

The Long Road to Disarming Hezbollah—A DDR Model for Lebanon

Orna Mizrahi, Udi Dekel, Ofer Guterman | April 2026

Assuming that Operation Roaring Lion does not end in the complete defeat of Hezbollah, the issue of disarming Hezbollah will remain on the agenda at its conclusion—an interest shared by both Israel and the Lebanese state. This article proposes adopting the DDR model—Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration—and advancing an L(ebanon)DDR process as an orderly framework for disarming Hezbollah and integrating it into Lebanon, alongside repairing, rebuilding, and strengthening the Lebanese state.

This framework offers an alternative to disarming Hezbollah through military force, which would require Israel to occupy all of Lebanon. Although it is clear that Hezbollah will not relinquish its weapons easily, the current circumstances present an opportunity to force this outcome through combined Lebanese–Israeli, regional, and international efforts. These circumstances include the willingness of Israel and Lebanon to enter into direct political negotiations; the military weakening of Hezbollah (and Iran) following the war; the IDF’s presence in southern Lebanon; and the growing support within Lebanon for disarming Hezbollah.

On April 9, Israel agreed to President Aoun’s proposal to open direct negotiations with Lebanon to promote a peace arrangement and disarm Hezbollah. This objective is the central challenge on the path to an agreement between the two states, which would establish the Lebanese government’s monopoly over the use of military force. Experience from DDR processes suggests that this model can help, as it offers a long-term, supervised, and gradual process that combines disarmament with civil,

social, and economic rehabilitation, alongside international support and reciprocal incentives for all parties involved.

The DDR Model

DDR—Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration¹—the disarmament of weapons, the dismantling of militias and armed groups, and their integration into the state—is a model for post-conflict transition processes, from internal armed confrontation to a stable political-civil order. Its purpose is to reduce violence, dismantle armed organizations, and establish conditions for political and security stability. DDR does not focus solely on disarmament and the collection of weapons; rather, it is designed to establish the state’s monopoly on the use of force by integrating operatives and organizational frameworks into a stable state and social order. Moreover, it addresses broader aspects of state reconstruction, including economic development and the neutralization of the gray economy, processes of deradicalization, and the reorganization of public order and the judicial system.

Disarmament includes collection, registration, neutralization, storage, and destruction of weapons, as well as verification, monitoring, and oversight mechanisms through a multinational task force to ensure that armed organizations outside state frameworks cannot be reconstituted. **Demobilization** aims to dismantle the organizational and command structures of armed organizations and factions, including command-and-control systems, combat units, recruitment mechanisms, and militant identity frameworks. **Reintegration** is intended to enable terrorist operatives and support networks to transition into civilian and even political pathways, thereby reducing both the incentive and legitimacy of returning to violence and joining militias.

The DDR process is well-suited to the Lebanese case because it is a flexible model applicable to complex environments in which it is particularly difficult to define a clear and definitive end to the conflict. It is relevant in situations where the state is weak and the armed organization also functions as a political, social, religious, and ideological actor. In such contexts, DDR is not merely a technical tool; rather, it provides a broad political-security framework that integrates incentives, oversight, selective enforcement, state reforms, and the construction of effective governance and security structures. A prominent example is Northern Ireland, where a DDR process took place, including agreements on governance arrangements, even though the conflict itself had not yet been fully resolved. In this framework, DDR enables an interim condition that prevents a relapse into armed conflict despite the absence of a final peace settlement.

DDR can also be adapted not only to internal armed conflicts but to realities that combine intra-state conflict with conflict involving an **external actor**, as in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, where Israel is also involved as an external actor. Such a model is more comprehensive than those designed for purely internal conflicts, requiring the construction of a supportive regional-political context and raising key

United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, “4.10: ¹ Disarmament,” in *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards*, June 16, 2020; United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, “4.20: Demobilization,” in *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards*, February 22, 2021; United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, “4.30: Reintegration,” in *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards*, September 26, 2022.

questions regarding sequence (the order of steps and measures) and agency (the actors responsible for advancing the framework).

Unique Characteristics of Hezbollah and the Lebanese State

Hezbollah is a hybrid organization with a military wing (a guerrilla-terror army) and is currently the most powerful military-security actor in Lebanon. This is despite its weakened condition following the heavy blows it has sustained from the IDF (during the Swords of Iron war from October 2023 onward; during the ceasefire period from November 2024; and during Operation Roaring Lion since March 2026). Nevertheless, the scope of its remaining arsenal still serves as a deterrent vis-à-vis other militias in Lebanon (Christian-Lebanese and Palestinian), as well as the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and other state security bodies. Hezbollah's arsenal includes primarily short- and medium-range rockets and missiles, attack UAVs, air defense systems, anti-tank missiles, and artillery, alongside tens of thousands of military operatives.

