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Lebanon's National Security
From Fragmented Sovereignty to the Constitutional State!

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Executive Summary

At its core, **Lebanon's National Security** crisis concerns the **State's ability to exercise sovereign authority**, govern through its constitutional institutions, and shape strategic choices in the collective national interest. Military threats, vulnerable borders, and the repercussions of regional and international conflicts are serious challenges. Yet they also expose a deeper structural crisis, shaped by decades of fragmented sovereignty, competing centers of decision-making, disrupted constitutional institutions, declining judicial independence, a weakened public administration, and external dependencies that have constrained the State's ability to define and defend its national interests. Addressing **National Security** therefore requires moving beyond a narrowly military understanding of defense toward a comprehensive approach centered on rebuilding the constitutional State and restoring its effectiveness. National security encompasses the State's capacity to protect its territory and people, uphold constitutional order, enforce the law, ensure institutional continuity, strengthen economic and societal resilience, and exercise independent sovereign decision-making. Within this framework, national defense remains an essential pillar of an integrated system in which legitimate force, institutional legitimacy, and effective public policies reinforce one another.

Lebanon already possesses a clear constitutional foundation for this approach. Article **65** of the **Constitution** entrusts the **Council of Ministers**, acting collectively, with responsibility for setting the State's general policy. Accordingly, a national security policy must emerge from constitutional institutions and provide the overarching framework for defense, foreign, economic, and social policies, as well as border management, infrastructure protection, and national preparedness. **Lebanon's** fundamental challenge lies in the persistent gap between constitutional principles and their translation into implementable and accountable public policies. Even the most carefully designed strategies remain limited in their impact when sovereign decisions are dispersed among competing authorities, accountability mechanisms are weakened, and citizens lose confidence in their institutions. Restoring the State therefore requires returning sovereign decision-making to its constitutional authority, consolidating judicial independence, reforming public administration, and rebuilding trust between citizens and public institutions. These are the conditions that would enable **Lebanon** to move beyond absorbing the consequences of geo-political developments toward anticipating them and shaping its own strategic responses. In this context, inclusive citizenship that embraces diversity constitutes a strategic foundation of national security. **Lebanon's** political, cultural, and religious pluralism, one of the defining characteristics of its society, can flourish within a single constitutional State that exercises exclusive legitimate sovereign authority and guarantees equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens. The challenge is to establish a shared national space that protects diversity while preventing it from becoming a source of competing sovereignties, parallel security allegiances, or loyalties extending beyond national borders. The central objective of this policy framework is therefore to advance the transition toward a **constitutional State capable of making sovereign decisions, protecting its citizens, exercising effective governance, anticipating strategic developments, and expressing the collective national interest.** Restoring the State is the overarching strategic objective around which every dimension of Lebanese national security must converge.

I. National Security Begins with the State

Rebuilding the concept of **Lebanese National Security** requires a fundamental reassessment of the approach that has shaped public debate over the past decades. Discussions have largely concentrated on military affairs, armed conflicts, border control, resistance, regional and international power dynamics, and deterrence. While these issues are central to understanding the threats facing **Lebanon**, reducing national security to these dimensions obscures the structural relationship between the security of the State and its ability to exercise its constitutional, sovereign, legal, economic, and social responsibilities. A country may possess military and security institutions yet remain strategically vulnerable if it cannot independently define its national interests, enforce its laws, safeguard institutional independence, provide essential public services, maintain socio-economic stability, or exercise exclusive authority over decisions of war and peace.

From this perspective, national security rests on five interconnected dimensions:

First – **Sovereign Security**. Safeguarding territorial integrity, protecting national borders, ensuring the State's exclusive authority over the legitimate use of force, and preserving the independence of national decision-making on sovereign matters.

Second – **Constitutional Security**. Ensuring the proper functioning of constitutional institutions, the separation, balance, and cooperation of powers, the rule of law, and effective mechanisms of accountability and institutional oversight.

Third – **Human and Societal Security**. Promoting equal and inclusive citizenship that embraces diversity, strengthening social cohesion, advancing education, protecting rights and freedoms, and guaranteeing the essential conditions for a life of dignity.

Fourth – Economic Security. Strengthening institutional credibility, ensuring sound public financial management, enhancing productive capacity, and building an economy capable of withstanding domestic and external shocks.

