



ROYAL DANISH  
DEFENCE COLLEGE

# Lebanon

## Strategic and Military Dimensions



DANISH DEFENCE

Edited by  
Birthe Hansen & Bertel Heurlin

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Lebanon: Strategic and Military Dimensions

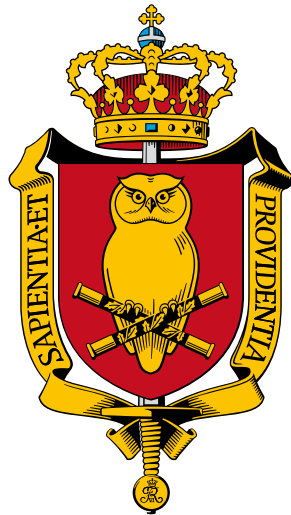
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# Contents

- Contents..... 2
- Preface ..... 3
- Introduction ..... 4
- 1. Lebanon – Changing Regional Role in the Middle East ... 7
- 2. Reflections on the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War..... 17
- 3. Hezbollah – Strengths, Vulnerabilities and Perspectives. 29
- 4. US Policy toward Lebanon – Continuity and change ..... 36
- Lebanon – Facts and Figures..... 43
- Timeline ..... 48
- Fact Box ..... 52
- Key Publications..... 53
- Short Curriculum Vitae..... 55

# Preface

– By Commandant of the Royal Danish Defence College, Rear Admiral Nils C. Wang

Lebanon is among the hotspots in world affairs. A small country struggling for freedom and independence, the fate of Lebanon has and will continue to be influenced by domestic developments and, more importantly perhaps, by regional and international drivers and circumstances. The Lebanon agenda retains an important position in the Middle East as well as in international politics. Alternative outcomes in the form of a renewed outbreak of war or new conditions for peace are analyzed and debated in domestic, regional and international political forums. Denmark is currently among the 30 states contributing to the international military presence in Lebanon, following the international community's decision to strengthen its role there after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War.

The decision to host an international conference "Lebanon: Strategic and Military Perspectives" in September 2010 was a way for a number of Danish institutions to demonstrate their interest in Lebanon's role and position, and to express their concerns about the country's future. One of the results of the conference is this publication, which is based on the presentations and the discussions that occurred therein.

The publication is the responsibility of the Copenhagen Middle East Research Project (COMER), a collaboration between the Royal Danish Defence College and the University of Copenhagen's Department of Political Science. It has been edited by Associate Professor Birthe Hansen and Professor Bertel Heurlin, assisted by former intern at the Royal Danish Defence College Johannes Fromholt and intern at the Royal Danish Defence College Martin Krastrup.

# Introduction

– By Bertel Heurlin and Birthe Hansen

The basic idea of “Lebanon: Strategic and Military Perspectives” is to outline the challenges and opportunities facing Lebanon. In so doing, it seeks to understand, analyse and explain Lebanon’s role in the regional and international contexts, taking into consideration both the fluidity of the ever changing environment as well as more constant factors. Not least, it will investigate the strategic and political problems underlying the mutual relations between the Lebanon Armed Forces (LAF), Hezbollah and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Middle East studies in Denmark are not new. One of the earliest and perhaps best-known examples of this long tradition is the famous Danish scientific expedition to the Arab world in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, whose sole survivor was Carsten Niebuhr. Niebuhr subsequently published *Account of a Journey to Arabia and Surrounding Countries* in two volumes (1774, 1778) in German, which soon gained an international reputation.

Niebuhr travelled through Lebanon in 1766, and wrote a 40-page chapter describing the geographical characteristics and inhabitants of Mount Lebanon. In reference to Mount Lebanon’s remarkable degree of independence from the Ottoman Empire, he wrote:

*“There are many different sects and religions, many of them have sheiks and emirs of their own nations. They rent certain districts of the pashas. But the rent is seldom paid until the Turks are getting the rent with an army, which always will be very expensive”*<sup>1</sup>

He also referred to Beirut, the city then rented by the Druse, as having:

*“... a good harbour, and a fine trade with silk, cotton, oil, and other goods as Mount Lebanon has in abundance”*<sup>2</sup>

This tradition of Danish scholarly interest in Lebanon and the Middle East in general, has continued over the years with numerous historical, archaeological and societal studies. By contrast, Danish political studies and Danish political involvement in Lebanese and Middle Eastern affairs have remained limited. However, this lack of political engagement changed in the post-Cold War era as a result of Denmark’s participation in the first and second international military interventions in Iraq. The Danish government subsequently established a so-called Middle East initiative. In autumn 2009, at the UN’s request, the Danish government dispatched a company of 135 soldiers to Lebanon to join the UNIFIL forces, which had been given an extended mandate after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War.

The Danish military contingent comprises a logistics company from the Royal Danish Army, whose mission is to provide transport and logistical support to the 12,500 UNIFIL soldiers from 30 countries. The Danish contingent is headquartered in Naqura, in Lebanon’s south-west.

Understanding Lebanon and its position and role in regional and international politics is essential for comprehending the wider problems

1 Cit. from the Danish Edition of Carsten Niebuhrs book, *Carsten Niebuhrs Rejsebeskrivelse fra Arabien og andre omkringliggende lande*, volume 1-2, Copenhagen (no printing year): Forlaget Vandkunsten. Translation to English by the authors, p.405.

2 Ibid., p.439.

afflicting the Middle East. Not only is the fate of Lebanon critical to the entire region, Lebanon has long played a very specific role, both regionally and internationally, due to the composition of the society. Charles Malik, Lebanon's one-time ambassador to the UN, hinted at this role in a speech to the General Assembly in December 1948 in which he emphasized Lebanon's unique identity and unique nature:

*"The history of my country for centuries is precisely that of a small country struggling against all odds for the maintenance and strengthening of real freedom of thought and conscience. Innumerable persecuted minorities have found, through the ages a most understanding haven in my country, so that the very basis of our existence is complete respect of differences of opinion and belief"*<sup>3</sup>

This characterization appears convincing. Freedom and tolerance of difference remain vital to Lebanon's continued existence. Despite an often bleak past and a problematic future, the potential for the emergence of a Lebanon that accords with general global norms of the 21st century remains. A prerequisite for this outcome will be the promotion from both within and without of a policy of freedom and tolerance of difference.

However, Lebanon faces a considerable challenge: how to survive as a sovereign, autonomous and independent political unit, guarding its integrity geographically, and demographically.

Survival is crucial. Despite Lebanon having existed in its present incarnation for 90 turbulent years, history teaches us that states are born and that states may die. While still a young nation, it is a fact that 75% of today's nations are younger still than Lebanon. Thus, in Lebanon we have a country struggling to achieve and maintain the basic goals of a nation-state, and a state highly dependent on the development in the region, and not least on the international setting.

While there is no doubt that Lebanon is a small state with limited territory, population and resources, size isn't everything. As Middle East journalist David Hirst argues in his new book *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*, Lebanon is a state to be wary of. This refers to a statement in 1870 by the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. He had in mind states like Belgium, Latvia and all the small German states before the establishment of the *Keiserreich* in 1871. This importance is attributable to the process of "Lebanonization" which may and often does invite foreign intervention of different kinds. The French version, "Lebanesation", is now an official part of the French language, being defined in the latest edition of the authoritative French dictionary Larousse as "*a process of fragmentation of a state as a result of the confrontation between different communities*".<sup>4</sup> During the Cold War, other small states likewise gave their names to features characteristic of diminutive powers during specific historical and geopolitical condi-

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<sup>3</sup> Barry Rubin (ed.): *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict, and Crisis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p.25

<sup>4</sup> David Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*. London: Faber and Faber, 2010, p.2.

tions. These include: “Denmarkization” – to be protected by an alliance and unwilling to share the burden; and “Finlandization” – to accept superpower interference in domestic affairs. Lebanonization seems, however, to be a condition that still characterizes Lebanon. Processes of fragmentation are evident, and, as ever, forces outside the country appear ready to exploit this fragmentation.

While Lebanon has traditionally been the “small state” of the Middle East, other assessments claiming a new status for Lebanon have recently emerged. The leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, announced shortly after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War that Lebanon had been transformed into one of the great powers of the Middle East. This is questionable, to put it mildly. Rather, Lebanon might, as a publicist recently observed, be seen as “...*the place where other’s political, strategic, ideological and religious conflicts are displaced – often escalating in proxy wars.*” Despite this, we still have a Lebanon emphasizing freedom and unity in difference.

The mere process of arranging a conference and preparing a small publication on Lebanon manifested the domestic and external challenges facing Lebanon. A policy among certain institutions of non-participation in international conferences where scholars from all the relevant Middle East powers are represented gave rise to considerable problems in organizing the conference. We are proud of the fact that we ul-

timately succeeded in gathering a team of highly qualified speakers covering a broad spectrum of the dimensions associated with the conference’s theme. We remain grateful for the participants’ wisdom and commitment, and for the high quality of their presentations, which provided a nuanced portrait of Lebanon’s security challenges.

The following five chapters focus on the main actors influencing Lebanese security: the Lebanese armed forces and Hezbollah on the domestic scene, and Israel, Syria, Iran and the United States on the international scene. In the first chapter, Eyal Zisser provides a historical account of the external pressures impacting Lebanon, followed by an examination of current Syrian interests in the light of its principal role and Israeli policy in relation to Lebanon. In the second chapter Husam Mohamad analyses the break out, actors’ strategies, and results of the 2006 conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. In the third chapter, Paul Salem provides a portrait of Hezbollah, outlining its visions, capabilities and role in Lebanese state and society. Chapter four deals with US interests in Lebanon. Here Birthe Hansen describes the changes, continuities, and instrumental character of US engagement, which is currently preoccupied with a focus on the challenges from Iran and thus faces a dilemma regarding the policy towards Hezbollah. Finally, a fact sheet and a small bibliography on Lebanon are provided by Johannes Fromholt.