In effect, Hezbollah constitutes a “state within a state” for the Shiite population, which identifies with it both ideologically-strategically (“the resistance”) and religiously (in accordance with the Iranian doctrine of clerical rule). The organization maintains independent leadership and institutions, as well as an extensive socioeconomic system that provides for all its needs and those of its members and supporters, including a banking system, economic enterprises, and services in healthcare, education, religion, and media. Its funding sources are diverse. It relies heavily on external support from Iran (approximately \$1 billion annually), alongside donations and self-generated income—much of it illicit—from drug trafficking, money laundering, and the smuggling of funds into Lebanon via money changers while leveraging Shiite communities worldwide and Lebanon's largely cash-based economy.

Hezbollah has a dual identity: On the one hand, it is an organization rooted in Lebanon's Shiite population, presenting itself as the “defender of Lebanon” and claiming responsibility for the country's security and that of its citizens. It is deeply embedded in all branches of governance in Lebanon; its political party (“Loyalty to the Resistance”) is an active participant in the political system and represents its interests in government and parliament. On the other hand, Hezbollah maintains close ties with its patron, Iran, which was responsible for its establishment and continues to provide for all its needs, supplying weapons, equipment, training, and funding while coordinating strategy in the confrontation with Israel. In the eyes of its domestic opponents, Hezbollah's alignment with Iran during the war (Operation Roaring Lion) further reinforced its commitment to Iran and the perception that it serves Iranian interests at the expense of Lebanon's security and prosperity.

The Lebanese state suffers from longstanding structural weaknesses stemming from its demographic composition, which also underpins its system of governance based on sectarian power-sharing. These conditions are at the root of Lebanon's characteristics as a failing state: prolonged political paralysis, economic collapse, dysfunctional and corruption-ridden institutions, deteriorating infrastructure, and the absence of basic services for citizens.

At the same time, Hezbollah's weakening following the Swords of Iron war has led to a significant shift in Lebanon's internal political balance. Hezbollah has lost its dominant position in decision-making processes and has been compelled to accept the appointments in early 2025 of Joseph Aoun as president and Nawaf Salam as prime minister. Upon taking office, both declared their intention to restore Lebanon's sovereignty, including dismantling all militias and granting the LAF a monopoly over arms. Although this new leadership remains weak and has not yet achieved these goals up to Operation

Roaring Lion, it nonetheless constitutes a potential partner and address for advancing change based on the DDR model.

Adapting DDR to Lebanon

The DDR model may be suitable for disarming Hezbollah and weakening its political power for the following main reasons:

- **DDR is a gradual**, long-term, and multi-layered process, suitable to the Lebanese case, where all spheres of life must be addressed. It involves not only changes within the organization itself but also the rehabilitation and strengthening of the state framework—in this case, Lebanon. The phased implementation of the process is particularly important (for example, stages of disarmament based on geographic divisions or risk levels—prioritizing offensive weapons—and combining voluntary tracks with enforcement measures).
- **Hezbollah’s unique nature and role**—not merely as an armed militia but as an organization embedded across the Lebanese state systems while operating independently and serving as a substitute for state institutions for the Shiite population—require not only the collection of its weapons but also structural changes in its military, political, economic, and ideological dimensions, as well as a redefinition of its future role within Lebanon. This includes severing its ties with external radical actors, foremost Iran; addressing the needs of the Shiite population that depends on its support; and transforming the values and identity of this community.
- The DDR model incorporates security sector reform (SSR). Weakening Hezbollah through disarmament must go hand in hand with **strengthening the LAF and governance in Lebanon**. This requires reforms to strengthen the Lebanese leadership, ensure the state’s monopoly over weapons, and enhance the effectiveness of the army and other security agencies.
- Disarming Hezbollah and shifting the balance of power vis-à-vis the Lebanese state require **external involvement**—regional and international—for implementation, enforcement, verification, and financing, alongside the provision of incentives. This process will necessitate the mobilization of international actors, particularly the United States and France, as well as regional players—especially Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states—to fund the substantial assistance required for the LAF and the Lebanese state, on the one hand, and to incentivize Hezbollah’s transition from military influence to legitimate civilian-political influence, on the other.
- In the case of Hezbollah and Lebanon, the conflict is not purely internal but also involves an **external actor—Israel**. Any attempt to disarm Hezbollah must therefore be integrated into arrangements between Lebanon and Israel. This necessitates a broader framework that includes a political track—such as a peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel—as part of a new regional order that strengthens pragmatic actors and promotes multidimensional cooperation among them (including the expansion of the Abraham Accords).