Fifth – Strategic Security. Developing the State's institutional capacity to anticipate geo-political developments and formulate foreign, defense, and economic policies grounded in the national interest.

The significance of these dimensions lies in their functional interdependence. Sovereignty cannot be effectively exercised through dysfunctional institutions; societal resilience cannot be sustained amid economic collapse; and a State that has lost public trust cannot establish lasting security through military capabilities alone. The central question guiding any national security policy must therefore be whether the **Lebanese State possesses the institutional capacity to fulfill its responsibilities as a sovereign, legitimate, and effective constitutional State**.

II. Defining the National Interest

The **national interest** must serve as the foundational reference for any national security policy. Coherent strategic choices cannot be developed without first identifying the enduring interests around which State decisions should be organized. Historically, **Lebanon** has struggled with competing political interpretations of the national interest, shaped by partisan alignments, sectarian affiliations, and external relationships. As domestic political actors developed divergent strategic connections with regional and international powers, their perceptions of threats and alliances also diverged. At various stages, national policy became the outcome of negotiated compromises among conflicting interests rather than the expression of consistent institutional choices. Overcoming this structural imbalance requires an institutional definition of the national interest, grounded in the **Constitution** and the higher interests of the Republic, and capable of transcending temporary partisan and sectarian calculations.

Within this framework, **six fundamental national interests** can be identified:

1. Protecting the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Republic, while affirming the exclusive authority of constitutional institutions over sovereign decision-making.
2. Safeguarding constitutional institutions, rights, and freedoms, and protecting political pluralism and the democratic system.
3. Preserving societal cohesion as an essential condition for sustainable stability and sovereignty.
4. Consolidating the rule of law, judicial independence, and institutional accountability, thereby translating sovereignty from a legal principle into an effective practice.
5. Strengthening economic, social, and institutional resilience to protect society and the State against internal breakdowns and external shocks.
6. Establishing a strategic foreign-policy orientation that prevents **Lebanon** from becoming an arena for regional and international conflicts, while strengthening stable relations with its Arab surroundings and Arab and international partners on the basis of constitutionally defined State interests.

Education, human development, and institutional sustainability are closely linked to these interests. They help ensure continuity across generations and prevent national priorities from becoming dependent on short-term political changes. Defined in this manner, the national interest becomes an institutional benchmark for evaluating public policies and strategic choices, as well as a shared reference for establishing national priorities.

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III. From Fragmented Sovereignty To Constitutional Sovereignty

The fragmentation of sovereign authority represents one of the most serious structural weaknesses in **Lebanon's National Security** framework, particularly when competing centers of decision-making are accompanied by a disconnect between declarations of sovereignty and actual political practice. Sovereignty extends beyond international recognition of the Republic's borders. It requires the effective exercise of authority within those borders and the capacity of constitutional institutions to make decisions concerning war and peace, defense, security, foreign policy, border management, and the legitimate use of force. When these responsibilities are divided between State institutions and actors operating outside constitutional authority, sovereignty becomes subject to negotiation and shifting power balances rather than remaining a clearly established institutional competence. Addressing this imbalance requires reaffirming a fundamental constitutional principle: political pluralism is legitimate and necessary, whereas **competing sovereignties undermine the very foundations of the State**. Political parties, social constituencies, and civil society organizations have the right to compete democratically over programs, priorities, and national visions within the constitutional framework. Sovereign decisions, however, remain the exclusive responsibility of the Republic's constitutional institutions. This principle protects political diversity while preventing it from generating parallel security and strategic authorities. The Constitution must therefore serve as the institutional foundation of national security, defining the relationship between the legitimacy of political representation and the unity of sovereign decision-making.

IV. National Security Requires Constitutional Governance

Article **65** of the **Lebanese Constitution** provides the legal and institutional foundation for developing a national security policy by assigning responsibility for the State's general policy to the Council of Ministers acting collectively. On this basis, the government should lead a structured institutional process involving the relevant ministries, public administrations, and specialized agencies to identify national interests, assess risks, formulate strategic choices, and coordinate implementation. This process should follow a clear policy sequence. **National Interest → National Security Policy → Specialized Sectoral Strategies → Implementation, Monitoring, and Accountability Plans.** The purpose of this sequence is to establish national security policy as a comprehensive strategic reference from which sectoral policies derive their direction, without undermining their distinct responsibilities or artificially merging their functions.

