
STRATEGIC REALITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE ARMED FORCES:

A Comparative Analysis between the Lebanese, US and UK Armed Forces

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Abstract

This study explores the realities and challenges of strategic planning (SP) in armed forces, focusing on the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) with a comparative analysis of the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) Armed Forces. Through literature review, document analysis, and interviews, the study examines organizational structures, decision-making processes, and factors influencing (SP). Findings reveal common challenges in guidance, resource allocation, technology integration, and geopolitical dynamics, while highlighting unique characteristics of each force. The LAF case study offers insights into challenges in complex socio-political contexts. The study contributes to understanding (SP) complexities, offering insights for policymakers and military planners to enhance armed forces' effectiveness globally.

Key Words

Strategic Planning; Armed Forces; Lebanese Armed forces.

1- Introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

This study explores the reality and challenges of (SP) in the LAF, comparing them with the (SP) methods of the US and the UK Armed Forces. The objective is to identify areas for improvement in the LAF's (SP) and offer recommendations for more effective goal achievement. Despite operating in a challenging environment marked by political, economic, and social constraints, as well as security threats, the LAF is committed to strengthening its (SP) processes¹. The comparison with the US and UK Armed Forces reveals variations in planning comprehensiveness, with the LAF's process focused on operational considerations². However, the LAF's (SP) is evolving to be more diverse and inclusive, emphasizing stakeholder engagement, international military cooperation, and strategic communications. Notably, progress has been made in critical sectors such as counterterrorism and border security³. To build on these efforts, the study recommends the LAF prioritize constructing an enhanced, integrated (SP) framework, considering a broader range of criteria tied to Lebanon's national security objectives. Ensuring that (SP) aligns with the needs of the Lebanese people requires ongoing investments in human resources, communication systems, and strengthened collaboration with civil society.

1.2 Historical Background of Planning

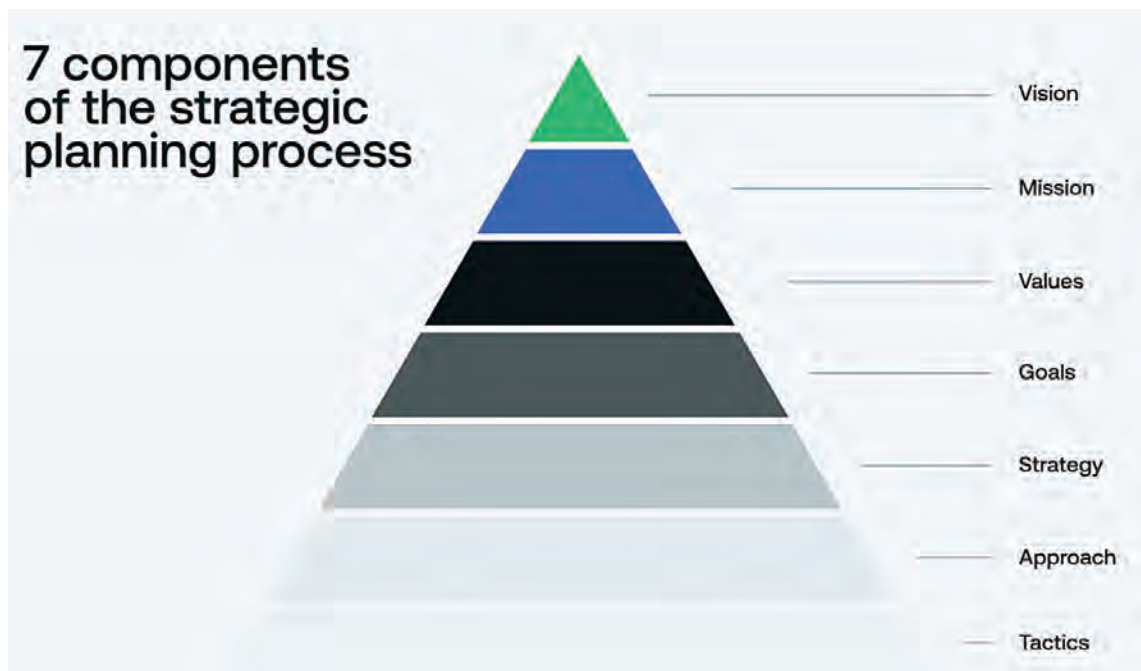
Planning, a fundamental organizational component, traces its roots to ancient civilizations like the Greeks and Egyptians which utilized it for city establishment, structure construction, and public event organization. Modern planning took shape in the early 20th century with Frederick Winslow Taylor's scientific management theories as a way to improve

1- Hokayem, E. (2012). *Lebanon's Army: National Army, Party Army, or Regional Army?* Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved from <https://carnegie-mec.org/2012/10/11/lebanon-s-army-national-army-party-army-or-regional-army-pub-49837>.

Wehbe, K. (2018). *The Lebanese Army and Security Challenges: Between Internal and External Pressures*. *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 9(2), 117-135. doi: 10.1080/21520844.2018.1465635.

2- Jaeger, M. C. (2018). *Strategic Planning in the US Army: A Comprehensive Analysis*. *Military Review*, 98(5), 20-34.

3- El-Khatib, Y., & Waked, R. (2018). *The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Challenges of Border Security*. *The Washington Institute*.



efficiency in the workforce⁴. In the military, historical emphasis on tactical goals shifted in the mid-20th century as (SP) gained recognition⁵. Strategic military planning involves long-term decision-making for organizational objectives in dynamic environments⁶. It has enabled a shift from reactive to proactive security approaches, anticipating and countering future threats⁷. Planning's journey from ancient origins to modern significance is evident in its pivotal role in achieving societal goals and enhancing military standards, showcasing its enduring importance in organizational success.

1.3 Overview of the Situation in Lebanon

Lebanon faces a complex security landscape marked by geopolitical tensions, terrorist threats, and internal challenges. Ongoing tensions with the Israeli enemy and the repercussions of the Syrian crisis, including the displacement of refugees, contribute to Lebanon's vulnerabilities⁸. The LAF plays a crucial role in countering terrorist organizations like ISIS, especially along the eastern borders⁹. However, resource constraints, exacerbated by

4- Taylor, F. W. (1911). *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Harper & Brothers.

5- Henrikson, A. K. (1998). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations*. University of Arizona Press.

6- Patterson, J. W. (2017). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A comprehensive guide*. John Wiley & Sons.

7- Barnett, M. N., & Barker, J. (2017). *Strategic planning for emerging security challenges*. Oxford University Press.

8- Deeb, M., & Herb, I. (2019). Regional conflicts and the security of Lebanon. In R. Hinnebusch & D. W. Lesch (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Middle-Eastern and North African History* (pp. 334-349). Oxford University Press.

