025).

Given these concerns, Hezbollah will likely only agree to disarm under conditions that mitigate the external threat and guarantee its community's security and political role. The 2025 plan's design directly attempts to do this. First, in phase one, Israel is obliged to stop launching attacks on Lebanon, since it cannot disarm under such conditions. Furthermore, phase one includes establishing permanent boundaries and withdrawing Israel from all occupied locations, including the Shebaa Farms – that is the casus belli for Hezbollah. Finally, the participation of the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL in providing security at the borders suggests that Lebanon will not become helpless – on the contrary, the country will provide defense with international assistance.

In terms of the credible commitment approach, the first and foremost important concern would be Hezbollah's trust in such commitments. In theory, Israel is making its promise about the ceasefire. But practically, Hezbollah is aware of how Israeli promises were kept in the past, e.g., after 2006, Israel still performed air strikes. Hence, verification and enforcement measures should be put in place. One could imagine establishing certain 'tripwires' in such agreements, where, say, violation by Israeli forces would be followed by the application of sanctions or even military reaction against Israel based on a UN Chapter VII resolution. Such a measure could ensure that Hezbollah does not expose South Lebanon to Israeli forces by ceasing its armed patrols.

Hezbollah's involvement in the Government is both a challenge and an opportunity for negotiating with the organization. While Hezbollah's participation makes it easier to negotiate since it means that the organization is rooted in the system (as it was done with the IRA and GAM), at the same time, it allows it to utilize governmental structures for delaying disarmament measures. It has already happened that Hezbollah's ministers walked away from governmental decisions regarding disarmament issues. Hezbollah participated in different rounds of the Lebanese National Dialogue (e.g., 2006), where the issue of disarmament had been discussed. However, due to the Agreement that all Lebanese factions need to consensually approve the strategy for national defense, none of the attempts bore fruit.

3.2. State Capacity and Credibility

The Lebanese Government, which has been fragile and sectarian since time immemorial, with a fragility ranking of 23 out of the 178 countries ranked by the Fund for Peace's 2024 Fragile States Index at 92.7 – an increase from its fragility score of 86.8 recorded in 2018 – and with over 38 percent loss in real GDP between 2019 and 2024 in the context of what is arguably one of the worst economic meltdowns in modern times (World Bank, 2024)—, will have to prove that it can step into the void if Hezbollah disarms. This involves accelerating capacity-building for LAF – preparing the Lebanese armed forces to defend the country's borders effectively. Military assistance from international allies such as the United States and France has already been taking place; with a disarmament agreement in place, one can envisage a considerable influx of aid – perhaps something high-tech like air defense or surveillance systems – enabling Lebanese forces to protect their territory against Israeli aggression and monitoring the border areas. The US, Saudi Arabia, and French promise of an economic conference goes beyond the physical rebuilding of damaged infrastructure, insofar as it will be a statement of the

international community's intent to support Lebanese sovereignty. A reinvigorated Lebanese economy through Gulf investments will bolster the credibility of Lebanon's sovereignty in indirect terms by making Hezbollah irrelevant to the impoverished Shi'as as providers. The state needs to carry out noticeable developmental projects in areas dominated by Hezbollah (south and Bekaa) to prove that these regions will not be forgotten once Hezbollah checkpoints and organizations are shut down (Höckel, 2007). This aligns with the best practices of DDR in terms of community readiness.

An important aspect in this scenario is how Iran and Syria react to Hezbollah's disarmament. Iran, Hezbollah's sponsor, publicly states its neutrality on Lebanese decisions, although it is clearly anxious about losing one of its key tools (Elimam & Choukeir, 2025). If it sees Hezbollah disarmament as a net loss in terms of its regional influence, Iran can act as a spoiler, for instance, by encouraging Hezbollah militants to obstruct the process or by developing new proxies. On the other hand, if Iran is included and given reassurances (for example, through backdoor negotiations between the US and Iran or mediation by Oman and Qatar), it may concede. This is especially likely in cases of overall regional détente. According to the Carnegie analysis by Michael Young, Lebanon may conduct secret diplomacy with Iran to understand its position regarding Hezbollah's future (Young, 2025b). For instance, Iran could get something in return for its compliance, such as relief from US secondary sanctions on Lebanese financial transactions. Although this is a far-fetched proposition, it may work if the spoiler theory holds that addressing spoilers' grievances is critical (Iran's grievance would be the loss of deterrence vis-à-vis Israel) (Lucic, 2009).

In the case of Syria (assuming a post-Assad environment), the Lebanon-Syria border needs to be delineated and secured. Syria historically resisted Hezbollah disarmament as this would have undermined its ability to hold Lebanon and pressure Israel. However, with new Gulf involvement and presumably some level of Arab consensus, Syria may be marginalized in this regard.