A national defense strategy would address military threats, defense capabilities, and the organization of legitimate armed forces. Foreign policy would translate national interests into diplomatic priorities and international positioning. Economic and social security policies would cover financial stability, critical infrastructure, energy, food security, and the capacity to withstand external shocks. Societal resilience would encompass education, social cohesion, public trust in institutions, and emergency preparedness, while cybersecurity and information security would protect public

institutions and national digital infrastructure. Experience demonstrates that these areas are closely interconnected. An energy crisis can develop into an economic and security threat; declining confidence in institutions weakens societal resilience; geo-political tensions may expose critical infrastructure and information networks to attack; and an ineffective public administration can undermine the implementation of defense policy. The essential function of a national security policy is therefore to build institutional coherence across these sectors, replacing fragmented responses with coordinated, implementable State policies.

V. The Rule of Law as a Pillar of National Security

The rule of law is a structural foundation of **National Security** because it directly shapes the legitimacy of the State, its capacity to exercise public authority, and its ability to protect citizens' rights. A State that cannot guarantee judicial independence, enforce its laws, combat corruption, or resolve disputes through established institutions faces challenges extending far beyond the justice sector. Such weaknesses undermine political stability, economic confidence, and social cohesion. Judicial authority must therefore be recognized as an essential component of **National Security Architecture**. An independent judiciary strengthens institutional legitimacy, protects rights and freedoms, provides legal certainty for investment and economic activity, reinforces accountability, and restores the direct relationship between citizens and the State. This relationship is particularly important in **Lebanon,** where declining confidence in public institutions has repeatedly encouraged citizens to rely on political and sectarian intermediaries to secure rights, resolve disputes, or obtain protection. The persistence of these practices weakens the State's institutional authority and reproduces relationships of dependency that constrain individual autonomy and undermine administrative effectiveness. The same analysis applies to public administration, which constitutes the most immediate and visible point of contact between citizens and the State. When public services become subject to political interference, or when their quality and accessibility deteriorate, institutions lose a vital means of earning public trust. Restoring the rule of law therefore requires an integrated reform process that connects judicial independence with administrative effectiveness and establishes transparency, accountability, and equality before the law as governing standards of institutional performance. Sovereignty has limited meaning in citizens' daily lives unless they experience it through fair judicial processes, functioning public administration, and the effective protection of their rights. Judicial and administrative reform must consequently be understood as a strategic investment in national security, State legitimacy, and renewed public confidence in constitutional institutions.

VI. Citizenship as a Strategic Foundation of National Security

The structural weaknesses of **Lebanon's National Security** system are closely connected to a parallel crisis in the development of citizenship and its institutional practice. Competing communal narratives, overlapping political loyalties, and unequal relationships between citizens and State institutions have constrained the emergence of a shared civic space in which the relationship between individuals and the Republic is governed by equal rights and responsibilities. Addressing this challenge

requires a clear distinction between societal diversity, which is one of **Lebanon's** defining characteristics, and the transformation of sectarian affiliations into alternative sources of authority that displace citizenship and public institutions. **Lebanon's** religious, cultural, and political pluralism is integral to its historical and civilizational identity. Its national value is realized when it operates within a constitutional State that protects differences and guarantees equality. The imbalance emerges when communal structures assume political, economic, or security functions that properly belong to the State, or when access to rights and services becomes conditional upon affiliation and loyalty rather than citizenship. Building national security therefore requires strengthening inclusive citizenship as the foundation of the constitutional compact, a framework for governing diversity, and a safeguard against the transformation of differences into competing sovereign authorities. Education occupies a central place in this process. **Lebanon's** educational system must prepare citizens capable of critical thinking, democratic participation, constitutional understanding, and the responsible exercise of rights and duties. It must also cultivate an appreciation of pluralism and reinforce the role of public institutions as the common framework through which national belonging is expressed. Persistent delays in curriculum reform, the politicization of aspects of the educational environment, and the erosion of human capital through emigration and the loss of skilled professionals all weaken **Lebanon's** capacity to develop sustainable national resilience. Citizenship education and constitutional literacy should therefore become integral components of national security planning, understood as long-term investments in people and institutions. Generations that understand the **Constitution**, respect diversity, uphold equality, and recognize the State as the common authority for all citizens constitute a strategic national asset no less important than economic resources or defense capabilities. Citizenship, in this sense, provides the human and constitutional foundation that gives sovereignty its societal meaning, transforming belonging to **Lebanon** from an emotional attachment into a responsible institutional practice.