9- US Department of State. (2020.). *Security Assistance to Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/security-assistance-to-lebanon/>.



the economic crisis, impede the LAF's capabilities¹⁰. The explosion in Beirut in 2020 highlighted the urgent need for effective (SP) and institutional reforms¹¹. Political divisions and a lack of consensus on national security further challenge the LAF's responsiveness¹². To address these issues, the LAF must urge various stakeholders to develop a comprehensive National Defense Strategy (NDS) aligned with Lebanon's security objectives, considering challenges from the Syrian conflict and potential oil and gas discoveries in the Mediterranean¹³. (SP) is pivotal for the LAF's effectiveness in navigating Lebanon's evolving security landscape¹⁴.

10- Lebanese Armed Forces. (2024). *Orientation Directorate*. Retrieved from <https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en>.

11- Al Jazeera. (2020, August 7). Beirut blast: What we know so far. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/7/beirut-blast-what-we-know-so-far>.

12- Ghazal, R. (2020, August 7). Lebanon's Military: Challenges and Prospects. *Carnegie Middle East Center*. <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/82400>.

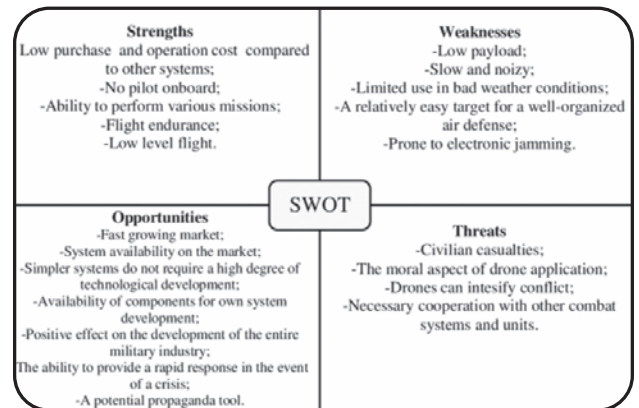
13- Chenab, Z. (2020). Lebanese Army's strategic planning for defense. *Research Gate*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.com/publication/343412575_Lebanese_Army%27s_strategic_planning_for_defence.

14- Al-Saleh, A. M., Haddad, A. M., & El-Fadel, M. (2020). Risk assessment and management of oil and gas activities in Lebanon. *Journal of Sustainable Development of Energy, Water and Environment Systems*, 8(1), 145-161.

2- Literature Review

2.1 The Reality of Strategic Planning in Armed Forces

Strategic planning is a fundamental organizational process aimed at establishing long-term goals and devising strategies to achieve them. O'Regan and Ghobadian (2004) define it as a proactive, forward-looking approach that aligns an organization's resources and capabilities with its envisioned future state, emphasizing



adaptability to environmental changes. The process involves defining vision and mission statements, conducting internal and external analyses, employing Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threat (SWOT) analysis, setting Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART) goals, identifying alternative strategies, creating action plans, executing plans, and monitoring progress¹⁵. Crucially, effective (SP) requires collaboration, involving stakeholders across all levels. This participative approach ensures agreement, objective alignment, and representation of organizational values, fostering continuous learning and adaptability to changing conditions (Bryson, 2018). In governmental institutions, (SP) is indispensable for aligning activities with mission and values. Leveraging strengths, mitigating weaknesses, and addressing opportunities and threats, these institutions set SMART goals based on situational analyses, including SWOT and Political, Economic, Social, and Technological (PEST) analyses¹⁶. Strategies are then developed to enhance service delivery, transparency, accountability, governance, and public participation¹⁷. Implementation involves initiating programs or reallocating resources, followed by continuous monitoring and

15- Bryson, J. M. (2018). *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement* (5th Ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

16- Government of Alberta. (2017). *Strategic planning toolkit for municipalities*. Retrieved from <https://www.alberta.ca/strategic-planning-toolkit-for-municipalities.aspx>.

17- Read, L., & Atinc, T. M. (2017). *Information for accountability: Transparency and citizen engagement for improved service delivery in education systems*.

evaluation to ensure plan relevance and effectiveness¹⁸. Strategic planning proves vital for governmental institutions, enhancing service delivery, transparency, accountability, and public participation. Commitment from leadership, staff, and stakeholders is crucial for the ongoing success of this process¹⁹. Through goal-setting, situational analysis, strategy development, implementation, and continuous monitoring, governmental institutions can effectively fulfill their mission and objectives, ultimately serving their citizens (Anand & Kodwani, 2015).

2.2 Historical background of Strategic Planning in Armed forces

Strategic planning has a long history in the military, dating back to ancient civilizations such as China and Rome. Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" and Julius Caesar's "Commentaries on the Gallic War" are two notable examples of strategic thinking and planning in ancient military history. In the modern era, the U.S. military has developed formalized (SP) processes, which are outlined in Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Planning. Other notable military strategists and theorists include Andre Beaufre, who wrote "Introduction to Strategy" in 1965, and B.H. Liddell Hart, who published "Strategy" in 1941. General Colin Powell also emphasized the importance of joint (SP) in his article "The Essence of Jointness" in the Joint Force Quarterly in 1993. These historical examples and modern practices demonstrate the enduring importance of (SP) in military operations.

2.3 The Benefits of Strategic Planning for Armed Forces

Strategic planning provides a range of benefits for armed forces²⁰:

a. Improved Readiness: Anticipating threats and developing response plans enhances armed forces' readiness for effective and efficient responses better resource allocation: (SP) identifies priorities, optimizing resource utilization to maximize armed forces' effectiveness.

b. Enhanced Coordination: Coordination among different units improves, aligning efforts and preventing duplication of resources.

18- United Nations. (2013). *Guidelines for developing a strategic plan*. Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/guidelines-for-developing-a-strategic-plan.pdf>.

19- Anand, A., & Kodwani, A. D. (2015). Strategic planning in government: A critical review. *International Journal of Management and Decision Making*, 14(3), 205-226.

20- Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2018). *Strategic planning for joint and combined operations (Joint Publication 5-0)*. U.S. Department of Defense. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp5_0.pdf.

c. Improved Decision-Making: Clear strategic plans facilitate informed resource allocation and threat responses, ensuring decisions align with overall goals.

d. Increased Agility: Contingency plans developed through (SP) enhance the armed forces' ability to respond swiftly to unexpected situations.

e. Improved Communication: A concise strategic plan fosters better communication, ensuring a shared understanding of the armed forces' mission and objectives.

f. Better Training and Development: (SP) aligns training programs with the armed forces' objectives, identifying necessary skills for success.

g. Increased Accountability: Clear goals and metrics in (SP) enhance accountability for performance within the armed forces.

h. Improved Morale: Involving everyone in the planning process boosts morale by fostering engagement and investment in achieving mission goals.

i. Enhanced Reputation: Effective execution of a strategic plan contributes to an improved domestic and international reputation, building trust among allies and deterring potential adversaries.