The DDR process is intended to address the challenge of disarmament not merely as a technical issue but also as part of a broader system of power, identity, governance, belonging, and politics. Precisely because Hezbollah is a hybrid, ideological organization deeply rooted in its community, a model is required that simultaneously addresses all dimensions: disarmament, dismantling of the military/militia framework, strengthening the Lebanese army and state institutions, reforming the

Lebanese judicial system, and extending a hand to integrate the Shiite community into state structures—while convincing it that its future does not depend on Hezbollah’s armed power.

Core Principles of the Proposed Framework for Lebanon on the Basis of DDR

A long-term, multi-layered, and phased framework is proposed, to be accompanied by external oversight. It includes ten components that must be synchronized:

1. Establishing a principled objective of assigning **the Lebanese state full responsibility for decisions on war and peace** and for ensuring the LAF’s monopoly over weapons as the sole defender of the state, while also requiring Hezbollah to commit to nonviolence and to deposit its heavy and medium weapons with the LAF.
2. **Gradual dismantling of weapons** and other military capabilities—first and foremost those of Hezbollah, but also of other militias, particularly Palestinian organizations in Lebanon—according to priorities, geographic divisions, and types of weaponry, with emphasis on offensive systems.
3. **A conditional and phased Israeli withdrawal**, calibrated to progress in Hezbollah’s disarmament and the establishment of security arrangements.
4. Establishment of a regional-international **monitoring and verification mechanism**—LISF (Lebanon International Stabilization Force)—distinct from UNIFIL (which is expected to leave Lebanon at the end of 2026). This would be a new force tailored to the mission, demonstrating determination in overseeing weapons handover, dismantling tunnels and weapons production/storage infrastructure, and ensuring that rearmament does not occur, including through monitoring borders and international crossings.
5. Creation of **civilian and community rehabilitation** tracks to encourage the disengagement of terrorist operatives (Hezbollah, Palestinian, and others) from their organizational, military, and terrorist frameworks.
6. Measures to **sever Hezbollah’s ties with Iran** and block all channels for transferring funds and weapons to the organization, including its black-market financial networks.
7. Significant **strengthening of the Lebanese state**, with international assistance: reforming the political system and government institutions; judicial reforms aligned with a state monopoly on force; economic recovery and infrastructure rehabilitation; and programs to repair war damage, including the resettlement of displaced populations from border villages—particularly the Shiite population that has relied on Hezbollah. For example, proposals such as a “[Trump Economic Zone](#)” for border-area development.
8. Advancing reforms to **transform and strengthen the LAF**, including reviewing its mandate and the composition of its personnel to ensure loyalty to the Lebanese state. This includes training programs, substantial salary increases, and the provision of equipment suited to its missions.
9. Promoting a **deradicalization program** within the Lebanese education system—particularly among the Shiite population—to reshape collective values, foster a moderate shared national identity, and promote tolerance.
10. Establishing a framework for **direct Israel–Lebanon negotiations**, beginning with security arrangements centered on Hezbollah’s disarmament, border demarcation, and agreed-upon

border regimes, and ultimately leading to a peace agreement and Lebanon's integration into frameworks such as the Abraham Accords.

The Disarmament Framework

Hezbollah's deep entrenchment in Lebanon's political and social system constitutes a sort advantage, as it enables a gradual approach rather than an "all-or-nothing" demand that would likely face outright rejection. The goal is to reduce the organization's military autonomy, dismantle its combat units, and transfer authority to the state. This process must proceed in parallel with measures to strengthen the Lebanese state and the LAF, thereby shifting the internal balance of power in favor of the Lebanese government. In the early stages, the IDF may even require operational freedom—tacitly accepted by the Lebanese government—to prevent Hezbollah's rearmament until the LAF is capable of enforcing disarmament. Accordingly, in this framework:

- **In phase one**, Hezbollah would be required to accept the authority and decisions of the Lebanese government (rather than any external actor), commit to nonviolence, and accept a prohibition on the possession and use of heavy and medium weapons. The Lebanese government, for its part, would recommit to implementing UN Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 and begin deploying LAF forces in southern Lebanon, accompanied by an international monitoring mechanism—preferably within the LISF framework and in coordination with Israel.
- **In phase two**, heavy and medium weapons would be transferred to the LAF (excluding personal weapons, to reduce operatives' fear of exposure), through a gradual, geographically phased process under international supervision. The possibility of the use of force by the LAF, with LISF support—and potentially Israel—cannot be ruled out at this stage.
- **In phase three**, combat units would be dismantled, and appropriate solutions provided for Hezbollah's military operatives (integration into the LAF following careful screening and vetting, or placement in civilian frameworks; options for senior commanders to leave Lebanon in exchange for amnesty; and enforcement measures, including sanctions against noncompliant actors). At the same time, mechanisms would be established to control Lebanon's financial system and prevent the transfer of funds to terrorist entities.

Disarmament Process (Based on DDR Precedents)²

- Establish intelligence and mapping of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure.
- Short amnesty window for Hezbollah operatives and incentives ("weapons for bonuses" and community compensation).
- Fixed/mobile handover points, registration, and biometric tracking.
- Secure storage under the LAF or LISF.
- Sorting and destruction (cutting/melting; dismantling warheads; controlled detonation; removal of hazardous materials).

² The Balkans in the post-Yugoslav space; Latin America, especially Colombia; Liberia; Sierra Leone; Burundi; Indonesia, particularly Aceh after the 2005 agreement; Afghanistan; Somalia; Northern Sudan; and Northern Ireland.

- Neutralization and destruction of production infrastructure, tunnels, and storage facilities.
- Monitoring and verification mechanism under LISF (intelligence tools, spot inspections, operational freedom).
- Targeted enforcement against high-risk noncompliant actors and the Lebanese judicial process.

Strengthening the Lebanese Armed Forces

A parallel effort to strengthen the LAF will be required. This includes:

- **Comprehensive reform of the LAF:** revising its mandate to focus on border defense and combating militias while relinquishing internal security and civilian roles (to other agencies).
- **Personnel measures:**
 - Urgently increasing salaries and improving service conditions, alongside a strict prohibition on secondary employment and enforcement against violations;
 - Advancing deep reforms in recruitment and screening processes, including minimum standards to ensure a professional and loyal force while “cleansing” the LAF of Hezbollah operatives and collaborators;
 - Developing training tracks for soldiers and officers with Western assistance (modeled on the “Dayton program” for Palestinian security forces).
- Mobilizing **extensive external assistance** for funding, training, and procurement of equipment, intelligence, and combat capabilities to enable the LAF to address its challenges—preventing Hezbollah’s military presence in southern Lebanon, completing its disarmament, dismantling other militias (especially Palestinian groups), and monitoring smuggling across international crossings. The provision of weapons should be gradual and conditional on progress in LAF reforms and performance, under international supervision.

Framework for Integrating Hezbollah and Its Shiite Support Base

According to the DDR model, as progress is made in disarming Hezbollah, parallel efforts must be undertaken to integrate its operatives into the Lebanese state. In Lebanon, this is an especially complex challenge, as it involves not only integrating terrorist operatives but also dismantling the independent socio-economic system that Hezbollah has built over the years. At the same time, the state must provide alternative solutions for the Shiite population that has relied on Hezbollah for salaries, education, and services, thereby eliminating dependence on the organization. In this framework, the following steps are required:

1. **Establishing criteria for integrating Hezbollah’s military operatives** into the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and other security bodies. Those found unsuitable for military or security service should be offered civilian roles in community service. The incorporation of intact Hezbollah units into the army and the individual integration of Radwan Force fighters must be categorically rejected, and former Hezbollah members who are admitted as individuals into the LAF must undergo rigorous screening.
2. **Nationalization of Hezbollah’s economic and social institutions**, including its banking, education, and healthcare systems. This would be a complex and extensive process requiring gradual implementation. Civilian employees within these systems (clerks, teachers, doctors) could continue their work but would receive their salaries from the state. The education system

would need to be reformed to remove the “resistance” narrative and instill Lebanese national values and identity.

3. **Cutting off all direct funding channels to Hezbollah** that bypass state institutions. This includes developing a digital financial system (encompassing infrastructure, technologies, services, and regulation to enable electronic financial transactions). Such a move would need to proceed in parallel with broader economic reforms, with the aim of reducing reliance on Lebanon’s cash-based economy.