VII. Rebuilding the State Where Parallel Structures Have Expanded

Parallel structures tend to expand where public institutions have lost effectiveness, where their presence in citizens' daily lives has weakened, and where their ability to guarantee rights, services, and protection has diminished. This phenomenon reveals the direct relationship between sovereignty and institutional performance. Establishing effective State authority becomes difficult when citizens cannot experience the State's presence through the essential services on which they depend. Security, healthcare, education, social protection, infrastructure, and access to justice are all public responsibilities directly linked to the legitimacy of the State and its capacity to exercise sovereignty. When legitimate institutions fail to fulfill these responsibilities, citizens turn to alternatives capable of meeting their immediate needs, even when those alternatives are connected to political parties, networks of influence, or informal authorities. Over time, service-delivery networks may become instruments for generating political dependency, mobilizing loyalties, and reinforcing structures that compete with the State in the exercise of public functions. Correcting this imbalance requires moving

beyond declarations of sovereign principles toward rebuilding the effective capacity of public institutions.

Restoring State authority means ensuring that legitimate institutions become the most reliable, equitable, and effective providers of citizens' rights and services. It also requires restructuring the relationship between society and public authority around rights rather than political mediation and dependency. This approach is particularly important in areas historically affected by deprivation, inadequate infrastructure, declining public investment, or the expansion of parallel networks. The State must reestablish its presence through fair and effective public policies that address development disparities, improve access to services, provide social protection, and guarantee the equal application of the law. Restoring sovereignty thus becomes an integrated institutional and societal process in which the State strengthens its authority through legitimacy, fairness, and competence, gradually rebuilding citizens' confidence in its capacity to protect and serve them.

VIII. The Shiite Community and the Process of State-Building

Assessing the position of **Lebanon's Shiite community** within the process of rebuilding the Lebanese State requires an inclusive national perspective that recognizes the community as an integral partner in the Republic and acknowledges its historical, political, intellectual, and social contributions to the development of the State and public life. Such an approach must avoid reducing the Shiite community to the political duality of **Hezbollah and the Amal Movement** or making its political and social future dependent on the fate of an armed organization or an existing partisan arrangement. The community's political, intellectual, and social history extends far beyond any single organization or leadership. Its internal diversity forms part of **Lebanon's** wider national pluralism and deserves protection within the constitutional State. The transition toward full constitutional sovereignty therefore calls for a constructive approach to State-building that strengthens political pluralism within the Shiite community, creates space for independent civic, intellectual, and political initiatives, and guarantees citizens access to State institutions and fundamental rights without dependence on partisan networks for services or protection. This transformation cannot be achieved merely by replacing one political leadership with another while preserving the same mechanisms that generate dependency and tie access to rights to political loyalty. What is required is a transition from **political dependency to institutional citizenship**, restructuring the relationship between citizens and the State around equal rights and responsibilities while strengthening the autonomy of individuals and communities in their civic and political choices. This challenge extends beyond the Shiite community to **Lebanon's** other constituencies, reflecting a broader crisis of political representation, leadership renewal, and democratic legitimacy. Reproducing sectarian patronage under new political labels or leaderships would change the actors without transforming the structures that have weakened the State and obstructed the development of citizenship. The objective must remain a shared national one: the integration of all Lebanese communities into an effective constitutional State that protects pluralism and equality, exercises exclusive sovereign authority, and guarantees rights and public services to every citizen.

IX. From Geo-political Vulnerability to Strategic Initiative

Lebanon operates within a rapidly changing geo-political environment in which regional conflicts intersect with international competition, alliances and balances of power are shifting, concepts of deterrence are evolving, and non-State actors are assuming increasingly significant roles in armed conflicts. These developments coincide with the growing strategic importance of economic corridors, energy networks, technology, critical infrastructure, competition over resources, and supply chains. As a result, security threats have become increasingly interconnected with economic and political choices. Within this environment, the Lebanese State must strengthen its ability to assess surrounding developments, identify their implications for national interests, and formulate proactive responses that protect stability and the independence of sovereign decision-making.