2.4 Reality of Strategic Planning in US Armed Forces

Strategic planning is a cornerstone in aligning national security policy with military requirements, operational planning, and capability development within the US Armed Forces. The absence of strategic plans can result in flaws in joint (SP), including duplications in military capabilities, challenges in rational service function assignments, and difficulties in implementing joint doctrine. The critical responsibility for developing these plans lies with the Chairman, occupying a pivotal position in the (SP) hierarchy. While explicit approval from the Secretary or the President is not statutorily required, the National Military Strategic Plan is regarded as part of the Chairman's military advice to the National Command Authorities. As underscored in "U.S. Department of Defense (SP): The Missing Nexus" by Lovelace Jr. and Young, effective strategic plans, such as the National Security Strategy (NSS), Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), and Military Security Strategy (MSS), are essential for averting flaws in joint (SP).

The layers of planning and decision-making in the US Army encompass a comprehensive process, ranging from the President-outlined NSS to

individual soldiers at the tactical level. The NSS establishes strategic goals and objectives for the nation, guiding the Department of Defense (DoD) and other national security agencies²¹. The (DoD), utilizing the NSS as a foundation, formulates its strategy and guidance, including the NDS and Defense Planning Guidance²². Military services, like the Army, leverage the NDS and DPG to develop strategic plans, with the Army Strategy identifying priorities and objectives²³. Operational planning involves translating strategic objectives into specific actions through campaign plans, and the decentralized Mission Command system is employed for execution at the operational level (Department of the Army, 2020). Individual soldiers at the tactical level carry out specific tasks, adapting to changing situations on the battlefield (Department of the Army, 2017).

Concerning (SP) and budget allocation in the US Armed Forces, the NSS, NDS, and MSS are interconnected and guide resource allocation within the (DoD), including the budget. These documents set national-level strategic goals, which are translated into defense-specific objectives and further refined to guide plans and operations (White House, 2017; Department of Defense, 2018; Department of the Army, 2018). This process ensures the effective use of resources to achieve the most important strategic objectives. In the event of a shortage of funds, the (DoD) must prioritize and make tough choices, involving trade-offs between programs, efficiency improvements, and potential collaboration with Congress and other agencies to secure additional funding²⁴. The goal remains to fulfill the mission and support national security interests, even in times of financial constraints.

2.5 Reality of Strategic Planning in UK Armed Forces

Strategic planning plays a pivotal role in the effective functioning of the UK Armed Forces, with the Ministry of Defense (MoD) overseeing this complex

21- *National Security Strategy*, White House, December 2017. Available online at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

22- *National Defense Strategy*, Department of Defense, January 2018. Available online at: <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Jan/19/2001872886/-1/-1/1/National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.Pdf>.

23- Department of the Army. (2018). *Army Strategy*, July 2018. Retrieved from https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/strategic/army_strategy_2018.pdf.

24- Department of Defense. (2022). *Defense Budget Overview*, February 2022. Retrieved from https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2023/FY23_Budget_Request.pdf.

and rigorous process. Collaborating closely with the Chief of the Defense Staff, the UK Armed Forces' (SP) involves various stages, including setting objectives, assessing the strategic environment, developing options, and evaluating risks. This comprehensive approach is vital for adapting to dynamic global conditions while ensuring the fulfillment of the organization's mission²⁵.

The road map of the (SP) process involves multiple tasks and responsibilities. These include setting strategic objectives, assessing the environment, developing options, evaluating risks, implementing and monitoring the strategy, consulting with stakeholders, developing detailed plans, allocating resources, and reviewing and adapting the strategy²⁶. Ensuring legal compliance is also integral, encompassing seeking approval from the Prime Minister, managing legal risks, and adhering to national and international law²⁷.

Legal compliance is a multifaceted aspect, involving coordination with other government departments, developing policies for legal compliance, and staying abreast of legal developments (GOV.UK. 2023). Additionally, the Armed Forces must uphold human rights, adhere to international humanitarian law, ensure transparency and accountability, and maintain operational security²⁸.

Strategic planning is intrinsically linked to budgeting within the UK Armed Forces. The Defense Planning Assumptions (DPA) serves as a long-term strategic plan, outlining objectives and required resources, subject to regular updates based on geopolitical changes²⁹. Operating within a fixed budget allocated by the government, the UK MoD manages resources

25- Ministry of Defense. (2020). *Joint Doctrine Publication 5-00: Joint Operations*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907844/20200420_JDP_5-00_Joint_Operations_6th_Edition_Public_Release.pdf.

26- Corel Corporation. (2024, January 23). Mind Managers, Guide to understanding strategy maps. *MindManager*. <https://www.mindmanager.com/en/features/strategy-map/#:~:text=A%20strategy%20map%20is%20a,connections%20between%20different%20strategic%20objectives>.

27- GOV.UK. (2023, February 6). *UK defense and security export statistics: 2021*. Official Statistics. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-defence-and-security-exports-for-2021/uk-defence-and-security-export-statistics-2021>.

28- Weiss, T. G. (2015). *The United Nations: before, during and after 1945*. *International Affairs*, 91(6), 1221-1235.

29- UK Ministry of Defense. (2020). *Defense planning assumptions*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/Defense-planning-assumptions-2020>.



efficiently, encompassing equipment, training, and personnel costs³⁰. Capability development is a crucial facet, involving the identification of necessary capabilities and plans for acquisition and maintenance. Risk management is integrated into (SP) and budgeting, encompassing contingency planning and investment in research and development to counter emerging threats (UK MoD, 2020).

Collaboration with allies and partners is a key consideration, with the Armed Forces developing partnerships, sharing intelligence, and engaging in joint operations (UK MoD, 2020). In instances of resource scarcity, strategies such as prioritization, efficiency measures, collaboration, and research and development investment are employed to adjust (SP) and budgeting (UK MoD, 2018). In essence, the interplay between (SP), legal compliance, and budgeting ensures the adaptability and effectiveness of the UK Armed Forces in a rapidly evolving global landscape. The integration of these components is essential for achieving strategic objectives, maintaining legal integrity, and optimizing resource utilization.

30- UK Ministry of Defense. (2018). *Defense expenditure: Plans and budget*.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/Defense-expenditure-plans-and-budget-2018>.