3.3. Public Opinion and Spoilers

The attitude of the Lebanese public is a key consideration here. After suffering from the devastating Israeli aggression of 2023, many Lebanese seem tired of Hezbollah's military campaigns, suggesting a need to steer clear of more warfare. Such an attitude could put pressure on Hezbollah to enter peace negotiations, especially if such criticism comes from members of Shi'a communities. Discontent with socio-economic and war losses is a sign that the group's popularity is declining (Haddad, 2005). Should such loyalists feel humiliated at the prospect of disarmament, it may not go through. Effective handling of the situation calls for the successful presentation of Hezbollah's position in the context of a victory for the Lebanese. In this regard, an IRA is illustrative: positive discourse is crucial for garnering the necessary support.

As for Possible Spoilers aside from Iran, these could be Israel itself. There is a risk that some Israeli government would perceive disarmament as deception and/or too slow going, and, based on a border skirmish, attack Hezbollah to spoil the whole process. For this reason, some agreement with Israel would be required. Curiously, Israel in 2025 has every reason to collaborate, since its main goals were reached through the destruction of the Lebanese leadership in the aggressive campaign of 2023 (Elimam & Choukeir, 2025). Rather than risking yet another bloodbath, it would prefer the process of disarming Hezbollah to take place under international supervision (Kirshner, 2026). Before both the 12-day war and the attack on Iran in 2026, Israeli officials maintained their silence on the issue but were closely watching. Clearly, securing Israeli cooperation will involve American pressure.

Among Hezbollah's political opponents (both Christians and some Sunnis), there is a general disposition towards disarmament; however, if the mood is too celebratory and vengeful, this may encourage Hezbollah to harden its position. Indeed, careful balancing will have to be practiced: for instance, the President of Lebanon, Mr. Aoun, has declared willingness to open to Iran within limits of sovereignty (Elimam & Choukeir, 2025); this way he avoids creating a message of being anti-Iran and anti-Shi'a, rather than pro-sovereignty, to prevent Hezbollah from perceiving the Lebanese Government as a Western/Gulf satellite state's puppet. Nevertheless, it is possible that domestic rivalry may complicate matters - for instance,

if Hezbollah's ministers were to resign, this might bring about the downfall of the whole Government. Accordingly, the strategy needs either to preserve a unity government or to switch to a situation in which a broad coalition, without Hezbollah, forces things through (an extremely dangerous move). This illustrates Stedman's claim that several spoilers require distinct approaches; perhaps, certain political groups must be induced into silence (Amal, Hezbollah's fellow Shia party, must be reassured that it still has some influence; perhaps, its Speaker, Nabih Berri, will remain in place).

To sum up, it appears that while disarmament of Hezbollah may be feasible under negotiations, such an approach would be extremely challenging. For this reason, this study developed a formula in which Hezbollah feels comfortable disarming, while preserving its followers' safety and honor.

4. Proposed Model: The Layered Sovereignty Bargain (LSB)

This study proposes an integrative framework, the Layered Sovereignty Bargain (LSB), which recognizes that Hezbollah's disarmament is not a single issue but a bundle of interdependent bargains across different spheres. The LSB approach posits that Lebanon's sovereignty can be fully restored (i.e., the state's monopoly of force regained) only if a bargain is struck across the political, institutional, security, economic, and regional domains. Each layer addresses specific stakeholder interests and credible commitment needs, while reinforcing the overall Agreement.

The LSB approach differs from existing scholarship. First, while Hartzell and Hoddie (2008) demonstrate that multidimensional power-sharing correlates with durable peace, their framework treats the political, military, territorial, and economic dimensions as independently stabilizing mechanisms; the LSB, by contrast, specifies their interdependence, arguing that progress on any one layer is conditional on progress in the others. Second, unlike conventional DDR doctrine (UN IAWG-DDR, 2014), which sequences disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration as operational phases, the LSB integrates DDR within a broader political–economic–regional bargain tailored to hybrid actors embedded in the state. Third, whereas credible commitment theory (Walter, 1997) identifies third-party enforcement as the key to overcoming the disarmament dilemma, the LSB disaggregates "the bargain" into five distinct commitment problems—political, institutional, security, economic, and regional—each of which requires its own guarantors and its own credibility mechanisms. In this sense, the LSB is not merely an additive aggregation of existing frameworks but a relational model that foregrounds the conditionalities among layers as the central causal claim.