# 1. Lebanon

## – Changing Regional Role in the Middle East

– By Eyal Zisser

### Introduction

Lebanon is a fragile state plagued by religious splits and divisions. In the past this fragility had turned the country into a paradise for foreign intervention by both regional and international forces. Their aim was to exploit Lebanon's weakness, as well as its special status in the region and its thriving economy, in order to strengthen their own status in both Lebanon and the entire region.

The inclination of the various Lebanese political actors themselves to rely on foreign forces, to invite them to intervene deeply in their country in the hope that this might advance their own special interests, became even more pronounced during the bloody civil war and has revealed itself to be very damaging and destructive. And yet it remains a prominent factor weakening the Lebanese state system.

Lebanon is not a central player in determining the moves made on the international or Middle East chessboards. Still, certain developments and conflicts that take place on its soil have significance not only for Lebanon's fate, but for the fate of the whole region. This was so in the past and remains so today. Thus, Lebanon can be described as a battlefield where the struggle for the Middle East was and is being waged.

### Historical Background

The state of Lebanon, established by the French Mandate authorities, came into existence on 1 September 1920. The aim of the French in sepa-

rating this diminutive parcel of land, just over 10,000 square kilometres from the Syrian Lands (Bilad al-Sham, Greater Syria), was to turn it into a bridgehead from which to spread French culture and values as well as French influence and rule throughout the Middle East.

There was nothing new in the way France viewed Lebanon. It was the way that this territory had been viewed by the West from very early times: as a bridgehead or Western outpost on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. This assumption stemmed from the fact that much of the population of this territory was Christian, being members of the Maronite Christian community. At the beginning of the twentieth century they were the largest community in the country, and they had strong historical ties to France and the Vatican. Indeed, members of the Maronite community encouraged the French decision to establish the Lebanese state in September 1920. They justified their demand for a state by virtue of the Maronites' historical right to Lebanon, their uniqueness and their special relationship with the West, especially France and the Vatican.<sup>1</sup>

However, French hopes of maintaining a presence on the shores of the Middle East were disappointed. In 1943 Lebanon became an independent state, and shortly afterwards the French were compelled to remove their forces from the Levant, at first from Syria and then from Lebanon as well. The Maronites, who several decades before had resolutely demanded that the

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<sup>1</sup> For more see Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon*, Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1965, pp 11-27, 5-59; Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

territory comprising Lebanon be turned over to France, were now the first to turn their backs on that power.<sup>2</sup>

The so-called National Pact of 1943 became the basis of Lebanon's independent existence after the departure of the French. This pact was an unwritten agreement between the various religious communities in Lebanon. It provided for the division among the communities of the young state's positions of power and resources and determined the character of the state in general. With this, the Maronites gave up their concept of Lebanon as a bridgehead or Western outpost on the shores of the Middle East. For its part, the Sunni community, the largest Muslim group in Lebanon at that time, gave up its demand that the country be annexed to the Arab world, and if possible, that it unite with Syria, Lebanon's neighbour to the east.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, an independent Lebanon arose on the basis of a new conception, that of a state bridging between the West and the East, between Europe and the Arab world. Here it was thought that the East and the West could coexist in peace and harmony. Lebanon would no longer be merely a Western bridgehead, but a full-scale bridge aspiring to connect civilizations, cultures, religions and people. And indeed, in many ways during the first decades of its independent existence until the outbreak of civil war, Lebanon

did serve as a kind of bridge, or to be more precise, an enclave in relation to the Arab world surrounding it. Uniquely, it maintained an open and pluralistic system of government and society, thanks to which it enjoyed levels of economic prosperity and welfare, rare in its part of the world.

Then, in 1975, the country spiralled into a bloody civil war. From being a bridgehead or a bridge, it quickly became a violent playground, or worse, a vicious battlefield. The various communities populating the state moved their disputes and power struggles from the corridors of government and the halls of parliament to the streets. Lebanon's neighbours, regional powers, and international great powers all joined the fray, seeking either to gain a foothold in, or even control of, the country. This was especially so given that Lebanon was perceived as the key or the entryway to the whole region. With the inhabitants at each other's throats, "visitors," some at the invitation of locals, some without invitation, began knocking at the country's gates in the hope of entering and gaining some advantage.<sup>4</sup>

Among the powers trying to gain access to Lebanon, Syria deserves special mention. For it, Lebanon represents a kind of courtyard or entrance hall on Syria's western border. For hundreds of years Damascus was a provincial capital in the Ottoman Empire, and the Syrian and

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<sup>2</sup> Eyal Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2000, pp 5-59.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the 1943 National Charter see Raghid al-Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2005; Mas'ud Dahir, *Lubnan, al-Istiqlal al-Si'a wal-Mithaq* (Lebanon, the Independence and the National Charter), Beirut: Dar al-Matbu'at al-Sharqiyya, 1988 (Arabic); Basim al-Jisr, *Mithaq 1943* (the 1943 Charter), Beirut: Dar al-Nahar lil-Nashr, 1978 (Arabic).

<sup>4</sup> See Farid el Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2000; Kamal Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War: Lebanon 1958-1976*, Delmar, New York: Caravan, 1976. See also Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1993.

Lebanese territories were joined in one social and economic unit. However, a Syrian presence only returned to Lebanon following the Lebanese Civil War, which was brought to an end by the October 1989 Taif Agreement. Since then, Damascus has been a king-maker and a powerful influence in its neighbor's affairs. For a brief period Syria seemed to be losing its hold on Lebanon, and in the spring of 2005 it was even compelled to withdraw its military forces from the country. However, as time passed it became clear that Damascus was regaining its position as a key player in Lebanon's national life.<sup>5</sup>

Over recent years Lebanon has become a kind of laboratory in which regional and other foreign powers test their strength and advance their interests in the area. Instead of serving as a bridge connecting civilizations, the state has turned into a bridge by way of which various powers try to penetrate its territory and from there spread their influence and control over the whole Middle East. Lebanon is still a vital and energetic entity enjoying openness and pluralism such as cannot be found in any other corner of the region. However, heavy clouds of radicalism and violence cast their shadow over these qualities and over the economic prosperity that has returned to its shores.

To the regret of many Lebanese, their state has never been able to assume the role of an influential player in the Middle East arena. The fragmentation and disputes among the various

religious communities inhabiting the country prevent the formation of a strong state with an effective central government. Furthermore, the various communities themselves are the parties who, in most cases, invite outside interference in Lebanon's affairs. By choosing a foreign patron, each one hopes to advance its own special interests. Thus, the Maronites invited the French to intervene in the 1920s, the Sunnis teamed up with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1970s, and the Maronites worked with Israel at the end of the 1970s. Today the Shiites are being helped by Iran, and the Sunnis are seeking an ally, first of all, in the West, in Washington or Paris, then in the Arab world, in Saudi Arabia, and finally, in Damascus, with whom, it seems, they are presently trying to restore their relationship.

In this sense nothing has changed in Lebanon. It remains weak, with an unstable political and social structure and the various communities struggling for power. As such, it represents a tempting prize for outside forces seeking to test their strength. It has therefore become a kind of key to the future of the Middle East and a battlefield whose engagements will undoubtedly affect the outcome of several of the more general struggles being waged in the region today. These struggles include: Shiites and Sunnis; the moderate Arab world and radical actors; Iran and the Arab states; Israel and Syria and Iran; the West vs. Iran and its allies in the region; and

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<sup>5</sup> For more on Syrian-Lebanese relations see Adeed I. Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980; Marius Deeb, *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. See also Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2007, pp 172-197; Robert G. Rabil, *Embattled Neighbors: Syria, Israel and Lebanon*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993.

others. As usual, the Lebanese population will pay the price for these conflicts. It even seems that over the years they have become accustomed to serving as pawns on the regional and international chessboards, and have learned how to obtain whatever little profit there is in such circumstances.

### **Syria and Lebanon – between Damascus and Beirut**

In the mid-1940s, even before World War II ended, State Department analysts in Washington began drawing up plans for the future political order in the Middle East. Naturally, their main aim was to ensure the interests of the West and of the United States in particular. A major place in this planning was allotted to the Levant; i.e. the shores of Syria and Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> First of all, these were viewed as the ideal location from which Saudi Arabian oil could be exported to Europe via the Mediterranean. Second, and no less important, the Levant was considered to be a major tier in the defence system the Americans were planning for the Middle East in their efforts to counter a possible Soviet attack in a feared Third World War.<sup>7</sup>

In the eyes of the Americans and others, Syria was the key to achieving control throughout the Middle East. This was because, in contrast to Lebanon, which was at that time a stable and prosperous state, Syria was known for its lack

of political stability and its frequent changes of regime. The British journalist, Patrick Seale, in his 1965 book, *The Struggle for Syria*, declared that whoever ruled Syria would rule the whole Middle East, thanks to Syria's geographical and symbolic centrality, which more than made up for its political weaknesses.<sup>8</sup>

However, over the years the domestic circumstances of the two neighbours changed. If in the 1950s and 1960s the measure of stability clearly inclined in Lebanon's favor, after this it shifted dramatically in favor of Syria. The ratio of populations also changed dramatically. During the 1940s the population of Lebanon numbered around 1.5 million and the population of Syria around 4 million. Today there are around 4 million Lebanese and around 23 million Syrians.