2.6 Challenges of Strategic Planning in US and UK Armed Forces

Strategic planning in armed forces, both in the US and the UK, faces intricate challenges, including balancing long-term goals with short-term objectives, adapting to evolving security environments, managing limited resources effectively, and aligning military strategy with political objectives.

a. For Armed forces in General:

- 1- Balancing Long-Term Goals and Short-Term Objectives: Military planners must navigate the complex task of simultaneously envisioning overarching strategic visions and addressing immediate tactical needs.
- 2- Adapting to Rapidly Changing Security Environments: The rise of cyber threats and unmanned aerial vehicles necessitates constant adaptation to unconventional challenges.
- 3- Managing Limited Resources: Constrained budgets demand careful decisions on resource allocation, prioritization, and trade-offs to optimize effectiveness.
- 4- Ensuring Alignment with Political Objectives: Harmonizing military strategy with broader political and diplomatic goals is critical to avoid dissonance between actions and diplomatic efforts.

b. For the US Armed Forces:

- 1- Resource Constraints: Operating within fixed budgets requires strategic resource management given diverse mission requirements³¹ (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015; Barno & Bensahel, 2017; Krepinevich & Watts, 2015).
- 2- Balancing Global Commitments: Deployment worldwide necessitates balancing objectives and preventing overextension³².

31- Drew, C. A. (2018). Strategy and strategic planning in the US Department of Defense. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41(5), 623-648.

32- Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2015). *National military strategy of the United States of America*. Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/ Doctrine/pubs/jp5_0.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp5_0.pdf).

- 3- Adapting to Emerging Threats: Constant assessment and adaptation are required in response to evolving threats³³.
- 4- Managing Technology: Staying abreast of technological developments and integration pose ongoing challenges³⁴.
- 5- Ensuring Continuity of Leadership: Complex leadership structures challenge maintaining strategic alignment during transitions (Drew, 2018).

c. For the UK Armed Forces³⁵:

- 1- Adapting to New Threats: Responding to emerging threats requires continuous assessment and adaptation.
- 2- Balancing Global Commitments: Diverse global commitments demand careful coordination and resource management.
- 3- Managing Technology: Integrating new technologies into existing systems necessitates continuous investment.
- 4- Ensuring Continuity of Leadership: Hierarchical leadership structures pose challenges in maintaining strategic alignment during transitions.

33- Barno, D. A., & Bensahel, N. (2017). *America's military in transition: The challenge of adapting to new wars, new missions, and new threats*. Cambridge University Press.

34- Krepinevich, A. F., & Watts, B. (2015). *The future of the US military: Implications for national security and strategic planning*. Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

35- House of Commons Defense Committee. (2020). *Beyond endurance? Military exercises and the duty of care*. Retrieved from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmdfence/36/36.pdf>.

3- Overview of the Lebanese Armed Forces

3.1 Historical Background of the LAF

Lebanon gained independence in 1943, leading to the establishment of the LAF in 1945, with a primary mission of internal security and defense against external threats³⁶. However, the early years posed challenges, including political instability and sectarian conflicts. The LAF intervened in 1958, restoring order during a political crisis, and in 1984 underwent restructuring to enhance effectiveness³⁷. Post the Lebanese war in 1990, the LAF played a crucial role in reconstruction, expanding its mission to include law and order, border security, and counterterrorism. It supported the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in maintaining peace in southern Lebanon. Notably, the LAF faced ongoing challenges, particularly the conflict with the Israeli enemy, involving border skirmishes and confrontations³⁸.

The United Nations Security Council's Resolution 425 called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, with the LAF working closely with UNIFIL to implement the resolution. In the war of 2006, the LAF played a pivotal role in maintaining security and implementing the ceasefire agreement, including defining the Lebanon-Israel border³⁹. Facing new challenges like terrorism, cross-border conflicts, and the Syrian refugee crisis, the LAF collaborated with international partners, notably the US and France, to enhance capabilities⁴⁰. In 2014, the LAF countered ISIS's attempt to expand into Lebanon, demonstrating its commitment to security.

Facilitated by the US, talks in 2020 led to an agreement in 2021, and by September 2022, Lebanon and "Israel" announced a deal on the disputed maritime border, a significant achievement for the LAF and Lebanon (Orientation Directorate, 2024). The LAF's dedication has earned respect

36- Lutterbeck, D. (2014). *The LAF: A State within a State?* The German Marshall Fund of the United States.

37- Barak, O. (2009). *The Lebanese army: A national institution in a divided society*. State University of New York Press.

38- Fisk, R. (2005). *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*. Oxford University Press.

39- Hokayem, E. (2012). *Lebanon's Army: National Army, Party Army, or Regional Army?* Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved from <https://carnegie-mec.org/2012/10/11/lebanon-s-army-national-army-party-army-or-regional-army-pub-49837>.

40- Ghattas, K. (2018). *The LAF and the Challenges of Security Sector Reform*. Middle East Institute.

globally. To ensure Lebanon's stability, it must continue adapting to challenges and collaborating with international partners (Ghattas, 2018). The LAF's success underscores its commitment to defending Lebanon and promoting regional peace and stability.

3.2 The Missions of the LAF

According to Decree number 102 dated 16/09/1983, the LAF is mandated with three crucial missions: Defense, Security, and Development. In its Defense Mission, the LAF stands ready to confront external threats, particularly from the Israeli enemy, ensuring constant readiness to defend the nation's borders. In its Security Mission, the LAF combats terrorism, espionage, and organized crime, while also providing relief services and intervening decisively in security incidents. Additionally, the LAF undertakes a vital Development and Humanitarian Mission, contributing to infrastructure building, disaster management, and alleviating citizens' suffering during crises and catastrophes, demonstrating its commitment to national well-being and stability.

3.3 Overview of Strategic Planning in the LAF

The LAF have a well-established history of (SP) and doctrine development. Recent efforts focus on modernization, operational readiness, and strengthening regional and international partnerships⁴¹. The legal framework, governed by the Lebanese Constitution and the National Defense Law (NDL) 102/83, designates the Council of Ministers (CoM) to set general policies, including defense. The (NDL) outlines defense objectives, emphasizing resistance to aggression and safeguarding sovereignty (Orientation Directorate, 2024).



41- Lebanese Armed Forces. (2024). *Orientation Directorate*. Retrieved from <https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en>.



The LAF's multifaceted role includes defense, security, and development, allowing their involvement in social and developmental fields without hindering core functions. The General Defense and Security Policy, decided by the (CoM), guides security measures, while the Supreme Defense Council (SDC) formulates necessary actions. The Military Council contributes to defense policy adjustments. The Minister of National Defense (MND) oversees its institutions, with the Commander in Chief (CINC) directly linked to the MND, responsible for LAF preparation and leading military operations (Orientation Directorate, 2024)

Beyond constitutional and legal frameworks, the LAF has developed its (SP) framework aligned with the NDS and the GDPS. This involves assessing the security environment, identifying threats, formulating objectives, and implementing strategies⁴². Mechanisms for resource allocation, monitoring, and periodic plan reviews ensure relevance and responsiveness to evolving security conditions (LAF, 2019).