For much of its recent history, **Lebanon** has absorbed the consequences of geo-political developments without possessing the institutional tools necessary to anticipate them. The involvement of domestic actors in competing regional projects has also contributed to importing external conflicts into the national political arena and deepening disagreements over interests and priorities. Breaking this cycle requires redefining **Lebanon's** strategic positioning around its enduring national interests rather than allowing its choices to depend on temporary regional alliances. External developments should be assessed according to their implications for Lebanese sovereignty, domestic stability, economic prosperity, and constitutional order, rather than through the competing political calculations of individual parties. Within this framework, **State-led public diplomacy** becomes an instrument for advancing national interests, mitigating risks, and developing regional and international partnerships that strengthen the State's capacity to protect its sovereign decisions. The transition from **geo-political vulnerability to strategic initiative** begins when the State regains the ability to define **Lebanon's** place within its regional environment, shape external relations according to the national interest, and anticipate developments before they become domestic crises.

X. From Resilience to Proactive Preparedness

For Throughout decades of wars, crises, and institutional breakdowns, Lebanese society has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to endure and adapt to exceptional circumstances. Individual and community initiatives, solidarity networks, professional expertise, and the contributions of the Lebanese diaspora have played essential roles in preserving a minimum level of social and economic continuity. Yet societal resilience cannot permanently substitute for effective public policies and functioning institutions. When the State repeatedly relies on citizens' capacity to absorb the consequences of economic collapse, armed conflict, institutional paralysis, and deteriorating services, it gradually exhausts the human and social resources on which national resilience depends. **Lebanon** must therefore move from managing the consequences of crises toward building proactive preparedness that can prevent risks, mitigate their effects, and strengthen the capacity to respond effectively. This transition requires permanent institutional capabilities in strategic foresight, crisis management, continuity of constitutional institutions and public administration, economic security, cybersecurity, critical infrastructure protection, and emergency response. It also requires mechanisms

for regular risk assessment, identification of vulnerabilities in vital sectors, and the development of preventive plans and early interventions capable of stopping sectoral crises from escalating into broader national threats. Sustainable national security depends on institutions that can learn from crises, anticipate emerging risks, coordinate responses, and maintain the continuity of the State under exceptional circumstances. Resilience can then evolve from a societal capacity to endure repeated crises into a national strategic asset supported by proactive public policies and institutions capable of protection, planning, and implementation.

XI.Ten Priorities and Three Strategic Tracks

For Translating this conceptual framework into actionable public policies requires an integrated approach that moves beyond treating reforms as isolated initiatives. **Lebanon** needs a coherent national program in which the restoration of sovereign authority, the rebuilding of State institutional capacity, and the strengthening of national resilience reinforce one another. The following ten priorities are organized around three complementary strategic tracks. Together, they provide the foundation for rebuilding Lebanese national security on sustainable constitutional and institutional grounds.

Strategic Track One - Restoring Sovereign Authority

1. **Adopting a National Security Policy under Constitutional Authority**

   The Council of Ministers, acting within its constitutional mandate, should initiate a structured institutional process to formulate a comprehensive national security policy. This process should involve the relevant ministries, public administrations, and specialized agencies, with the objective of identifying enduring national interests, assessing strategic threats, mapping structural vulnerabilities, and establishing the priorities that should guide the work of public institutions. The importance of this initiative lies in establishing a unified national framework for decision-making, enabling **Lebanon** to move beyond fragmented sectoral policies toward a strategic vision that integrates the State's essential functions. For this process to succeed, national priorities must be aligned with institutional capacities and available resources, ensuring that broad policy directions are translated into actionable programs with clear implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

2. **Restoring the Exclusive Constitutional Authority over Sovereign Decisions**

   Restoring the State's exclusive authority over sovereign decisions is a foundational condition for the effectiveness of any national security policy. This authority encompasses decisions concerning war and peace, defense, foreign policy, border management, and the legitimate use of force. All such responsibilities must be exercised exclusively through the competent constitutional institutions and in accordance with applicable laws. Achieving this objective requires addressing the existence of competing centers of authority and decision-making, while consolidating the unity of sovereign power. This would preserve political pluralism within the constitutional framework of the Republic and prevent it from becoming a

plurality of security and strategic decision-making authorities. The credibility of this process will ultimately depend on the ability of constitutional institutions to exercise their responsibilities effectively and ensure that sovereign decisions remain subject to constitutional responsibility and institutional accountability.