A pivotal transformation began in November 1970 when Hafiz al-Assad, father of Syria's present ruler, Bashar al-Assad, took power in Damascus. He brought Syria political stability such as it had never known before, thereby enabling it to take its place as a regional mini-power seeking hegemony over its immediate surroundings. At the same time, Lebanon plunged into a bloody civil war that cost the country hundreds of thousands of citizens killed and inestimable economic damage.

Lebanon set out on a new path in 1989 with the signing of the Taif Agreement. This accord ended the protracted violent struggle between

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6 The Levant also includes modern Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories.

7 See Eyal Zisser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence*, pp 206-219. See also Irene L. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1985*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

8 See Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965, pp 5-7. See also Andrew Rathmell, *Secret War in the Middle East: the Covert Struggle for Syria*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1995.

the Maronite Christians, who historically had enjoyed hegemony and dominance in Lebanon, and the Sunni Moslems, who constituted the largest Muslim group in the country and who were second in size to the Maronites. In accordance with the Taif Agreement, the representatives of the two communities agreed to divide political power between them. Taif ignored the Shiites. After all, it was fear of a Shiite rise to power in Lebanon which brought the Sunnis and the Maronites to join forces and bring an end to the civil war. The agreement was signed in Taif, Saudi Arabia, a leading Sunni state which gave its blessing to the agreement in a clear indication of its aim to protect the interests of Sunni community in Lebanon.<sup>9</sup> However, the Shiite community could no longer be ignored, as was the case during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Over the subsequent years this community had grown to become the largest in Lebanon, outnumbering both the Sunnis and Maronites. According to various assessments, a little over a third of the Lebanese population is Shiite. It goes without saying that the Shiite community also became the strongest one in the state, thanks to the two militias it produced, Amal, and the more important Hezbollah.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, post-Taif Lebanon was, and remains, a state operating in the shadow of a renewed violent struggle for power and influence, with

the Sunni community on one side and the Shiites on the other. Large portions of the Maronite community, led by General Michel Aoun, have chosen to support the Shiites. This may seem somewhat surprising given that Shiite aspirations appear to be in complete opposition to those of the Maronites. However, it should be noted that historically the active opponents of the Maronites were the Druze and the Sunnis, while the Maronites' relations with the Shiites generally remained good or even very good.

### **Lebanon as a Regional Player in the Middle East – After the Taif Agreement**

Leaving aside Lebanon's domestic matters, we return to the main topic of interest here – the regional struggles over Lebanon. With the end of the civil war and the signing of the Taif Agreement, the theory took hold in both the Middle East and throughout the world that Syria was the key to ensuring stability in Lebanon. Syria had proven that it was the only power prepared to spill the blood of its soldiers in efforts to mediate among, and at times even to confront, the various forces struggling for supremacy in Lebanon, so as to bring about quiet and calm.

The theory of Syria as peacekeeper was shared by the US, the other Western states, Israel, and even the moderate Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia. It is noteworthy that Taif, the city where

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9 See William W. Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions*, Princeton, New Jersey: Marcus Weiner Publishers, 1997. Deirdre Collings (ed.) *Peace for Lebanon: From War to Construction*, Bolder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994. Kail C. Ellis (ed.) *Lebanon's Second Republic: Prospects for the Twenty-first Century*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002.

10 For more on the Shi'ite community in Lebanon see Tamara Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon, Community and Nation-State, 1918-1943*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006; Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2005. See also Na'im Qasim, *Hizballah, al-Minhaj, al-Tajruba, al-Mustaqbal*, (Hizballah: The Path, the Experience, the Future), Beirut: Dar al-Hadi, 2002 (Arabic).

the agreement of that name was signed, is located in Saudi Arabia. The agreement brought the Lebanese Civil War to an end and enabled the country to function stably, all under Syrian auspices.

In contrast to Syria, both Israel and the US came out of their Lebanese efforts battered and bruised. Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982 with the aim of establishing a pro-Israel Maronite regime that would make peace with the Jewish state. However, Israel failed in its effort to control Lebanese affairs and was eventually compelled to withdraw its troops as it was unwilling to pay the price in the blood of its soldiers that the occupation was taking. The US was likewise compelled to withdraw the marines it had sent into Beirut, along with France, after suicide bombers, almost certainly members of Hezbollah, carried out terrorist attacks on the headquarters of the foreign troops causing heavy casualties.<sup>11</sup>

Syria was thus perceived as the power that could ensure stability in Lebanon and, in particular, restrain the Hezbollah organization that had begun to increase in strength among the Shiite population. It is therefore no wonder that Israel held peace talks with Damascus in the 1990s with the working assumption that Syria would receive an international seal of approval for its presence in Lebanon as part of any peace agreement, in return for ensuring that quiet was preserved along the Israeli-Lebanese border.

### **The 2000s – Renewal of the Struggle over Lebanon**

The situation changed radically as the new century began, however. Lebanon once more became an arena of intrigues and struggles, and fertile ground for regional and international powers wishing to try their luck.

First, in Syria, Hafiz al-Assad, founder of the Assad "dynasty," died. When his son and heir, Bashar al-Assad, initially took power he was perceived as a weak and lacklustre ruler, incapable of filling the big shoes of his forceful father. The result was a relative weakening of Syria's regional status, which led certain political actors within Lebanon to think that the time had come to challenge Syria's dominance in their country and perhaps even settle some old scores with the Syrians.

Second, in October 2000 the Second Intifada erupted on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Simultaneously, Hezbollah renewed its activities against Israel along the Israeli-Lebanese border. These stormy events in the Middle East were supplemented by the al-Qaeda terrorist attack on the US on 11 September, 2001. In the wake of this atrocity President George W. Bush proclaimed a war on terrorism, and American forces soon invaded Afghanistan and Iraq.

Third, the regional and international vicissitudes just noted brought US-Syrian relations onto a collision course. Throughout the Bush administration Bashar al-Assad was a persona non grata, and an enemy whom American policy-

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<sup>11</sup> See Anthony Mcdermott and Kjell Skjelsbaek (eds.), *The Multinational Force in Beirut, 1982-1984*, Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991.

makers thought needed to be stymied or overthrown if possible. One of the arenas in which the US tried to counter Assad and Syria was, of course, Lebanon.<sup>12</sup>

Fourth, the policies adopted by the US (i.e. the liquidation of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq) as well as internal regional developments, led to Iran's emergence as a potent regional superpower. Iran began to expand its hegemony in the Persian Gulf area and then deeper into the Middle East, in Lebanon via Hezbollah, and later in the Gaza Strip via Hamas. Regarding Hezbollah, it is important to note its two facets. While on the one hand it was created by the Iranian regime, remains committed to Teheran's worldview, and is heavily financed and armed by the Persian state, on the other hand it represents the Shiite Lebanese population and gives expression to this community's desires and struggles for a more just distribution of the Lebanese pie.

Fifth, the Sunni Arab states have become increasingly alarmed over the Iranian threat and quite concerned about the expansion of Shiite power throughout the Middle East (especially now that Iraq has become a state under Shiite hegemony). The fact that Syria befriended Iran and for several decades now has maintained an alliance with Teheran, caused a deep rift between Damascus and the moderate Arab states. Relations between Egypt and Syria have remained ruptured for many years, and Syria's relations with Saudi Arabia have been in crisis,

among other things, due to the Lebanese question and the support Damascus renders to the Shiite population and the Hezbollah organization.

Thus, during the past five years Lebanon has become the main arena for the regional and international struggles outlined above. All this was in addition to the domestic struggle between the Shiite and Sunni populations that was already developing. The fact that Hezbollah set the tone in the Shiite community, thanks to the economic aid it received from Iran, simply served to transform the Shiite challenge into a matter of significance regionally and beyond.

### **The Cedar Revolution, Spring 2005**

The so-called Cedar Revolution broke out in the spring of 2005 following the murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq Al-Hariri. It would have been just another Lebanese political campaign had not a number of important political forces become partners. These included the Sunni Hariri family and its Saudi allies, who enjoyed American and French backing and were joined by the Druze leader, Walid Jumblatt. He wanted to settle accounts with the Syrians, who were widely known to have murdered his father, Kamal Jumblatt, in March 1977. The "revolution" led to the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, in what seemed at the time to signify the end of Damascus's historical role in that country. However, fissions in the ranks of the March 14 camp, the coalition that had worked against Syria, soon emerged. Furthermore, it soon be-

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<sup>12</sup> See Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, pp 142-197.

came apparent that Hezbollah, with the support of Iran, would be the actor most successful in exploiting the vacuum left in Lebanon by the Syrians' withdrawal. Within a few years, when Hezbollah's domestic opponents proved unable to counter that organization's growing strength, the Syrians, not surprisingly, returned to Lebanon. Moreover, they did so with the blessing of the moderate camp in the Arab world, led by Saudi Arabia, which began once more to view Syria as the stabilizing factor that could bring peace and quiet to Lebanon and, in particular, block Hezbollah and Iran.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Second Lebanese War, Summer 2006**

The Second Lebanese War between Hezbollah and Israel in the summer of 2006 is not perceived in the Arab world – or, to be more precise, is not perceived by the Arab leadership (as distinct from Arab public opinion) – as an additional Arab-Israeli war. Rather, it is viewed as the first round of violence in the Iranian-Israeli conflict, and in this instance most of the Arab regimes sided with Israel. The 2006 fighting inflicted severe damage on Lebanon and its people, including members of the Shiite community. Hezbollah survived the war and, of course, sought to portray its success in surviving as a victory. The price it was forced to pay has nevertheless deterred it greatly for nearly

four years and has led it to make every effort to preserve absolute quiet along the Israeli-Lebanese border.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Struggle for Lebanon, 2008-2009**