4.1. Political Dimension – Inclusive Power-Sharing Bargain

From a political point of view, the deal first needs to ensure that Hezbollah is not marginalized politically. This implies formal agreements of power sharing within the Government. For example, in Lebanon, minimum Shi'a participation in state institutions beyond the provisions of the constitution could be guaranteed. It may be possible to introduce a new body called "National Security Council", by legislation, where all the positions would rotate among different communities, ensuring Shi'a involvement in military policy after disarmament. Moreover, Loyalty to the Resistance bloc as Hezbollah's political organization should be provided with the right to participate actively in elections and to hold governmental positions corresponding to its share of the electorate. The political deal would mean that the ideas and community of Hezbollah would be expressed democratically through voting, rather than guns. International security scholars argue that credible inclusion decreases the likelihood of going back to violence. Secondly, the Lebanese Support Bloc (LSB) could enshrine decision-making on issues of war and peace by consensus (preventing the risk that a future government could make such decisions against the interests of the Shi'a population). Thus, instead of Hezbollah's unilateral 'resistance doctrine,' all the parties could endorse a 'collective defense doctrine.' To this end, a parliamentary strategy for national defense needs to be drafted. In turn, Hezbollah would undertake to function only as a political movement.

4.2. Institutional Dimension – Security Sector Integration Bargain

The institutional layer focuses on the state's organs, particularly security forces. The bargain here asserts both to 'Integrate qualified Hezbollah fighters and commanders into the Lebanese Armed Forces or Internal Security Forces,' and 'Reform and strengthen those state forces to make them apolitical and competent defenders of all Lebanon.'

The military wing of Hezbollah incorporates numerous experienced fighters; integration may provide the opportunity to serve in the Army, border troops, or in the service of intelligence (similar to the way it was done in Nepal when integrating members of the Maoists' party (Upreti, 2012)) or, as in Iraq, when incorporating militias into the military. Thus, integration provides employment and prestige (a DDR process) for Hezbollah fighters, whereas Hezbollah itself gets the assurance that its people will represent the state force along with other parts of the population, including Shi'a resistance fighters. As for Hezbollah, it will surrender all its heavy weapons to the Army and refrain from any other military training or recruitments. The Lebanese Armed Forces, which received a reinforcement of new recruits and external help, will operate across all border areas, particularly in south Lebanon (in accordance with UNSCR 1701), though most likely with greater effectiveness. Moreover, to guarantee civil control, a single command system must be established (no competing ones). This institutional bargaining deal solves a problem of credible commitments. Since Hezbollah fighters have become part of the national military, there is no reason to keep separate armed forces, as has happened in similar cases before (e.g., ex-rebel fighters incorporated into the police of Aceh province and the Army of Mozambique). The LSB may define some quotas, or certain jobs (e.g., a certain number of Shia officers at southern posts), in order not to give Hezbollah the feeling that it is a kind of purge.

4.3. Security Guarantees Dimension – Mutual and International Bargain

In essence, the solution to the threat of external intervention and military issues lies in establishing a security strategy for both Lebanon and Israel. Lebanon, together with Hezbollah, must be assured of its security against attacks by Israel, whereas Israel must be assured of its safety after disarming Hezbollah and preventing future threats to itself. The solution, therefore, necessitates outside assistance. For example, there could be an agreement that involves the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon and the establishment of a ceasefire, which will be enforced by enhanced UNIFIL and a UN monitoring mission. In case of any breaches, action should be taken accordingly. Nations such as the United States, Russia, and France could offer assurances of security to Lebanon, while the disarmament process of Hezbollah should be thoroughly verified. All heavy weapons should be registered and destroyed, and light personal weapons should be kept under license in order to avoid any humiliation; however, they should be devoid of military hardware.

Intercepting any attempts at rearmament by the peacekeepers patrolling the Blue Line and other key sites, such as airports and ports, is paramount in this security strategy, replacing the threat of Hezbollah as a means of deterrence through the presence of the Lebanese state and international organizations. Building trust may be achieved by involving friendly nations in the peacekeeping force.

4.4. Economic and Social Dimension – Development Bargain

The guns will likely stay quiet as prosperity grows. The economic component of the LSB is supposed to bring some improvements to Lebanese people's lives in the regions dependent on Hezbollah. The 2025 Gulf-sponsored plan is likely to be followed by holding an economic conference and reconstructing the infrastructure after disarmament. Some investments targeted at strengthening the economy of the Hezbollah-controlled regions in the south and Bekaa will provide job opportunities and develop basic services, such as electricity and healthcare. The Government and foreign donors will have to substitute Hezbollah as a provider of social benefits to the local residents. The South and Bekaa Development Program could become the means of providing those services under the supervision of the Gulf countries. Providing the fighters of Hezbollah with vocational skills, microcredits, and accommodation will prevent them from turning to criminal activity or using violence to earn their living. Legalization of

some of Hezbollah's fundraising operations in exchange for demilitarization could also be considered. With regard to the general population, the end of Hezbollah's autonomy will bring an opportunity to continue the routine economic activities. Therefore, the phrase "disarmament will bring development" could motivate people in favor of the disarmament process.

