

LEBANON GOVERNMENT

Party Portrait

Prime Minister Saad Hariri leads his country through continued periods of political turbulence and instability, heavily impacted by conflict in neighboring Syria. Hariri is drawn from the March 14th alliance, one of the two most prominent political alliances in the country – cutting across sectarian lines to include Sunnis, Christians and Druze. These diverse actors, which have traditionally clashed in Lebanon, have united around the shared goal of ending perceived Syrian interference in Lebanon. Despite persistent insecurity, the Lebanese economy continues to grow and diversify, with a dynamic banking and financial sector. Hariri’s government is also occupied with challenging the political and security threat of Hezbollah, backed by regional power Iran, both within Lebanon and in neighboring Syria. An influx of refugees into Lebanon has strained inter-communal relations, fractious inter-religious ties, and put pressure on the economy to provide sufficient employment for the population.

Key Interests

- Weaken and disarm Hezbollah
- Strengthen the hold of the Lebanese state
- Strengthen the position of the country’s Sunni communities.

Sources of Leverage

Political - Domestic legitimacy and political support from regional and international powers

Regional Strategy

Key representatives from the March 14 alliance have generally supported the Syrian rebellion, considering it a legitimate struggle against Assad’s oppression. The Future Movement is believed to have been subtly supporting the Syrian rebels by transporting arms from the Gulf, mostly Saudi Arabia, to the Syrian rebels to overtake Assad regime and cut the “Axis of Resistance” between Iran, Syria and Hezbollah.

Powerful Individuals

Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Former President Amine Gemayel

Potential Negotiation Moves

Support Syrian Rebellion - Support the Syrian rebellion in an attempt to oust President Assad and weaken Hezbollah’s regional and domestic influence.

Oppose Nuclear Agreement - Oppose Iranian nuclear agreement and the country’s attempt to strengthen its nuclear weapon capabilities.

Internal Conflicts

Recent shifts between the two major coalitions appears to have settled along sectarian lines. Hezbollah-backed president, Aoun, was elected as president in Oct 2016 after few surprising political moves that left March 14 coalition weaker than ever. Hariri’s initially nominated Frangieh, a nominal member of the opposing March 8 alliance in an attempt to encourage Hezbollah to switch its support toward Frangieh and in so doing weaken the alliance between Hezbollah and Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement which forms the cornerstone of the March 8 coalition. However, this strategy failed because Hariri lost his key Christian ally, Samir Geagea (leader of the Lebanese Forces party), who considered the nomination of Frangieh as a betrayal. Consequently, Geagea joined the Free Patriotic Movement within the March 8 coalition and supported Hezbollah’s candidate, Aoun. As a result, the three biggest parties of the March 14 alliance are now divided: The Lebanese Forces party was supporting Aoun, the Future Movement was supporting Frangieh, and the Kataeb Party was refusing to support either of them. Believing that a Syrian-friendly president is better than no president at all, Hariri eventually succumbed to Hezbollah’s candidate and voted for Aoun.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, IAEA, OIC, UN

Allies

SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Partners

EUROPEAN UNION, QATAR, FRANCE

Rivals

IRAN

Adversaries

LEBANON Hezbollah, IRAN, SYRIA Government, ISRAEL

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, GERMANY, JAPAN, KUWAIT, TURKEY, U.A.E., UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

Aid Donor

N/A