In May 2008, Shiite Hezbollah fighters took over Sunni West Beirut. This action represented a new phase in the domestic power struggle for control of the Lebanese state. In the shadow of the Beirut developments, the Doha Agreement was signed later that month on 22 May, 2008. While it helped calm the situation, it also demonstrated the fault lines dividing the country and the potential explosiveness of the situation. Parliamentary elections took place about a year later, in June 2009. The March 14 camp (the coalition of Sunnis, some Maronites, and the Druze led by Walid Jumblatt) once again succeeded in winning a majority. However, Hezbollah's leader, Hasan Nasrallah, warned that whoever won the elections would have to act as if they had never taken place, since decisions were always reached in Lebanon by consensus, meaning that the Shiites and Hezbollah had to be taken into consideration. Nasrallah was hinting at the fact that elections in Lebanon were based on the country's religious composition in which parliamentary seats were allotted according to a communal key. This key far from reflected the demographic changes that had

13 See Eyal Zisser, "Lebanon: The Cedar Revolution – Between Continuity and Change," *Orient*, Vol. 47, No. 4, (2006), pp 460-484. See also Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon: the Assassination of Rafik Hariri and its Impact on the Middle East*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2006; Marwan Iskandar, *Rafiq Hariri and the Fate of Lebanon*, London: Saqi, 2006.

14 See Yoram Schweitzer, "Divine Victory and Earthly Failures: was the War Really a Victory for Hizbollah," in Shlomo Brom and Meir Eliran (eds.) *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007, pp 123-134; Eyal Zisser, "The Battle for Lebanon: Lebanon and Syria in the Wake of the War," in Shlomo Brom and Meir Eliran (eds.) *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, pp 135-150.

taken place over the years, the main feature of which was the Shiites' emergence as Lebanon's largest community.<sup>15</sup>

### Summation

Even after the October 1989 Taif Agreement the Lebanese state remained fragile and plagued by religious splits and divisions. In the past this fragility had turned the country into a paradise for foreign intervention by both regional and international forces seeking to exploit Lebanon's weakness, its special status in the region and its thriving economy, so as to strengthen their own status in both Lebanon and the region. Moreover, the propensity of the various Lebanese political actors to depend on foreign forces, to invite them to intervene in what was happening in their country, in hopes that it would advance their own special interests, revealed itself to be very damaging and destructive. This propensity continued, and became even more pronounced, during and despite the bloody civil war. It remains a prominent factor weakening the Lebanese state system.

While Lebanon is not a central or leading player in determining the moves that will be made on the international or Middle East chessboards, developments and conflicts that take place on its soil often influence not only Lebanon's fate, but the fate of the entire region. This was so in

the past and remains so today. Thus, Lebanon can be described as a field of battle where the struggle for the Middle East was and is being waged. Among the diverse clashes taking place there today, some of which are interconnected, are the following:

Shiite Iran vs. the moderate Sunni Arab states: This struggle is over who will dominate the Arab lands and the Fertile Crescent. In recent years Turkey has joined this contest, following a policy that has been labelled "neo-Ottomanism." Turkey turned its aspirations eastward after it got tired of waiting to be admitted into the European Union. It is now seeking influence and control in the Arab world by exploiting the leadership vacuum prevalent there and the weakness of the Arab states both individually and collectively. It can be assumed that in the long term Turkey and Iran will find themselves at odds, as was the case for hundreds of years when the Ottoman and Persian Empires faced off against each other. However, at present their relations are cordial.

The radical axis vs. the moderate axis: US President George W. Bush called the radical axis, the "axis of evil". It includes Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas. The moderate axis includes the moderate Arab states, backed by the US.

Israel vs. Iran, Hezbollah, and to a certain extent Syria: When considering this clash it should

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<sup>15</sup> See Eyal Zisser, "Hizballah in Lebanon: Between Tehran and Beirut. Between the Struggle with Israel, and the Struggle for Lebanon," in Barry Rubin (ed.) *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict and Crisis*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp 155-176. For more on Iran-Lebanon relations see H. E. Chehabi (ed.) *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the 500 Years*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2006. For more on Hizballah see Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizballah*, Syracuse University Press, 2004; Judith Palmer Harik, *Hizballah, the Changing Face of Terrorism*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2004. See also Hala Jaber, *Hizballah: Born with a Vengeance*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997; Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizballah, Politics Religion*, London: Pluto Press, 2002.

be noted that there is no doubt that Syria is unenthusiastic about the long-term prospect of Hezbollah growing stronger and more firmly entrenched in Lebanon. On the contrary, this development is liable to threaten Syria's status on its neighbour's soil, which historically has been based upon a policy of divide and rule with Syria serving as an intermediary between the rival factions. As a rule, in the past Syria has avoided allying exclusively with any one of the rival factions. Damascus is also far from enthusiastic about Hezbollah's rise to power as a radical fundamentalist group supported by Iran, since Syria continues to identify itself as a secular and Arab state.

However, Damascus also sees itself as being threatened by Israel, and in the past, by the US as well. This being the case, Syria felt and still feels that it has a clear interest in supporting Hezbollah in every way possible and in strengthening its military power, since the immediate threats are perceived as Israel and the US. The emergence of the March 14 camp, supported by Saudi Arabia and the US, was viewed through the same lens by the Syrian leadership, as it suspected that the March 14 Lebanese were working to undermine the stability of the Baath regime in Damascus.

Given this analysis, it is no wonder that Saudi Arabia has changed its view of Syria's role in Lebanon. France and the US also appear to be rethinking Syria's role. Even the government of Israel, led by Ehud Olmert, sought to conduct peace talks with Damascus in the spring of 2008 on the understanding that the price the Syrians would receive in return for peace would be Lebanon. The Syrians would be granted mastery of that state along with, of course, the return of the Golan Heights.

Lebanon in 2010 thus finds itself in the shadow of Syria's return to the status of a major player in its domestic life. For its part, Damascus is currently receiving considerable encouragement from a number of unexpected quarters that just a few years ago fought to remove Syria from Lebanon, starting with Washington and passing on through Riyadh, Jerusalem and even Beirut. Policy-makers in each of these capitals hope that once Syria regains influence and control in Lebanon, it will manage to change the balance of power in the troubled country, which in recent years has swung in favour of Hezbollah and its patron, Iran, and will recalibrate to a more favourable balance in that troubled country.

## 2. Reflections on the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War

– By Husam Mohamad

Over the course of the past four years, much attention has been paid by scholars, policymakers, activists and observers to the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. This chapter explores the war's main events, causes and consequences, and in so doing shows it to be a significant part of a larger unfinished conflict. It also highlights that the deeply-rooted confessional system in Lebanon has largely been sustained by the lack of effective state institutions and procedures that could be employed to resolve sectarian disputes. The primary goal of the chapter is to reveal the crucial strategic miscalculations made by Hezbollah and Israel throughout their latest conflict. While reflecting on the factors that may have motivated Israel to expand its conflict with Hezbollah into a full-scale war, the chapter assesses the war's effects on the Israeli and Lebanese sides. The chapter concludes that while conflict may continue to escalate between Israel and other forces, namely Hezbollah, Hamas and Iran, the US retains the capability to seek a balanced, inclusive and lasting peace settlement that would defuse tensions across the Israeli-Lebanese borders and the entire region.

### Introduction

The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War that lasted from July 12 until August 14 represents the latest

turning point not only in Israel's wars with Hezbollah, but also in relation to domestic disputes originating in Lebanon, and to external conflicts involving Israel, the Arab world and Iran. Since its launching, the war has become the subject of contradictory narratives regarding its root causes, costs and outcomes, not to mention its winners and losers.<sup>1</sup> Media outlets in the Arab world revealed the depth of public admiration for Hezbollah's proven ability and willingness to challenge Israel on the battlefield.<sup>2</sup> Inquiries into the war in Israel also highlighted challenges concerning Israel's management of its war with Hezbollah.<sup>3</sup> While Arabs generally refer to the 2006 war as the Sixth Arab-Israeli War, relating it to their wider conflict with Israel, Israelis describe it as the Second Lebanon War, connecting it to their First Lebanon War with the PLO in 1982. Above all, the 2006 war has been viewed worldwide as a war between proxies, in which Israel is believed to have fought on behalf of the US's War on Terror, while Hezbollah has been accused of promoting Iran's interests in the region. Certainly, the Bush administration linked Israel's escalation of an all-out war against Hezbollah with its post-9/11 War on Terror strategy.<sup>4</sup> Although Iran viewed its backing of Hezbollah as part of its duty to confront Israel, Iran's involvement in Lebanon is often con-

1 See Shai Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," *Middle East Brief*. Brandeis University Crown Center for Middle East Studies, No. 10 (September 2006).

2 See Zahera Harb, "The July 2006 war and the Lebanese blogosphere: towards an alternative media tool in covering wars," *Journal of Media Practice*, 10 (2009), pp 255-258.