42- Lebanese Armed Forces. (2019). *Strategic Plan 2019-2024*. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanese-armed-forces-strategic-plan-2019-2024>.

The LAF prioritizes defending Lebanon's sovereignty, balancing defense and deterrence, and enhancing interoperability with national and international partners. The Lebanese Strategic Doctrine evolves, considering political dynamics, resource availability, and regional security challenges. Notably, the LAF has made significant strides in modernization and training, backed by international partners like the (US), contributing to improved capabilities and counterterrorism efforts⁴³ (Orientation Directorate, 2024).

However, challenges persist, including aging equipment and limited urban operational capacity. Reports from institutions like the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) provide insights into the LAF's capabilities, challenges, and its role in regional conflicts. UK-based research institutions stress the importance of ongoing support for the LAF, emphasizing capacity-building efforts for stability and security in Lebanon⁴⁴ (Royal United Services Institute, 2021; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021). The multifaceted reality of (SP) and the ongoing Lebanese dialogue underscores the need for continued engagement and support for Lebanon's security and stability⁴⁵.

3.4 The Challenges of Strategic Planning in the LAF

Lebanon confronts significant challenges in the (SP) of its Armed Forces (LAF), primarily due to the absence of a cohesive (NSS) and Defense Planning Strategy (DPS). The repercussions of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 in 2004, have sparked contentious debates on the group's role and the imperative for a comprehensive (NDS). Within the context of a politically divided landscape and divergent perspectives on security, achieving consensus becomes a formidable task.

In response to these challenges, President Michel Sleiman proposed a Comprehensive in 2012. This proposal emphasizes the implementation of political measures to fortify state institutions, assert governmental

43- Cordesman, A. H. (2016). LAF: An Overview. *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/lebanese-armed-forces-overview>.

44- Chatham House. (2020). *Lebanon: From Political Crisis to Economic Collapse*. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/03/lebanon-political-crisis-economic-collapse>.

45- International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 2021. *The Middle East and North Africa: Key Trends and Drivers*. <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2021/middle-east-north-africa-trends-drivers>.



authority, and bolster security forces. The economic constraints exacerbated by the 2019 economic crisis have led to constrained military budgets, affecting equipment acquisition and training. Additionally, the LAF's (SP) faces internal coordination challenges and obstacles related to the presidential election process.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a holistic NDS that takes into account Lebanon's geopolitical complexities and economic limitations. Furthermore, fostering collaboration with friendly nations becomes imperative for acquiring technology, equipment, and training. The achievement of political consensus on foreign policy and strategic orientation is indispensable, though this proves to be a formidable task in the current political milieu. President Michel Aoun underscores the inclusive nature of the NDS, advocating for centralized decision-making and decentralized implementation⁴⁶.

⁴⁶- General Aoun. (2008, November 6). *The defense strategy: Obtaining an air defense network and generalizing armed popular resistance*. The Central. <http://www.10452lccc.com/special%20studies/aoun.strategy6.11.08.htm>.

3.5 Strategic Planning Path in the LAF

The LAF embarked on a (SP) trajectory outlined in Decree No. 3771 of 1980. This regulatory framework defines the LAF's organizational structure, featuring Regiments, Brigades, Regions, Air Force, Navy, and Military Institute, all under the oversight of the highest-ranking officer, the CINC. With responsibility for both internal security and defense against external threats, the LAF faced challenges in its early years, prompting intervention in 1958 and subsequent restructuring in 1984 for enhanced effectiveness (Barak, O, 2009).

Guided by Decree No. 3771, the CINC, assisted by the Staff, including the Chief of Staff (CoS) and Deputy Chiefs of Staff (DCoS), plays a pivotal role in operational oversight and activities. The CoS, central to (SP), oversees military operations with support from officers specialized in Planning, Operations, Human Resources (HR), and Equipment. The Directorate of Intelligence, a key component, supplies crucial information for threat assessment and strategy development.

Under the DCoS for Planning J5, the LAF's long and medium-term military policy takes form, involving collaboration with various directorates, such as General Studies, Budget Planning, HR Planning, Equipment Planning, International Military Cooperation, and Strategic Communication. These directorates collectively propose objectives, prepare budgets, manage human resources, and develop equipment plans⁴⁷.

Once endorsed by the (CINC), the strategic plans are implemented by the (DCoS) for Operations, responsible for training forces, coordinating military intelligence research, and managing operational moves. Simultaneously, the DCoS for HR ensures adequate manpower through volunteer programs, mobilization plans, and HR system oversight, while the (DCoS) for Equipment maintains equipment and secures supplies, collaborating closely with the LAF Staff for budget management (Lebanese Army, Military Doctrine).

In this cohesive framework, the LAF's (SP) ensures readiness to fulfill its mission effectively, reflecting the organization's commitment to adapting and addressing challenges throughout its historical trajectory.

47- Lebanese Army. (n.d.). *Military Doctrine*. Retrieved from <http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/military-doctrine>.

3.6 The LAF Capabilities Development Plan

The LAF took a significant step forward with the Capabilities Development Plan (CDP) for 2018-2022, marking a pivotal moment in enhancing its capabilities⁴⁸. This comprehensive initiative aimed at modernizing and developing the LAF across various dimensions, including human resources, training, equipment, and infrastructure. Particularly crucial for Lebanon, lacking a NSS, the CDP provided a clear vision and roadmap to the international community, strengthening the nation's defense capabilities and addressing security threats such as terrorism, border security, and cyber warfare.

Under the leadership of General Joseph Aoun, the LAF Commander in Chief, the CDP was introduced with a five-year plan, emphasizing the need for armies to adapt to internal and external challenges (LAF, "CDP 2018-2022"). General Aoun highlighted the strategic security vision embedded in the plan, encompassing counterterrorism efforts, homeland security maintenance, fighting organized crime, and ensuring border stability. Acknowledging the vital role of international support, both financial and technical, General Aoun expressed hope for complementary funding from friendly nations and UNIFIL forces to realize the outlined developments.

The CDP was strategically designed to address various security assumptions, including potential conflicts with the Israeli enemy and spillover effects from the Syrian crisis. As the sole guarantor of peace and security, the LAF's missions involve defending borders, maintaining internal security, implementing UNSCR 1701, and supporting humanitarian efforts (LAF, "CDP 2018-2022"). Despite limited capacities, the LAF is hailed as a national model for coexistence and enjoys widespread support.