3. Developing a National Defense Strategy within the Comprehensive National Security Policy

A national defense strategy, understood in its proper strategic and institutional sense rather than through the narrow, conventional formulation that has characterized much of the Lebanese debate, must be developed as an essential component of the broader national security policy. Its objectives, priorities, and capabilities should derive from an institutional definition of the national interest. Such a strategy must address the nature of military threats, the requirements for protecting national territory and borders, the development of defense capabilities, the allocation of responsibilities among legitimate armed forces, and the coordination of the relevant institutions. This policy sequence would allow **Lebanon** to move beyond treating defense as a function detached from the State's other responsibilities and toward an integrated national vision in which military capabilities are aligned with foreign, economic, and institutional policies. National defense becomes sustainable and effective when it is anchored in a State that exercises sovereign decision-making, defines its interests independently, and mobilizes the resources and institutions necessary to protect them. This necessarily entails rejecting any duality in sovereign decision-making or any sharing of armed authority with non-State actors.

Strategic Track Two - Rebuilding State Capacity and Citizenship

4. Strengthening Judicial Independence and Institutional Accountability

Judicial reform is an essential entry point for restoring State legitimacy and rebuilding citizens' confidence in public institutions. This requires guaranteeing judicial independence, strengthening the judiciary's capacity to enforce the law and protect rights, and consolidating mechanisms of institutional accountability while limiting political interference in the administration of justice. The implications of judicial reform extend beyond the justice sector. An independent and effective judiciary contributes to the proper functioning of public life, protects economic activity, strengthens investor confidence, and provides citizens with reliable legal guarantees. It also reduces individuals' dependence on partisan and sectarian intermediaries to secure their rights or resolve disputes, reaffirming the State as the common legal authority for all citizens.

5. Rebuilding Public Administration and Improving Service Delivery

Sovereignty is expressed through the State's ability to perform its everyday responsibilities efficiently and fairly, ensuring that citizens can access public services and exercise their rights without discrimination or political mediation. Public administration reform

must therefore constitute an essential component of national security policy, with a focus on strengthening institutional capacity, promoting transparency, improving service quality, and guaranteeing equal access. This process requires restoring the meaning of public service as a responsibility toward society and the common good, while reaffirming public institutions as instruments for implementing public policies rather than mechanisms of political patronage, sectarian allocation, or clientelism. The more effectively and equitably the State responds to citizens' needs, the stronger its legitimacy becomes and the less dependence there is on parallel structures that emerged in response to its institutional weakness.

6. Adopting a National Strategy for Inclusive Citizenship and Civic Education

Rebuilding the relationship between citizens and the State requires a national citizenship strategy that places constitutional literacy, democratic participation, critical thinking, and respect for pluralism at the heart of the educational process. This strategy should encompass curriculum reform, stronger civic education, the consolidation of equal rights and responsibilities, and the development of a shared understanding of belonging to the Republic and its institutions. Citizenship must extend beyond theoretical knowledge of constitutional principles to become a daily practice that governs relationships among individuals and between citizens and public authority. From this perspective, citizenship education represents a strategic investment in developing generations capable of protecting diversity within constitutional unity, participating in public life, holding institutions accountable, and contributing to the long-term sustainability of the State.

Strategic Track Three - Building National Strategic Resilience

7. Integrating Economic Security and Human Security into National Security Planning

Developing a comprehensive national security policy requires incorporating financial stability, energy, food security, healthcare, infrastructure, and social protection into the national strategic risk assessment framework. When economic and social crises deepen without effective institutional responses, they can become direct threats to domestic stability and the foundations of the State, undermining its capacity to protect citizens and fulfill its responsibilities. Economic and social policies must therefore be integrated into national security planning, with particular attention to identifying vulnerabilities in critical sectors and developing mechanisms to strengthen their ability to withstand shocks. This approach would enable **Lebanon** to move from addressing crises after they occur toward building economic and societal resilience that reduces their consequences and protects long-term national stability.