3 Avi Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.31, No.1, (February 2008), pp 3-40.

4 Jeremy Pressman, "The United States and the Israel-Hezbollah War," *Middle East Brief*, No.13. Brandeis University Crown Center for Middle East Studies, (November 2006), pp 1-8.

sidered reflective of its growing influence in the region. By claiming that Iran's ambitions are indistinguishable from Arab and Muslim interests, Hezbollah's leaders have made it clear that the alleged Iranian threat to the region is not simply exaggerated by Western countries and their allies in the Arab world, it is nonexistent.<sup>5</sup>

Although many factors may have contributed to fuelling the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, Hezbollah's kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers eventually triggered the war. The kidnapping may have been intended to counter pressure from Lebanese officials and factions interested in disarming Hezbollah, and strengthening the Lebanese government and its army instead. A successful kidnapping, followed by a prisoner exchange between Hezbollah and Israel, would have boosted Hezbollah's popular appeal and blunted calls for its disarmament. Hezbollah further believed that the kidnapping was a legitimate act of resistance against Israel, its main objective being to secure the release of Lebanese prisoners in Israeli captivity. The kidnapping was never intended to lead to a full-scale war with Israel.<sup>6</sup> Although Hezbollah clearly miscalculated Israel's reaction to the kidnapping, which dragged Lebanon into deadly clashes with Israel, the war ultimately contributed to legitimizing Hezbollah as a credible force that is unlikely to be disarmed by any Lebanese

authority, at least not in the near future.

While exploring the 2006 war, this chapter highlights forces and conditions that have contributed to, or resulted from, the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. It draws attention to the political and strategic costs of the war as expressed by Israeli, Hezbollah and Lebanese officials. It also points to miscalculations made by Hezbollah and Israeli leaders with regard to their willingness to risk involvement in a full-scale war. Although a ceasefire agreement eventually ended hostilities between the parties, the 2006 war remains an unfinished one, in which observers continue to speculate on the prospect of another, perhaps yet more vicious, war involving Israel and Hezbollah. As a politico-religious resistance movement, Hezbollah's conflict with Israel will surely continue until perhaps a comprehensive peace settlement is reached between Israel and its adversaries, including Iran.<sup>7</sup> Given that Israel, along with the US, have largely categorized almost all Islamists worldwide within a one-size-fits-all formula that does not distinguish Hezbollah from al-Qaeda, it is also assured that Israel will continue fighting Hezbollah until the latter group is dismantled. This homogenous view of Islamists is often shared by pro-Western Arab regimes.<sup>8</sup> Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan have in recent years lost much of their former credibility and prestige

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5 See Graham E. Fuller, "The Hizballah-Iran Connection: Model for Sunni Resistance," *The Washington Quarterly*, 30:1, pp 139-150.

6 See Joseph Alagha, "The Israeli-Hezbollah 34-Day War: Causes and Consequences," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Volume 30. Number 2 (Spring 2008), pp 1-22.

7 See Abbas William Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizballah-Iran-Syria Relationship," *Middle East Journal*, Volume 62, No. 1 (Winter 2008), pp 32-53.

8 See Husam Mohamad, "US Policy towards Islamists: A Review of Recent Debates" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No.3. (June 2000), pp 567-578.

as influential political and/or military players in the region, in part, as a result of the growing role of non-Arab governments such as Iran and Turkey.

### **Lebanese Confessional Politics**

The distribution of power inside the Lebanese political system has traditionally rested upon a confessional (sectarian) structure that has become well-entrenched within Lebanese politics and society. The confessional system was legitimized by the 1932 census results and the 1943 Lebanese National Pact.<sup>9</sup> This confessional structure fuelled the 1958 and 1975-1990 Lebanese civil wars. Although the signing of the 1989 Taif Accord, or Document of National Understanding, marked an end to the longest civil war in Lebanon, the agreement failed to dismantle the Lebanese sectarian framework. The changes that were introduced preserved the long-held Christian and Sunni Muslim dominance within the Lebanese parliament and cabinet.<sup>10</sup> The political status of the Shia remained unaffected by the accord. The Shia community, which is the largest and most deprived of the Lebanese sects, is represented by Hezbollah and Amal.<sup>11</sup>

While sectarianism has resulted in conflicts

among and between Lebanese religious and political factions, Lebanese hostility toward Palestinian refugees has historically been quite intense. Although they have resided in Lebanon since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Palestinian refugees and their offspring have remained isolated from Lebanese politics and society since the PLO's expulsion from Beirut in 1982.<sup>12</sup> Christian Phalanges in particular have opposed any Palestinian presence or political inclusion in the country, and have adamantly resisted moves to grant Palestinians an official status in Lebanon.<sup>13</sup> The Lebanese government views the Palestinian presence in Lebanon as temporary. Yet the absence of a strong Lebanese state, which serves to strengthen the confessional setting in Lebanon, enabled those affiliated with the PLO and its Lebanese allies in the 1970s and 1980s, along with Hezbollah's supporters in recent years, to exert a powerful influence over the country. In the two decades that followed the PLO's expulsion from Beirut in 1982, Hezbollah was able to claim a monopoly over the country's resistance movement. Since Lebanon's independence, its people have also grown accustomed to identifying themselves more with their local and sectarian identities rather than their national identity.<sup>14</sup>

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9 See Bassel F. Salloukh, "Democracy in Lebanon: The primacy of the sectarian system," in Nathan Brown and Emad El Din Shahin, eds, *The Struggle over Democracy in the Middle East*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, pp 134-150.

10 See Muhammad A. Faour, "Religion, Demography, and Politics in Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No.6, pp 909-921 (November 2007)

11 See Simon Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 29, pp 21-34; See also Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

12 S. M. Akram, "Palestinian Refugees and their Legal Status: Rights, politics and implications for a just solution," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 31, pp 36-51.

13 See George Corm, *A History of the Middle East: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, London: Grant Publishing, 2010 (Originally published in French in 2007), pp 125-126.

14 See Karim Knio, "Is Political Stability Sustainable in Post-Cedar Revolution Lebanon," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.13, No.3, (November 2008), pp 445-451.

### War's Causes and Outcomes

Hezbollah's kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers in 2006 was intended to lead to a prisoner swap similar to the 2004 exchange between Israel and Hezbollah. Hezbollah justified its kidnapping as a legitimate act of resistance to Israel's continued military occupation of Lebanese territories.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Hezbollah admitted to miscalculating Israel's response to the kidnapping. Hezbollah leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, confessed that had he known the scale of Israel's attacks against Lebanon he would not have authorized the kidnapping. In reacting to the Israeli offensive on Lebanon, most Lebanese officials, along with other pro-Western Arab regimes, considered Hezbollah an Iranian proxy, and accused it of acting recklessly and immaturely.<sup>16</sup>

Israel is widely believed to have used the kidnapping incident as a pretext to launch an exhaustive war against Lebanon. Despite its 22-year occupation of south Lebanon, Israel failed, or neglected, to calculate the likely outrage of the Lebanese people to the bombardment of their country, especially after Israel targeted locations with no strategic significance. Many Israeli officials mistakenly assumed that the Lebanese people would react as they had to Israel's war against the PLO in 1982, when there was lit-

tle or no sympathy among the Lebanese masses for the PLO and the Palestinian refugees. Israel's 1982 invasion was aimed at eliminating the PLO and Palestinian nationalism from the country and ultimately at establishing a new order in Lebanon.<sup>17</sup> Israel was therefore able to expel the PLO from Beirut and to provide cover for the Christian Phalanges forces to carry out their Sabra and Shatila refugee camps massacres. Unlike the 1982 war, the 2006 war was intended to penalize Lebanon for Hezbollah's successful kidnapping.<sup>18</sup> Contrary to Israel's expectations and contrary to the 1982 war, the 2006 war served as a rallying force by which the Lebanese people were able to express their solidarity with the Shia community in the south. On the other hand, although they were critical of their government's handling of the war, a majority of Israelis blamed Hezbollah for the tragedies inflicted on Lebanon and its people. Faced with widespread condemnation, Israeli officials maintained their war with Hezbollah was a just one.<sup>19</sup> They also stated that their primary goal was to pressure the Lebanese communities and the Lebanese government into choosing between pursuing a route that would lead to the disarming and dismantling of Hezbollah, or paying a huge price for their inaction against Hezbollah and its allies in Lebanon.<sup>20</sup>

15 See Ohannes Geukjian, "Which State for Lebanon in the Aftermath of the Hizbullah-Israeli War of July-August 2006?," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.17, No.2, (Summer 2008), pp 135-153.

16 See Abdel Monem Said Aly, "The Sixth Arab-Israeli War: An Arab Perspective," *Middle East Brief*. Brandeis University Crown Center for Middle East Studies, No. II. (October 2006), pp 1-8.

17 See Hilal Khashan, "The Evolution of Israeli-Lebanese Relations: From Implicit Peace to Explicit Conflict," *Israeli Affairs*, Vol.15, No.4, (October 2009), p.319, p. 328, p. 334.

18 See Wesley Moore, "A War-Crimes Commission for the Hizbollah-Israel War?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIII, No. 4, (Winter 2006), pp 61-90.

19 See an interview with Michael Walzer versus Jerome Slater, "Was Lebanon a just war?" *Public Policy Research*, (June-August 2007), pp 97-110.