Proposed Management Architecture for the DDR Process in Lebanon

The “Board of Peace (BoP)” model could serve as an appropriate framework in the Lebanese context as well, implemented under American, French, and Saudi auspices through disciplined management and a determined international oversight mechanism. The following is a proposed management structure for driving the DDR process in Lebanon, adapted from the model developed for Gaza:

Composition of the Council and Executive Bodies

- **The BoP**, chaired by President Trump: the highest political echelon, responsible for endorsing the strategy and ensuring broad international and financial backing. Its role would be to create the political framework for enforcing demilitarization and advancing a political settlement while mobilizing regional and global actors to invest in exchange for stability. Adjustments to the composition of the council would likely be required for the Lebanese context (e.g., including France and possibly additional Western actors).
- **An Executive Council for Lebanon**: This body should preferably be headed by a US High Commissioner (for example, David Schenker, a diplomat familiar with the Lebanese arena) or a French counterpart (if France is not formally part of the BoP). This council would directly manage the Lebanese arena on behalf of the BoP, be responsible for strategy formulation, coordination of efforts, and monitoring implementation. It would also serve as a forum for coordinating the interests of participating states, including the United States, the E3 (France, the United Kingdom, and Germany), and moderate Arab states.
- **An implementation coordination mechanism**: Alongside the BoP, a civil-military coordination center (CMCC) should be established as the operational command and control mechanism on the ground. It would be responsible for synchronizing DDR processes with the flow of reconstruction and economic development funds, as well as for preventing escalation.

The Deradicalization Effort within DDR

The deradicalization component constitutes the cognitive and societal foundation complementing the physical DDR effort. While DDR focuses on dismantling the operational infrastructure of armed organizations, deradicalization operates at the societal level, aiming to generate a deep transformation in collective values. It is a broad psycho-social process designed to replace narratives that justify violence with legitimate civic ideologies. Whereas DDR seeks to neutralize the operational capabilities of sub-state actors, deradicalization aims to eliminate the social motivation to support them, thereby preventing the long-term reconstitution of terrorist infrastructures.

In Lebanon, this effort is essential for fostering a unifying national identity (“Lebanon First”) that prioritizes state sovereignty over sectarian and religious loyalties. Rather than focusing on negating the “other,” the Lebanese application of deradicalization—led by the BoP—should emphasize constructing a positive narrative of a “prosperous and sovereign Lebanon,” highlighting shared national identity and

interreligious tolerance as core values. Advancing these goals will require comprehensive reform of the education, religious, and media systems, aimed at cultivating active citizenship and commitment to state institutions, while positioning the state as the sole provider of security, services, and national pride.

Implementation of this model will be based on creating an optimistic horizon of internal stability and regional cooperation, establishing Lebanese identity as the primary source of belonging over external influences. Deradicalization efforts would include programs for the social integration of former fighters into multi-sectarian communities, alongside mobilizing moderate religious leadership to promote national reconciliation. Under the supervision of the BoP, training centers would be established to offer pathways for social mobility conditioned on the adoption of civic values, thereby severing the traditional link between militant sectarian affiliation and economic security.

In the initial phase, behavioral change will be required, followed, wherever possible, by deeper psychological transformation. Accordingly, incentives must be offered with the potential to influence public attitudes in Lebanon, particularly among the Shiite population. It is also especially important to reshape the narrative regarding Israel, repeal Lebanese laws prohibiting contact between Lebanese and Israeli citizens, and promote channels of engagement between Israeli and Lebanese actors, both official and unofficial.

Framework for Political Change in Israel–Lebanon Relations

On April 9, 2026, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the cabinet to open direct negotiations with the Lebanese government, with the aim of achieving a peace arrangement and disarming Hezbollah. The central point of contention with Lebanon is Hezbollah’s disarmament and the assumption of full state responsibility—one state, one law, one weapon. Accordingly, the desired sequence for managing negotiations is:

1. Discussion of security arrangements, including the steps required for Hezbollah’s disarmament and the adoption of a DDR process with the support of moderate Arab states, the United States, and European countries.
2. Implementation of the disarmament process, alongside a gradual Israeli withdrawal to an agreed border line, conditional on the dismantling of Hezbollah’s offensive capabilities.
3. Conclusion of a peace agreement between the states, which could be integrated into broader regional processes aimed at establishing a new Middle Eastern order (including potential accession to the Abraham Accords).