8. Establishing Strategic Principles for Foreign Policy

Lebanon's external relations should be guided by nationally defined institutional interests and managed through the competent constitutional authorities, ensuring consistency in diplomatic orientation and independence in sovereign decision-making. This approach requires developing regional and international partnerships that reinforce State sovereignty,

support stability, and expand economic and institutional capacities without reproducing domestic divisions or perpetuating external dependencies. It also calls for continuous assessment of regional and international developments in light of their implications for Lebanese national interests. Such an approach would enable Lebanese diplomacy to evolve from short-term responses to external developments toward proactive strategic engagement.

9. Establishing a Permanent Institutional Capacity for Strategic Assessment and Foresight

Lebanon needs a permanent institutional mechanism capable of monitoring geo-political, economic, technological, and societal developments, analyzing their implications for national security, and identifying emerging risks before they develop into crises. Its responsibilities should include conducting periodic risk assessments, developing potential scenarios, identifying structural vulnerabilities, and providing relevant constitutional institutions with evidence-based analysis and policy recommendations. The effectiveness of this mechanism will depend on coordination among public administrations and specialized agencies, the availability of qualified expertise, and the integration of assessment findings into decision-making processes and the periodic revision of national priorities. Developing strategic foresight would expand the State's capacity to take the initiative while reducing the costs associated with delayed responses to emerging threats and crises.

10. Linking Public Policies to Implementation and Accountability

A national security policy becomes effective when it is translated into clear implementation plans that assign responsibilities, establish timelines, define measurable indicators, and provide for regular monitoring and evaluation. This requires identifying the institutions responsible for each priority, determining the resources necessary for implementation, and adopting performance criteria that make it possible to measure progress, identify shortcomings, and adjust policies as circumstances evolve. Such an approach would move strategic planning beyond policy documents and general declarations toward measurable institutional performance and accountability for results. The added value of these ten priorities lies in their structural interdependence. Sovereignty remains fragile without institutional capacity. Institutions lose part of their societal legitimacy when they are disconnected from inclusive citizenship. National resilience, in the absence of strategic vision, becomes little more than repeated crisis management. **Lebanon** therefore requires an integrated national State-building program in which sovereignty is reinforced by institutional effectiveness, institutional legitimacy is consolidated through citizenship, and societal resilience develops into sustainable strategic capacity.

XII. An Integrated Phased Pathway to Implementation

The transition from fragmented sovereignty toward a comprehensive national security policy requires a cumulative reform process that progressively strengthens the constitutional, institutional, and societal conditions necessary for the State to recover its full capacity to exercise its responsibilities. The nature of **Lebanon's** crisis calls for an approach that combines clarity of strategic objectives with

realism in implementation. Reforms should advance through interconnected priorities without making their initiation conditional upon the resolution of every political disagreement.

First – Restoring Constitutional Order

Restoring constitutional order constitutes the starting point of this process. It requires reaffirming the authority of constitutional institutions in formulating national policies and making public decisions, strengthening governmental coordination, consolidating judicial independence, and launching a formal institutional process to identify national interests and strategic priorities. The importance of this phase lies in rebuilding the institutional foundations of decision-making, overcoming fragmented approaches to national priorities, and establishing the constitutional basis for developing a national security policy.

Second – Consolidating Institutional Sovereignty

The next phase requires the State to progressively restore its exclusive authority over sovereign decisions, the legitimate use of force, border management, defense, and foreign policy, while simultaneously strengthening the ability of the competent institutions to fulfill their responsibilities. This process entails addressing competing centers of authority, improving institutional coordination, and establishing the administrative and operational conditions necessary to transform sovereignty into an effective constitutional practice.

Third – Rehabilitating Public Institutions

The restoration of sovereign authority cannot be sustained if citizens continue to experience the State as a collection of institutions disconnected from their needs or incapable of guaranteeing their rights. Consolidating sovereignty must therefore proceed alongside public administration reform, stronger accountability mechanisms, improved service delivery, and equal access to institutions and rights. The objective is to rebuild trust between citizens and the State while progressively reducing structural dependence on political and sectarian mediation and patronage networks.