20 See Oded Owenheim and Gadi Heimann, "Revenge in International Politics," *Security Studies*, 17, pp 685-724.

For 34 days Israel launched its heaviest attacks ever on one of its Arab neighbours. However, by the war's end, Israel had failed to achieve the decisive victory it sought against Hezbollah.<sup>21</sup> Despite the destruction inflicted upon Lebanon and its inhabitants, which enraged public opinion across the region, Israeli officials maintained that their offensive was consistent with international laws and procedures concerning the conduct of war. Israel's use of cluster bombs on civilian areas in the south, which were found to have violated international regulations, was justified by the US as a matter relating to Israel's right to defend itself. In spite of the massive destruction they inflicted upon Lebanon,<sup>22</sup> Israeli officials maintained their rhetoric of identifying the Israeli Defence Forces as the most moral army in the world, as if a measurement of world armies' morality ever existed.<sup>23</sup>

Studies associated with both sides of the conflict differed in their assessments of the war and its effects on the Israeli and Lebanese sides.<sup>24</sup> The Israeli air force had flown more than 12,000 combat missions and its navy and army had fired over 100,000 shells, including a considerable amount of cluster bombs that were sprayed across southern Lebanon. Israeli airstrikes destroyed more than 30,000 homes, 9,000 busi-

nesses, 400 miles of road, 80 bridges, five hospitals, and the airport's main terminal. In total, Israel's attacks cost Lebanon over \$15 billion in damages and missing revenues that paralyzed the country and reversed its infrastructure advancements of the early 1990s. Over one million Lebanese people were displaced, with at least 1,200 dead and over 4,000 wounded.<sup>25</sup> Despite Israel's massive attacks, Hezbollah managed to survive the war and to inflict losses upon Israel. It fired more than 4,000 rockets into northern Israeli towns.<sup>26</sup> Israeli fatalities included 158 dead, 119 of whom were soldiers, with 5,000 civilians wounded and 350,000 people evacuated. Among the civilian casualties in Israel were 17 Israeli Arabs whose towns lacked bomb shelters and early warning systems. Israel's financial losses reached \$6 billion.<sup>27</sup> As such, the war not only challenged Israel's military might and its declared deterrent strategy, it also demonstrated to the Israelis that their reliance on military power alone is not a guarantee of lasting security. In addition, the war triggered painful memories of earlier wars in Lebanon's history, and reminded the Lebanese of their country's fragile future.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1701 was issued on August 14, 2006. It

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21 See Shibley Telhami, "Lebanese Identity and Israeli Security in the Shadows of the 2006 War," *Current History*, (January 2007), pp 21-26.

22 See Michael Gross, "The Second Lebanon War: The Question of Proportionality and the Prospect of Non-Lethal Warfare," *Journal of Military Ethics*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp 1-22.

23 Ha'aretz, November 12, 2007.

24 See Jonathan Cook, "In 2006 Lebanon War, Most Crimes were Israeli," *Antiwar.com*, (August 17, 2007); see also Max Boot, "The Second Lebanon War," *Council on Foreign Relations* (September 4, 2006) internet.

25 See Paul Salem, "The Future of Lebanon," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.85, Issue 6 (Nov/Dec 2006), pp 13-22.

26 *The Daily Star*, Friday February 05, 2010. Internet Edition.

27 *Guardian*, Wednesday 30 January, 2008. Internet Edition. Guardian.co.uk.

enforced a ceasefire agreement, reaffirmed UNSC Resolution 1559 (2004), and called for the strengthening of the Lebanese state's authority over the country. By expanding the power of the Lebanese army, along with increasing the number of UNIFIL forces south of the Litani River, Hezbollah's 22 years of dominance over the south was seriously compromised. The resolution also enforced an embargo on arms sales to all groups except those authorized by the Lebanese government.<sup>28</sup> Israel continued its own independent security scrutiny of Hezbollah's compliance with the UN arms embargo, violating Lebanese territory and airspace zones in the process. Hezbollah's reluctance to respond to Israel's provocation may have been due to fears about starting a new conflict with Israel. It may have also been the result of the deployment of Lebanese and UNIFIL troops that were expected to handle security issues on the Israeli-Lebanese borders. Israeli officials used Hezbollah's subsequent unwillingness to attack Israel as evidence that the 2006 war had achieved its goals. Although Israel undoubtedly caused significant damage to Hezbollah's military power and readiness to fight Israel, the 2006 war and its images of destruction ultimately weakened Israel's reputation and strengthened Hezbollah's status.<sup>29</sup>

### **Contesting the War's Legacy**

Over the course of Israel's 22-year military occupation of south Lebanon, Hezbollah carried

out a protracted guerrilla warfare strategy that was inspired by the ideals of Iran's 1979 revolution and the conducts of other resistance movements in the region. As a result of its guerrilla operations, mainly suicide bombing missions, against Israeli targets in south Lebanon, Hezbollah created a situation that compelled Israel to withdraw its forces from Lebanon in 2000. In the decade following Israel's departure, Hezbollah managed, with Iran's vital assistance, to become militarily and technologically the premier armed group in the country. This was evidenced, during the 2006 war by Hezbollah's high degree of readiness, organizational capabilities and discipline in countering the Israeli offensive. Empowered by a fairly advanced weapons system and by controlling ungoverned territories in the south, Hezbollah was able to project an image of a unique non-state actor. Throughout its history as a resistance movement, Hezbollah has repeatedly carried out successful hit-and-run operations against Israeli forces. As a guerrilla movement, Hezbollah continues to operate in an urban war setting, where the distinction between guerrilla fighters and ordinary citizens is often difficult to determine. As a semi-regular military force, Hezbollah has utilized modern technologies that have enabled it to launch attacks deep into Israel's northern towns. In 2006, for example, it launched thousands of technologically advanced missiles, usually associated with conventional military operations, into Israel. Along with combining guerrilla and

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<sup>28</sup> See Gary Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War," *Mideast Monitor*, Vol.1, No.3 (September-October 2006) Internet Edition.

<sup>29</sup> J.P. Hunerwadel, "Israel's Failure, Why?" *The Merge*, (Winter 2007), pp 22-27

semi-regular military activities, Hezbollah managed to secure political gains that improved its status in the Lebanese political system and the confessional framework. Hezbollah's military and political successes were strengthened by the presence of its own satellite media channel, al-Manar, which is viewed by a wide audience across the region. Above all, Hezbollah's military, political, social and media successes have significantly enhanced its popular appeal and have mobilized the Shia community in support of its goals. Hezbollah's performance against Israel's massive 2006 offensive has lately led many in the US defence establishment to explore the Lebanese conflict and Hezbollah's tactics as case studies that may assist them in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup>

Israeli officials used Hezbollah's kidnapping of their two soldiers to justify their massive military offensive against Hezbollah. Hezbollah leaders used Israel's forced withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 as testimony to the success of their guerilla strategy, which was also reaffirmed during the 2006 war. By pursuing this strategy, other occupied Lebanese territories, namely the Shebaa Farms, would eventually be returned to Lebanon. Yet most observers of Lebanese and Israeli politics agree that Israel will not fully resolve its

conflict with Lebanon until Hezbollah is completely disarmed or dismantled.<sup>31</sup> The Israeli war on Gaza in 2009 was in part a means of restoring its battered image following Hezbollah's successful performance during the 2006 war. Although Hamas survived the Israeli onslaught in 2009, unlike Hezbollah, it failed to seriously challenge Israeli forces on the battlefield or to pose a real threat to Israel itself.<sup>32</sup> Undoubtedly, Israel's conflict with Hezbollah, and to a lesser extent with Hamas, remains linked to the larger conflict between Israel and Iran. Thus, Hezbollah's existence as a credible force in Lebanon may eventually be determined by the Israeli-Iranian conflict.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike past Arab-Israeli wars where Israel achieved swift victories against Arab armies, some striking differences were revealed during the 2006 war. Among them were Hezbollah's ability to fight Israel until the war's final day, and its ability to inflict heavy losses on the Israeli side. While the PLO in Lebanon was successful in resisting Israel's attacks for months during the 1982 war, the Israeli offensive ultimately resulted in the PLO's expulsion from the country.<sup>34</sup> Although it was possible for Israel to attain its goals against the PLO, Israel failed to produce similar outcomes in its war with Hezbollah. Israel's strategy of crippling Lebanese infrastructure

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30 Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implication for the Army and Defense Planning*, published by the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2008, pp 11-19 Internet Link: <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/>.

31 See Dov Waxman, "Between Victory and Defeat: Israel after the War with Hizballah," *The Washington Quarterly*, 30: 1 (Winter 2006-07): pp 27-43. *Ha'aretz*, May 22, 2007.

32 Edward Djerejian, "From Conflict Management to Conflict Resolution," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 86. Issue 6 (November/December 2006): Internet Edition.

34 Husam Mohamad, "Palestinian Politics on the Defensive: From Camp David to the Uprising," *Scandinavian Journal of Development Alternatives and Area Studies*, Stockholm, Vol. 16 No. 3 & 4 (September & December 1997), pp 185-214. See also, Brian Parkinson, "Israel's Lebanon War: Ariel Sharon and Operation Peace for Galilee," *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. XXIV. No. 2. pp 63-84.

also failed to generate public outrage against Hezbollah, at least not as it had done with the PLO in 1982. With the demise of the PLO and the absence of Arab armies willing to battle Israel, Islamists such as Hezbollah, backed by Iran and Syria, have become the new rebel activists in the region.