To face strategic and operational challenges, including potential Israeli hostilities, internal conflicts, and the spillover of the Syrian crisis, the LAF must maintain and enhance its capabilities, adapt to UNIFIL's mission requirements, and provide disaster relief assistance (LAF, "CDP 2018-2022"). The LAF's multifaceted role as a defender of the country's integrity, civil rights, freedom, and democracy underscores its critical position in preserving Lebanon's security and stability.

48- Lebanese Armed Forces. (2017). *Capabilities Development Plan 2018-2022*. Yarze, Lebanon.



4- Methodological Framework for Investigating LAF's Strategic Planning

The methodology of this study is pivotal for robust results, detailing methods and enhancing validity⁴⁹. Investigating LAF's (SP), the case study method delves into its processes, comparing with the US and UK Armed Forces for insights into challenges (Creswell, 2014). Data, drawn from interviews with military personnel, strategic experts, and officers, along with focus groups and document analysis (Creswell, 2014), undergoes thematic analysis⁵⁰. This approach identifies strengths, weaknesses, and challenges in LAF's (SP), contributing to a comprehensive understanding (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012).

4.1 Research Design and Approach:

Given the sensitivity of the subject matter and the difficulty in collecting data, this research relied on Qualitative Data Collection Methods (Creswell, 2014). The case study approach was utilized, along with a comparative analysis of the US and UK Armed Forces, to explore the (SP) practices of the LAF and the challenges they encounter.

In addition to the data collection methods mentioned earlier, the personal insights and experiences added a unique and valuable perspective to the research.

4.2 Sampling Strategy and Sample Size:

Understanding the sample's goal is crucial for addressing research questions effectively⁵¹. The sampling strategy ensures representative, reliable, and valid data in the study. For this research on (SP) in the LAF, the goal is to gather rich insights, aligning with the study's objectives and ethical considerations (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Despite the

49- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: A qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. Sage publications.

50- Alhojailan, M. I., & Ibrahim, M. (2012). Thematic analysis: A critical review of its process and evaluation. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*.

51- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). *How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability*. *Field Methods*.

seemingly small sample of 27 participants from a pool of 4,000 officers, this selection, focusing on (SP) expertise, aligns with Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) recommendation for qualitative studies. This approach proves cost-effective, time-efficient, and practical.

4.3 Focus Group Strategy and the Sample Size:

A focus group, guided by a moderator, is a qualitative method crucial for data collection, allowing participants to discuss specific topics⁵². In this study, it offers valuable insights into military personnel's perceptions of (SP) in the LAF. The focus group, comprising directors of the Army staff of planning, covers various aspects, ensuring a deep understanding. With a sample size of 6-10 participants per group, recommended for diverse opinions and effective dynamics⁵³, the focus group method promises rich and nuanced perspectives on the realities and challenges faced by the LAF.

4.4 Data Analysis:

This study employed manual thematic analysis to comprehensively examine the (SP) practices of the LAF, comparing them to those of the US and UK Armed Forces⁵⁴. The manual thematic analysis approach ensured a rigorous and systematic exploration of the data, enabling the identification of patterns and themes. The analysis focused on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the LAF's (SP) practices and the challenges it encounters in implementing effective (SP) processes.

By comparing the LAF to the US and UK Armed Forces, the study gained valuable insights into best practices and areas for improvement within the LAF.

4.5 Ethical Considerations:

In conducting any study project, it is essential to adhere to ethical considerations to ensure that the rights and welfare of participants are

52- Jones, K., et al. (2018). *Utilizing Focus Groups in Military and Veterans Health Research*. *Journal of Military and Veterans Health*.

53- Kitzinger, J. (1995). *Qualitative Research: Introducing focus groups*. *BMJ*.

54- Alhojailan, M. I., & Ibrahim, M. (2012). Thematic analysis: A critical review of its process and evaluation. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*.

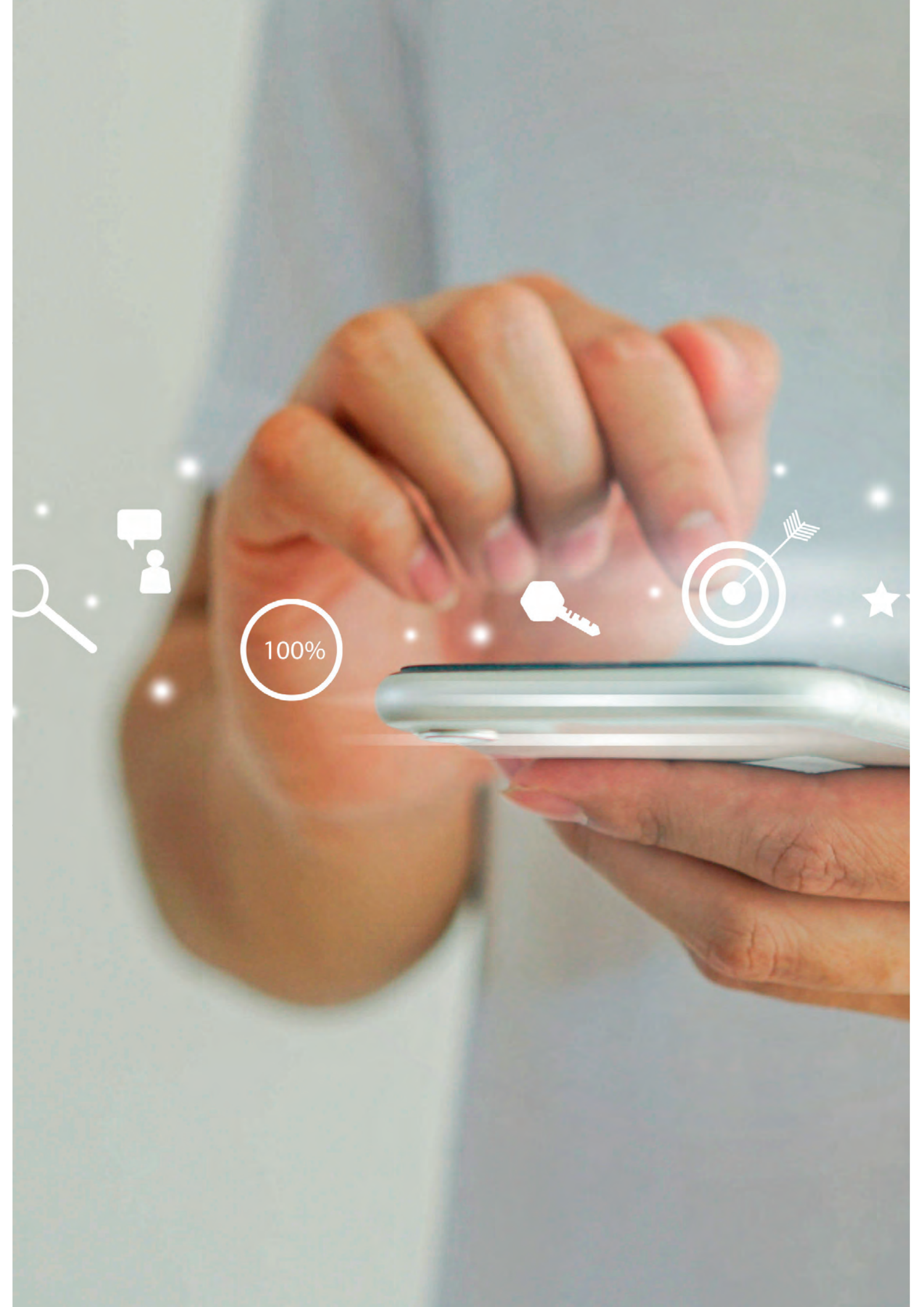
protected, and the study is conducted in a responsible and trustworthy manner. Several ethical considerations were taken into account to ensure the confidentiality, privacy, and safety of the participants and to maintain the integrity and credibility of the study⁵⁵.

