

D/NESA Comments on the draft paper "Lebanon: Elements of a US Strategy."

With a few minor changes the tics on P. 8 of the draft represent the list of objectives I submitted to the working group putting this paper together. I would like to take off from my original list and offer some thoughts on how those objectives might be achieved to take advantage of the change in the status quo brought about by the Israeli invasion.

My original list was:

1. Withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon.
2. Withdrawal of Syrian forces from western Lebanon to the Northern Biqa' Valley.
3. [Withdrawal of Palestinian forces from south Lebanon to their camps in the Beirut area, the shifting of all their heavy weapons to Syria and an agreed upon number of armored elements to be stationed in the camps for security purpose with small arms only.] - A
4. [Disbanding and/or integration into the LAF of all militias, including Haddad's.] B
5. The creation of a strong credible LAF.
6. The election of a strong Lebanese President.
7. [The establishment of an international fund to work for the reconstruction of Lebanon.] C

The first and essential step is to convene in Beirut, as soon as possible, a conference of key Lebanese political figures to agree on the above. The LAF could begin its rehabilitation by taking over the security arrangements in the city, doing away with the "Green Line" that divides the city and enforcing the "no militia" rule.

The Israelis will not leave Lebanon unless the security of their northern borders is guaranteed and unless the new status quo is recognized. I believe the following formulation would satisfy the Israelis while, at the same time, work toward the creation of a strong Lebanese Army and the disbanding of militias. Lebanese militias will be notified that their members will have three choices:

Qualified members can join the LAF, join a regional national guard or turn in their military weapons and retire. In a national guard mode the men remaining in the militias will not wear uniforms or bear arms unless they are in training, or are called out in a civil disturbance or natural catastrophe. Also, they will not cross the lines of their assigned regions (like our own state national guards). They will be responsible to the governor and ultimately the President.

Immediately after the conference of notables in Beirut is over, security for Beirut will be turned over to the gendarmerie and the expanded LAF will move south to take over positions from the Lebanon-Israeli border to the Litani. This newly expanded LAF will need credible arms from the US and will have to have US military training teams (MTTs) to work with them to bring about their rapid improvement. This will show a US commitment, while strengthening the LAF and should satisfy the Israelis' concerns about this area.

The area from the Litani north to Sidon will be covered by an expanded UNIFIL force. The main goal of this force will be to keep heavy weapons from being introduced into this region. This is the one task UNIFIL performed well in the south and should meet Israeli concerns. If this force is vetoed by the Soviets, the Lebanese Government should request an international force structured along UNIFIL lines. The Arab oil states should be tapped to pay for this force. The US should decline to participate in this force citing its involvement in "training" the LAF to the south.

The conference of notables should appoint several committees to deal with the following problems:

1. The Palestinian Committee. This committee should work with the Palestinian leadership to establish camp areas in the Beirut region, in the Biqa' and in North Lebanon near Tripoli. An agreement on the number of armed men per camp and the types of weapons should also be reached. Lastly, it should make it clear that no force will have heavy weapons in Lebanon except the LAF and possibly some Syrian units in the Northern Biqa':

2. The Election Committee. This committee, which would include Muslims, will agree upon a strong presidential candidate who will have wide acceptance.

3. The Military Committee. Will oversee the creation of a strong credible military force responsible to the central government.

4. The Reconstruction Committee. Will draw up a plan for the reconstruction of Lebanon, with the priority on South Lebanon, and seek funding for that plan.

The Syrian position will be a delicate one and should be handled by means of a statement issued by the conference of notables recognizing the special relationship between Syria and Lebanon, the vital role Syria played during the civil war and asking Syria to remain in the Northern Biga' Valley pending the election of a new president who will be empowered to discuss Syrian force presence in Lebanon with the Syrian Government on the basis of understanding each other's security requirements.

If the conference of notables can agree on most of the above, and it should do so quickly, this game plan should be presented to the Israelis with a request that they withdraw from Lebanon according to a schedule that reflects a certain achievement level of each of the goals. The US must urge Israel, in the strongest possible terms, to come up with a reasonable withdrawal schedule soonest to ensure the credibility of the new political situation in Lebanon.

Comment: I believe the Israelis are waiting for us to push for something like this. They can't do it themselves because it would never sell, it would have an Israeli stamp. They have presented us with an opportunity and we must be forceful and creative enough to seize it and act boldly. Consultations with appropriate parties, including the Israelis, would be in order.