In asymmetrical wars, it is difficult and quite controversial to identify winners and losers.<sup>35</sup> By the end of the 2006 war, however, the Israeli government, backed by the Bush administration, declared Israel victorious. The Israeli public and press expressed mixed views about the war's results and were largely critical of their government's handling of it. The pro-Western Arab regimes of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia criticized Hezbollah's acts in ways that were viewed as pro-Israel and anti-Hezbollah. The majority of Arabs and Muslims across the region, however, felt that Hezbollah succeeded in the war against Israel by launching counter-offensives against its northern region, which had not been threatened since the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.<sup>36</sup> This led Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah to declare a "divine victory".<sup>37</sup> Arab media outlets, including the pan-Arab Al-Jazeera channel, relied heavily on Israeli investigation reports, which were critical of Israeli leaders' conduct

throughout the war.<sup>38</sup> Human rights organizations assessing the war assumed that both Israel's and Hezbollah's conduct amounted to war crimes given that both parties had, directly or indirectly, targeted civilian populations. Both Hezbollah in 2006 and Hamas in 2009 randomly attacked Israeli civilian areas. However, throughout Israel's occupation of south Lebanon, from 1982 until 2000, Hezbollah rarely ever launched direct attacks against Israeli civilians. Israel, on the other hand, has attacked many civilian centers in Lebanon since its early encounters with the PLO in the 1970s.<sup>39</sup>

Following the ceasefire agreement, Israel launched an independent investigation, conducted by the Winograd Commission, to explore its handling of the Lebanon war.<sup>40</sup> The Commission disclosed statements made by Israeli officials revealing their perspectives on, and handling of, the war. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, for instance, admitted that his government had planned to attack Hezbollah prior to the kidnapping incident. In criticizing the government's handling of the war, President Shimon Peres indicated he would not have authorized such a war. The Army Chief of Staff, Dan Halutz, was the subject of particular criticism by the Commission for downplaying Hezbollah's capabilities. Halutz

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35 Eric A. Heinze, "None state Actors in the International Legal Order: The Israeli-Hezbollah Conflict and the Law of Self-Defense," *Global Governance*, 15, pp 87-105.

36 *Atlantic Free Press*, Thursday, July 24, 2006.

37 Dina Matat, "The Power of Conviction: Nassrallah's Rhetoric and Mediated Charisma in the Context of the 2006 July War," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, No.1. pp 122-137.

38 Steven Stalinsky, "Arab Press Outlets Mixed on Hezbollah Victory," *The New York Sun*, August 23, 2006. Internet Edition.

39 For more see an interview with Augustus Richard Norton, "Hizballah Through the Fog of the Lebanon War," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1 (Autumn 2006), pp 54-70.

40 See Efraim Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War," *Middle East Quarterly*, (Summer 2007).

did not expect Hezbollah to have the resources to withstand Israel's attacks.<sup>41</sup> Israel's Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, conceded that Israel's army, the strongest in the region, failed to dismantle Hezbollah.<sup>42</sup> Israeli public opinion surveys revealed that 58% of Israelis thought the war with Hezbollah achieved only a few of its goals. The Winograd report eventually concluded that the Israeli government's decision-making process leading up to the war was flawed. The decision to go to war relied neither on detailed military planning nor on an adequate understanding of the Lebanese setting. The report subsequently criticized Olmert's government for not considering other options in responding to Hezbollah's kidnapping. The objectives of the war were seen by the Commission as either unclear or unachievable by military means. In the Arab world, the results of these investigations were used by the media as proof of Israel's defeat. However, the findings of the Winograd inquiry were not intended as an admission of Israeli defeat, but were rather part of an oversight procedure reflective of the institutional practices followed by the Israeli political system.<sup>43</sup>

By 2008, the anxiety produced by the war escalated into open confrontation between Hezbollah's supporters and pro-Lebanese government factions. At the start of the crisis, Leb-

anese officials stated that they were unaware of Hezbollah's kidnapping. Hezbollah justified not releasing information to the government on the basis of its security needs. While the Lebanese government demanded that it be the only entity in Lebanon to hold a monopoly over the use of force, Hezbollah instead assumed a monopoly over the Lebanese resistance movement to Israel.<sup>44</sup> As events progressed, Nasrallah gave Prime Minister Fouad Saniora an ultimatum to form a unity government that would enhance Hezbollah's representative status. In response, many within the Lebanese political establishment accused Nasrallah of nurturing sectarian conflict. As Hezbollah moved to storm west Beirut in response to the government's decision to shut down its telecommunications system, the already tense situation erupted into violence in May 2008. This crisis was finally resolved by an agreement negotiated between the Lebanese factions in Qatar.<sup>45</sup>

At the international level, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were among the first to identify Israel's and Hezbollah's attacks on civilians as war crimes. Several human rights groups also condemned Israel's excessive and disproportionate use of force, along with its use of cluster bombs on towns across Lebanon's southern border.<sup>46</sup> Israel was also accused of

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41 *Ha'aretz*, November 1, 2009. Internet Edition.

42 See, Joseph Alagha, "The Israeli-Hezbollah 34-Day War: Causes and Consequences", 2008, *Ibid.* pp 3-4.

43 See Abdel Monem Said Aly, "The Sixth Arab-Israeli War: An Arab Perspective", 2006, *Ibid.* pp 3-4.

44 See Mats Warn, "Forever at the Crossroads: Hizbollah's combined strategies of accommodation and resistance," in Clive Jones and Sergio Cagnani, eds., *Israel and Hizbollah: An asymmetric conflict in historical and comparative perspective*, London & New York: Routledge, Tyler and Francis Group, 2010, pp 124-146.

45 Stacy Philbrick Yadav, "Understanding What Islamists Want: Public Debate and Contestation in Lebanon and Yemen," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Spring 2010), pp 199-213.

intentionally destroying food and medical supplies to force Lebanese civilians to flee, thus creating a killing box. In response to criticisms, Israeli officials admitted to targeting Lebanon's infrastructure to incite public condemnation of Hezbollah. Although Lebanese infrastructure was indeed crippled, a majority of the Lebanese people condemned Israel, as opposed to Hezbollah, for their country's obliteration.<sup>47</sup> The Bush administration's reaction to the war was influenced by its grand strategy formed in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. Bush's policy toward the Muslim world was centered on the War on Terror and the promotion of democracy in the region.<sup>48</sup> Israel's attempt to dismantle Hezbollah was thus considered helpful to the US strategy against Islamists. The US also considered Hezbollah an obstacle facing the democratization of Lebanon, and a challenge to the US-sponsored Middle East peace process. Faced with this situation, the US prolonged the war by deliberately delaying the issuance of the UNSC Resolution 1701, in the hope of giving Israel ample time to achieve its military goals.<sup>49</sup>

To understand the depth of the relationship between Palestinian Islamists, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah, one needs to

look back to the early 1990s. In 1992, Hezbollah welcomed hundreds of exiled Palestinian Islamists who were expelled by Israel into south Lebanon. Palestinian Islamists were later allowed by Israel to return to the Palestinian territories, by which time they had learnt new guerrilla fighting techniques, including suicide bombings, from Hezbollah's encounters with Israeli military forces in southern Lebanon.<sup>50</sup> As for the Palestinians living in Lebanon during the 2006 war, about 10,000 displaced Lebanese civilians who had fled from their towns in the south were given shelter by Palestinians in camps across southern Lebanon.<sup>51</sup> The Gaza war between Israel and Hamas in 2009 was to a large extent influenced by the results of the unfinished Lebanon war of 2006. Along with trying to restore its military reputation, Israel aimed at achieving a clear victory in 2009. Israel declared that its main goals were to end Hamas's rocket attacks and to restore its established deterrent strategy which had been brought into question by the war with Hezbollah.<sup>52</sup> Israel, along with the Egyptian government, also sought the return of Palestinian Authority (PA) rule in Gaza. Israel achieved a clear victory in Gaza as Hamas, unlike Hezbollah, lacked the resources and geographical depth to confront Is-

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46 *The Washington Post*, Sunday, April 20, 2008.

47 See Sergio Catignani, "The Israeli-Hezbollah War: A Preliminary Assessment," *Global Strategy Forum*, 2006, Internet Edition. [www.globalstrategyforum.org](http://www.globalstrategyforum.org).

48 See Husam Mohamad, "Democracy Promotion in Arab Politics," *Journal of International and Area Studies*, Vol.14, No.2, (December 2007), pp 103-118.

49 See Imad Mansour, "Washington and Hezbollah: A Rare Convergence of Interests," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, (Summer 2010), pp 82-104.; See also *The Washington Post*, Monday, April 6, 2009, Internet Edition.

50 See Adam Shatz, "In Search of Hezbollah," *The New York Review of Books*, April 29, 2004, Internet Edition. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2004/apr/29/in-search-of-hezbollah/?pagination=false&printpage=true>

51 See Adam Ramadan, "The Guests' Guests: Palestinian Refugees, Lebanese Civilians, and the War of 2006," *Antipode*, Vol.40, No. 4, pp 658-677.

52 See Matt M. Matthews, "The Israeli Defense Forces Response to the 2006 With Hezbollah," *Military Review*, (July-August 2009), pp 41-52.

rael on the battlefield. Based on its failed military strategy in the Jenine refugee camp in 2000, Israel did not risk any ground confrontation with Hamas in 2009, fearing that it may lead to Israeli casualties that would overshadow a swift victory. At the conclusion of the war, Hamas was able to survive as a weakened entity. On the other side of the conflict Hamas's rival, the PA, was perceived by most Palestinians as having supported Israel and Egypt's joint attempt to strangle the Gaza Strip.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusions

Given the absence of an Arab-Israeli peace accord, continued conflict between Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas could erupt for the slightest reason at any point in the near or distant future. Based on both Lebanese and Israeli domestic circumstances, Hezbollah is unlikely to initiate risky acts similar to the 2006 kidnappings that might lead to another full-scale war.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, Hezbollah may be forced to act against Israel if Iran is dragged into a conflict with the US and/or Israel. Presently, Iran continues to invest heavily in arming Hezbollah for its own possible future confrontation with Israel. Hezbollah's integration into the Lebanese political system may further its politicization, thus making it difficult for Hezbollah to jeopardize its rising power and authority within Lebanese pol-

itics.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the more integrated they are into the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), the less likely Hezbollah's militias would endanger the country's stability. However, the inclusion of Hezbollah's militia into the Lebanese army and Hezbollah's integration into the Lebanese political system may never succeed without the establishment of an all-inclusive peace settlement with Israel that must incorporate Iran. Given Hezbollah's expected resistance to any form of assimilation of its militias into the LAF, it may be more realistic to pursue a framework whereby Hezbollah's forces continue to exist and operate, only now under the supremacy of the LAF and not Hezbollah leadership.