4.5. Regional Dimension – Non-Interference Bargain

The conflicts in the region have always affected Lebanon's sovereignty. The idea of the regional part of the LSB is to achieve the commitment of Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United States to respect the sovereignty of Lebanon and its disarmament. It could imply some informal agreement in which Iran refrains from sending weapons to Lebanese organizations in exchange for sanctions' easing, and the Gulf countries stop giving support to Hezbollah's opponents. Israel could sign the long-term ceasefire agreement facilitated by the USA, which could lead to the signing of an armistice agreement, depriving Hezbollah of an excuse for maintaining an army. The 'Friends of Lebanon' association could be established with the participation of major powers, including Russia and China, and neighboring states, in order to protect the country from regional wars. Although the plan does not presuppose the signing of the treaty, it could be guaranteed by UNSC decisions. The purpose of the arrangement would be to isolate Lebanon from conflicts in the region and ensure its stability. This task seems to be very difficult; however, recent steps made by the Gulf countries make one think that it is possible if all sides agree to come to a compromise.

Layered sovereignty bargaining, hence, comes out as a bundled deal whereby neglect of any single layer can mean the downfall of the entire process. For instance, disarming Hezbollah can be done, but a lack of economic development and political inclusion can result in new conflicts, just like the return of RENAMO due to a lack of reintegration of ex-fighters (Vines, 2024). Alternatively, one can also go ahead with institutional integration, but failure of the security layer in case of military operations by Israel can lead to fighters reverting to violence. Therefore, coordination and conditions for achieving milestones are required in this approach, since all layers should be able to move together. One way in which this can be ensured is by setting interdependent benchmarks between various layers. For example, the destruction of weapons by fighters (security) can ensure an immediate release of development funds (economic), and Hezbollah's inclusion in the cabinet (political) will depend on successful fighter integration.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to determine whether the disarmament of Iran-backed Hezbollah, through initiatives by the United States and Gulf countries, will lead to the restoration of sovereignty and peace in Lebanon, or whether it will trigger a new wave of conflict in the country. The theories employed in the study and findings derived from previous experiences have provided an optimistic answer to these questions. To put it more clearly, the reestablishment of sovereignty in Lebanon appears likely, provided that Hezbollah's disarmament is achieved through gradual sovereignty negotiations. On the other hand, it is essential to keep in mind that Hezbollah will only disarm if guarantees are provided regarding its own security and that of its supporters. The comparative examples included in the study clearly demonstrate that in successful cases (IRA, Aceh GAM), reciprocity, verification, and political participation were of vital importance, whereas in cases of partial or failed disarmament (FARC, AUC, RENAMO), incomplete disarmament, inadequate protection of former combatants, and ongoing grievances were critical issues. The proposed framework reflects that only simultaneous and sequenced progress in the political, institutional, security, economic, and regional layers can lead to a process that produces sovereign power.

It should be highlighted that disarming the strongest non-state actor in the Middle East in an unstable regional environment has never been done before. Even with flawless advance planning, the situation remains so delicate that countless factors—such as provocations by a fugitive terrorist,

regime change, or an external shock—could come into play and upset the balance. The disarmament of Lebanon, and specifically Hezbollah, is believed to be a path toward sovereignty. If this process is approached as a matter of negotiation and compromise rather than the imposition of sovereignty, achieving sovereignty may appear feasible. A scenario leading to disaster—the opposite of this—would entail the use of any unilateral measure or the disregard of Hezbollah's legitimate security and political interests—in essence, a violation of every principle of credible commitment and inclusive peace. Indeed, as our comparative examples demonstrate, an incomplete disarmament process—one that disregards any of these layers—can be more harmful than no disarmament at all, potentially leading to new grievances and the resumption of conflict. Therefore, the importance of conducting this process correctly is immense.

For Lebanon, the success of this process would mean the restoration of a state's authority—a state whose sovereignty has always been contingent on the existence of an armed veto power—the establishment of a unified army and the rule of law within the country, and, ultimately, an end to foreign interference in Lebanese affairs. Once the support provided by Iran comes to an end—in the context of a potential weakening process (such as a blockade, embargo, or war)—it is likely that surrendering its weapons under reliable guarantees would appear to be the best way for Hezbollah to ensure its continued existence as a movement. Following the cessation of support, Hezbollah will have succeeded in protecting its supporters from external interference and securing the continuation of its existence. It will thus gain the freedom to claim the credit for having defended Lebanon in the past and will be able to focus on sustainable methods of influence.

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