The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants before the interviews and focus groups, explaining the study purpose, the expected outcomes, and the potential risks and benefits. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that their participation would be voluntary and anonymous.

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, all personal information, including names and job titles, was removed from the data analysis process. The study also adhered to ethical guidelines regarding sensitive information and potential harm to participants or the organization. The researcher was mindful of the potential impact of the study on the LAF and the potential consequences of disclosing sensitive information.

To address this, the researcher ensured that the data presented in the study was not sensitive or classified and did not pose any risks to the participants or the organization.

55- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). *How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability*. *Field Methods*.



5-Results and Findings

5.1 Introduction

This study reveals results from a case study on (SP) practices in the LAF, comparing them with the US and UK Armed Forces. The gathered data through interviews and focus group explores planning processes, decision-making, resource allocation, and challenges faced by the LAF. Thematic analysis of recorded, transcribed, and summarized interviews, along with comparative insights, offers a comprehensive understanding of LAF's (SP) reality. Valuable contributions from a focus group enrich the findings, emphasizing the significance of this study in uncovering insights and potential lessons from more established armed forces.

5.2 Interviews Results and Proposed Solutions

The analysis of the LAF' (SP) challenges reveals significant issues, including economic constraints, the absence of a NDS, and reliance on external funding. Proposals from the interviews yield key strategies for improvement.

a. Challenges:

- 1- Limited Resources: Lebanon's economic crisis restricts LAF finances, impacting (SP), resource acquisition, and infrastructure.
- 2- No NDS: The lack of a comprehensive NDS hampers goal alignment, affecting resource allocation and coordinated responses.
- 3- Donor Reliance: Economic challenges force heavy dependence on external donors, adding complexity to planning.
- 4- Unstable Politics: Lebanon's volatile political dynamics necessitate continuous adaptation of strategic plans.
- 5- Conflicting Pillars: Legal frameworks coexist with conflicting pillars, hindering coordination and collaboration.

b. Benefits:

The anticipated benefits include improved resource allocation, operational readiness, security stability, decision-making, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability.

c. Proposed Solutions:

- 1- NDS Development: Prioritize the creation of a (NDS) by political authorities.
- 2- Foster Accountability: Instill a culture of accountability to enhance transparency and efficiency.
- 3- Stakeholder Engagement: Actively involve diverse stakeholders for comprehensive perspectives in planning.
- 4- Enhance Communication: Improve internal and external communication for cohesive understanding.
- 5- Training and Placement: Provide training in key areas and align personnel assignments for optimal effectiveness.
- 6- International Partnerships: Strengthen collaborations with international partners for insights and support.
- 7- Reassess Priorities: Regularly reassess priorities, missions, and plans to stay aligned with evolving challenges.

5.3 Focus Group Results and Proposed Solutions

The focus group, featuring LAF Headquarters staff and UK's NSAP advisors, revealed critical challenges and proposed solutions for LAF's (SP).

(1)Absence of NSS: The lack of (NSS) hinders clear defense guidance, leading to challenges in threat identification and strategic decision-making. Without an NSS and (NMS), the LAF faces confusion, misjudgment, and hesitancy in addressing potential dangers.

(2)Leadership Hierarchy Challenges: The LAF's outdated structure since 1983 impedes effective coordination. The proposed solution suggests restructuring, drawing inspiration from US and UK Armed Forces, incorporating specialized roles like personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, (SP), information management, force development, and budget management.

(3)Undervalued (SP): The group stressed the need for ingraining (SP) principles across the LAF. Dedicated training programs were proposed to equip leaders with skills for developing, evaluating, and adapting strategic plans. Incorporating (SP) into routine activities enhances overall effectiveness.

a. Proposed Solutions:

- 1- Commander-in-Chief Guidance (CCG): Develop a CCG document outlining the CINC's vision and armed forces' main missions, enhancing strategic clarity and preparedness. Distribution internally and externally aims to provide a guiding framework.
- 2- Leadership Restructuring: Revise the hierarchical structure by adopting a model inspired by US and UK Armed Forces. This aims to streamline coordination, improve decision-making, and enhance organizational efficiency.
- 3- Institutionalizing Training: Institutionalize (SP) training to empower personnel in risk assessment, strategic thinking, and plan development. This approach ensures informed decision-making and proactive responses to emerging challenges, with a focus on establishing a National Defense College.

5.4 Summary of Findings

a. Realities and Challenges

Common challenges identified by the absence of a NDS, financial constraints, the need for collaboration, and security instability. However, differences emerge, such as legal (SP) issues and an extensive hierarchy within the LAF leadership, uniquely highlighted in the interview results. The economic crisis and funding shortages are expressed differently in each result, emphasizing the importance of donor reliance and austerity measures in the interview results and a broader economic context in the literature.

b. Proposed Solutions

Shared proposed solutions encompass the development of an NDS or CCG, fostering a culture of accountability, enhancing strategic communication, continuous assessment, and ensuring appropriate personnel placement. However, distinctions arise, with the interview results emphasizing the importance of a new staff structure, international partnerships, collaboration with other agencies, and the establishment of a performance management system and joint capability review. These aspects are not explicitly addressed in the literature review but align with organizational restructuring and comprehensive performance evaluation.

6-Conclusion

This study has examined the reality and challenges of (SP) in the Lebanese Armed Forces LAF and compared them to the (SP) methods of the US and UK armed forces. The objective was to identify potential spots for improvement in the LAF's (SP) procedures and to make recommendations to help the LAF successfully achieve its strategic goals more effectively. The LAF functions in a unique challenging environment, with an extensive record of political, economic, and social constraints.