Fourth – Consolidating Inclusive Citizenship and Societal Resilience

Strengthening equal and inclusive citizenship that embraces diversity, civic education, and societal cohesion is essential to ensuring the sustainability of institutional reform. This phase requires improving educational policies, reinforcing constitutional literacy, and expanding equitable access to public services, thereby restructuring the relationship between citizens and the State around rights and responsibilities while gradually reducing dependence on clientelist networks. Its significance lies in creating the societal foundation for the constitutional State and transforming citizenship into a sustained practice within public life.

Fifth – Strategic Integration and Institutional Review

The preceding phases converge in the development of an institutionalized national security policy that integrates defense and diplomacy with economic security, societal resilience, technology, education, and human security. Achieving this integration requires clear mechanisms for implementation, monitoring, and periodic review. These mechanisms must enable institutions to assess outcomes,

identify shortcomings, and update priorities in response to national, regional, and international developments. They must also ensure continuity in national security policy beyond temporary changes in political alignments and balances of power. Institutional evaluation should consequently become an integral component of the public policy cycle, ensuring that performance reviews, capacity development, and corrective measures are regular practices within State institutions and that their findings inform strategic decisions. These phases should not be understood as a rigid chronological sequence. Several reform tracks can advance simultaneously, depending on the nature of the reforms and the institutional capacities available. The decisive criterion is the direction of change and the cumulative impact of its results. Each reform should strengthen the State's ability to exercise sovereignty, serve citizens, and make strategic decisions through legitimate and effective institutions. The success of this process ultimately depends on moving beyond the management of reforms as fragmented responses to successive crises and treating them instead as interconnected components of rebuilding the constitutional State. Such an approach would help sustain institutional transformation and strengthen **Lebanon's** ability to protect its national interests

Conclusions and Horizons

The State as Lebanon's Strategic Choice. At its deepest level, **Lebanon's** national security challenge concerns the nature of the State and its capacity to exercise its constitutional and sovereign responsibilities. When sovereign decisions are distributed among competing authorities, the Republic loses its ability to formulate a coherent national strategy. When institutions weaken, sovereignty becomes increasingly vulnerable, regardless of the importance of the principles on which it is founded. When citizenship fails to provide trust, protection, and rights, individuals seek alternative guarantees through communal structures, political parties, and external networks. And when **Lebanon** lacks the capacity to anticipate geo-political developments, it finds itself confronting the consequences of decisions made beyond its institutions and bearing the costs of conflicts that do not necessarily reflect its national interests. Rebuilding national security therefore extends beyond reforming and restructuring the military and security sectors, as well as the judiciary. It constitutes a comprehensive national project to restore the State's capacity for decision-making, protection, governance, and strategic foresight. This project requires a transition **from sovereignty negotiated among competing centers of influence to constitutional sovereignty; from protection based on sectarian affiliations to institutional citizenship; from external dependency to the independent definition of national interests; and from recurring crisis management to sustainable strategic State capacity**. **Lebanon's Constitution** already provides the foundational principles for such a transformation. The central challenge, however, lies in the persistent gap between constitutional principles and institutional practice, and in the continued inability to translate these principles into public policies that can be implemented and subjected to meaningful accountability. This gap represents the most significant structural obstacle to developing an effective national security policy. It constrains the unity of decision-making, the functioning of institutions, the sustainability of reforms, and the State's capacity to protect its citizens.

National security must therefore become an **institutional doctrine for State-building**, providing a coherent framework for judicial, defense, foreign, economic, and social policies, whose effectiveness is measured by the ability of constitutional institutions to define and protect national interests. The ultimate test of this doctrine is whether **Lebanon** can build a constitutional State capable of independently defining its interests, exercising exclusive authority over sovereign decisions, protecting its citizens, enforcing its laws, anticipating risks, and engaging with its Arab surroundings and regional and international partners through institutions that represent the Republic and its collective interests. **Within this framework, restoring the State remains the strategic choice that brings together every dimension of national security. It is the foundation for moving from structural vulnerability to institutional stability, and from reacting to externally imposed developments toward consciously shaping Lebanon's national future**. **Restoring the State is therefore more than one component of Lebanon's national security policy. It is its central strategic objective and the constitutional and institutional guarantee for safeguarding Lebanese sovereignty, protecting human dignity, and ensuring the enduring viability of the Republic**.

Authors' Short Bio

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