Lebanon has been plagued by violence and instability for decades, including a civil war from 1975 to 1990, Israeli invasions, Palestinian refugees and Syrian displaced people, and ongoing sectarian tensions. Furthermore, the LAF faces a wide range of security threats, including terrorist activity, illegal immigration, and the complexity of extracting oil and gas, and the demarcation of the northern and southern borders.

Regardless of these challenges, the LAF showed a commitment to strengthening its (SP) processes in order to better address these issues. The comparison of the armed forces of the US and the UK reveals certain variations and matches in the (SP) procedures. The LAF's (SP) process is relatively limited and focused on operational considerations, whereas the US and UK Armed Forces have more extensive and comprehensive (SP) frameworks that take into account a broader range of factors such as political, economic, social, and technological trends.

The LAF's (SP) process, on the other hand, is becoming more diverse and inclusive, with greater stakeholder engagement and a greater concentration on international military cooperation and strategic communications. The LAF has also achieved substantial progress in sectors essential to Lebanon's security and stability, such as counterterrorism and border security.

To expand on these efforts, this study emphasizes that the LAF prioritize the construction of an enhanced and integrated (SP) framework that takes into





account an expanded range of criteria linked with Lebanon's broader national security objectives. To guarantee that its (SP) processes reflect the needs and hopes of the Lebanese people, the LAF should continue to invest in HR, foster communication and coordination systems, and strengthen its involvement with civil society.

Overall, strategic planning is essential to the LAF's effectiveness in handling Lebanon's complex security concerns and threats. The LAF is able to boost its capacities, efficiency, and effectiveness in carrying out missions and activities in preserving Lebanon's security and stability through implementing a more comprehensive and integrated approach.

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Strategic Realities and Challenges in the Armed Forces: A Comparative Analysis between the Lebanese, US and UK Armed Forces

Brigadier General Imad Al Hassan

الحقائق والتحديات الاستراتيجية: مقارنة تحليلية بين الجيش اللبناني والقوات المسلحة للولايات المتحدة الأميركية والمملكة المتحدة

العميد الركن الإداري عماد الحسن

يعتمد الدفاع الفعال عن الوطن على استراتيجية عسكرية قوية وقابلة للتكيف. ويشكل التخطيط الاستراتيجي حجر الزاوية في هذا المسعى، إذ يضمن تجهيز القوات المسلحة واستعدادها لمواجهة التهديدات والتحديات الأمنية. تتعمق هذه الدراسة في الحقائق والتحديات المحيطة بالجيش اللبناني. ومن خلال إجراء مقارنات مع عمليات التخطيط الاستراتيجي للقوات المسلحة في الولايات المتحدة والمملكة المتحدة، يسلط هذا التحليل الضوء على الجهود المستمرة التي يبذلها الجيش اللبناني في هذا الإطار.

في حين أن الجيش اللبناني يعمل ضمن سياق جيوسياسي مختلف إلى حد كبير مقارنة بالولايات المتحدة والمملكة المتحدة، فإن القوات المسلحة الثلاثة تواجه بعض العقبات في مساعيها الخاصة بالاستراتيجية. ولا يزال تخصيص الموارد يشكل تحديًا مستمرًا، ويتطلب إيجاد توازن دقيق بين الاحتياجات الفورية وتنمية القدرات على المدى الطويل. علاوة على ذلك، فإن المشهد الأمني نفسه يتطور باستمرار، ما

يتطلب القدرة على التكيف والرغبة في تعديل الاستراتيجيات استجابة للتهديدات المستجدة والصراعات الناشئة. وتضيف الحاجة إلى مواءمة الأهداف العسكرية مع الأهداف السياسية الأوسع طبقة أخرى من التعقيد. غالباً ما تحدد القيادة السياسية الاتجاه الاستراتيجي، وتترك للقوات المسلحة مهمة ترجمة تلك الأهداف إلى خطط قابلة للتنفيذ.

على الرغم من هذه التحديات المشتركة، فإن عملية الدعم الاستراتيجي للجيش اللبناني تختلف بشكل واضح عن نظيراتها في الولايات المتحدة والمملكة المتحدة. في الوقت الحالي، يركز نهج الجيش اللبناني في المقام الأول على الاعتبارات العملية، فهو يعطي الأولوية لتطوير القدرات لتلبية الاحتياجات الفورية، كما هو مبين في خطة تنمية القدرات. وفي المقابل، أنشأت الولايات المتحدة والمملكة المتحدة أطراً شاملة وطويلة الأجل للسياسة الاجتماعية. تتناول هذه العمليات المحددة نطاقاً أوسع من الاعتبارات، بما في ذلك تقييم التهديدات، تطوير وضع القوة والتخطيط للطوارئ لمختلف السيناريوهات.

ومع ذلك، من الواضح أن الجيش اللبناني يتخذ خطوات لتحسين نهجه في مجال الحماية الاجتماعية. فهو يتحرك بنشاط نحو إطار أكثر شمولاً يتضمن مشاركة أصحاب المصلحة، ويشمل ذلك تعزيز التواصل والتعاون مع صناعات القرار. علاوة على ذلك، يدرك الجيش اللبناني أهمية التعاون الدولي في مساعيه الخاصة بالحماية الاجتماعية، ومن خلال الاستفادة من الخبرات والموارد، يمكنه اكتساب رؤى قيّمة وتعزيز قدرات التخطيط الاستراتيجي الخاصة به.

إنّ فعالية جهود الدعم الاستراتيجي التي يبذلها الجيش اللبناني لها وزن كبير في سياق المشهد الأمني المعقد في لبنان. وتواجه البلاد العديد من التحديات الأمنية، بما في ذلك التوترات الإقليمية، والأزمات الداخلية، بالإضافة إلى عملية ضبط الحدود.

في الخلاصة، إن الجهود التي يبذلها الجيش اللبناني لتحسين عملية التخطيط الاستراتيجي الخاصة به هي شهادة على التزامه بحماية أمن لبنان. ورغم أن التحديات لا تزال قائمة، فإن استعداده للاستفادة من الأطر الراسخة مثل تلك التي تعتمد عليها الولايات المتحدة والمملكة المتحدة، إلى جانب تركيزه على الشمولية والشراكة الدولية، يظهر مساراً إيجابياً. ومع استمرار الجيش اللبناني في تطوير نهجه الاستراتيجي، سيكون مجهزاً بشكل أفضل للتعامل مع تعقيدات المشهد الأمني في لبنان وضمان استقرار البلاد وأمنها على المدى الطويل.