In the meantime, the Lebanese political system remains fragile, with Hezbollah continuing to enjoy superpower status in the country.<sup>56</sup> One of the factors potentially challenging Lebanon's stability and Hezbollah's status are the anticipated findings surrounding the 2005 assassination of Lebanon's former Prime Minister, Rafiq Al-Hariri.<sup>57</sup> Given that Hezbollah now represents Lebanon's most powerful military and political force, it is possible that a direct accusation against Hezbollah may lead to a crisis situation between Lebanon's Sunni and Shia factions.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, unless Israel initiates an attack against Hezbollah and/or Iran, it is possible that

53 See Yezid Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On," *Middle East Brief*, No. 41., Brandeis University Crown Center for Middle East Studies, (March 2010), pp 1-9.

54 See Giora Eiland, "The Third Lebanon War," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 11, No.2, (November 2008), pp 9-17.

55 See Trita Parsi, "Iran and Israel: The Avoidable War," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIV, No.3, (Fall 2007), pp 79-85.

56 See Nicholas Noe, ed., *Voices of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nassrallah*, London: Verso, 2007

57 *Ha'aretz*, November 11, 2010. Internet Edition.

58 *Ha'aretz*, November 18, 2010. Internet Edition.

Syria may play a role in constraining Hezbollah from reacting to charges relating to its alleged involvement in Al-Hariri's assassination, which would further threaten Lebanon's stability.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, under the Bush administration, the US granted Israel the license to play an unrestricted role against Hezbollah and Hamas. Thus far the Obama administration has refrained from showing as much support for a potential Israeli attack

against Iran, Hezbollah, or Hamas. However, depending on the US domestic setting, where the Obama administration is largely perceived as being soft in its approach to Islamists worldwide,<sup>60</sup> and where its current handling of Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas does not find much support, it is possible that Obama also will provide unrestricted license to Israel on issues concerning war and peace in the region.

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59 See Anthony Shadid, "In the Middle East, No Politics but God's," *New York Times*, October 23, 2010. Internet Edition. See also *Al-Akhbar*, November 15, 2010. Internet Edition.

60 See Alan Ramsay (2009) "The Obama Administration and the Middle East," *Contemporary Review*, Vol.291, No.1693, (Summer 2009), pp 137-148.

# 3. Hezbollah

## – Strengths, Vulnerabilities and Perspectives

– By Paul Salem

### Summary

This essay examines the origins, development and current outlook of Hezbollah. It examines the conditions in Lebanon within which the organization has thrived and the regional conditions that have enabled it. It also identifies some of the challenges facing Hezbollah and explores the organization's outlook and perspective. The essay ends with various endgame scenarios.

### Background to State Fragility

The fragility of the Lebanese state is due to two main factors: the precarious internal balance between sectarian factions, and the conflict between large regional players like Israel, Syria and Iran that use Lebanese territory as a proxy battleground. The collapse of Lebanese sovereignty happened in the late 1960s in the wake of the 1967 war. In that war, Syria lost the Golan Heights to Israel and began to invest in proxy warfare. The Palestinians also realized that the Arab states would be unable to defeat Israel, and opted for guerrilla – or what is now known as asymmetric – warfare. Jordan and Lebanon were identified as the two arenas from which to wage this asymmetric war.

While the Jordanian regime confronted and defeated the Palestinian armed groups in 1970, the Lebanese government and armed forces were too divided to take decisive action. Syria and Egypt encouraged the move toward proxy war in both Jordan and Lebanon. Jordan was able to reclaim its national sovereignty, while Lebanon lost it. In 1969, the Lebanese government, under Egyptian and Syrian pressure, signed an agreement with the PLO effectively

ceding sovereignty over much of its territory to the PLO and sanctioning it to conduct cross-border operations against Israel from Lebanon. The PLO became a state within a state in Lebanon, controlling much of the country's south. Differences over the growing role of the PLO, as well as internal disputes, led to the collapse of the Lebanese state in 1975. The PLO was driven out of Lebanon by Israeli forces in 1982. However, the vacuum left by the PLO's departure and the Israeli occupation of parts of south Lebanon unleashed new dynamics.

### Hezbollah's Rise

The Shiite community was first mobilized by the Shiite cleric, Imam Musa Sadr, in the 1960s in a "Movement of the Dispossessed". As state order collapsed in 1975, Sadr gave his blessing to the formation of an armed wing of the movement, called the Legions of the Lebanese Resistance, which formed the acronym Amal (which also means Hope). Sadr mysteriously disappeared on a visit to Libya in 1977, leaving the leadership of the community up for contestation.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran redefined the course of politics in the Lebanese Shiite community. The new Iranian government sent aid and advisors to its coreligionists in Lebanon, and by 1983 had set up Hezbollah, separate from the Amal movement, and modelled closely on the ideology and profile of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

With the PLO gone, Hezbollah and Amal fought pitched battles for control of south Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs. While Syria and Iran were allies throughout this period, the former

backed Amal while the latter backed Hezbollah. By the end of the decade they had negotiated a distribution of roles, with Amal given the main role in Lebanese politics and Hezbollah given the main role in armed resistance against Israel. Amal's leader, Nabih Berri, represented the Shiite community in the talks leading up to the Taif Agreement in 1989 that ended the Lebanese Civil War, and has been speaker of the Lebanese parliament since then. For its part, Hezbollah was given virtual exclusivity over armed resistance and has become the main non-state armed group in the country since then.

### **Fighting Israel**

Throughout the 1990s Hezbollah fought the Israeli occupation in south Lebanon. This meant ongoing armed skirmishes throughout the decade but also led to Israel launching two larger armed operations in Lebanon in 1993 and 1996. Both operations were in alleged response to Hezbollah's shelling of northern Israel, and led to hundreds of civilians and combatants dead and wounded, mainly on the Lebanese side, extensive displacement of civilians as well as large-scale destruction in southern Lebanon. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak finally ordered the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Lebanon in May 2000 after 22 years of occupation.

Hezbollah hailed the Israeli withdrawal as a great victory, claiming that it was the first time an Arab side had forced an Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory by force and without concessions. Other parties in Lebanon congratulated Hezbollah on its achievement, but then argued that with the occupation over, Hezbollah

should begin disarming. Hezbollah, with backing from Syria, which dominated and controlled Lebanon at that time, responded that the Israeli withdrawal was not complete and that armed non-state resistance therefore had to continue. They raised the issue of the disputed Shebaa Farms, the small town of Ghajar, and the issue of Lebanese captives in Israeli jails as reasons not to disarm and to maintain the struggle.

### **The Syrian Withdrawal and the 2006 War**

The Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in April 2005, after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri, left Hezbollah exposed. It came under intense pressure from the Bush administration who considered Hezbollah a primary target in the War on Terror, and Israel was looking for a way to deal a blow to the heavily armed group now that Syria was out of Lebanon. The occasion came in July 2006 when Hezbollah conducted a cross border raid killing and abducting Israeli soldiers. Israel, with backing and encouragement from the US, launched a large scale war whose declared objective was to cripple Hezbollah once and for all. Hezbollah surprised Israel with advanced missile systems and elaborate tunnel and defensive tactics. Hezbollah kept launching missiles into Israel throughout the war with Israel unable to stop them, and fought Israeli forces to a standstill. The war ended in stalemate and a ceasefire, with neither Israel nor the US able to claim victory, and with Hezbollah claiming that in standing up to Israel and the US it had won a "divine victory". Indeed, no Arab army had previously acquitted itself so effectively against Israel.

The 2006 war greatly raised Hezbollah's profile in the Arab and Muslim world. It also raised Hezbollah's value in Syrian and Iranian eyes as a major and proven regional force that could help provide deterrence and balance against Israel. They rapidly rearmed Hezbollah with more and higher quality missiles and other military equipment, and Hezbollah has been preparing for the eventuality of another large-scale war with Israel since then.

In relation to internal Lebanese politics, the country became deeply split between supporters and opponents of Hezbollah. Supporters argued that Hezbollah was the main defender of the country and should remain fully armed, while opponents charged that it was just a proxy for Syria and Iran, and was dragging Lebanon into repeated, unnecessary and devastating wars against Israel. Attempts by the government to curb Hezbollah's influence in May 2008 led to a Hezbollah backlash, in which Hezbollah fighters occupied most of Beirut and forced the government to back down. The clashes ended quickly, but involved Hezbollah in sectarian Shiite-Sunni clashes that it had not been involved in before. Far from being exclusively a national resistance movement, its opponents, especially in the Sunni community, now saw it as a Shiite militia out to impose its community's will over other communities in the country. In the shadow of similar but much bloodier events in Iraq, Hezbollah's weapons had taken on new meaning.

Since then, Hezbollah's opponents have realized that Hezbollah, as well as its regional patrons Syria and Iran, are not going to go away anytime soon. As the US pulled back from its

policy of outright confrontation with Hezbollah, Syria and Iran even at the end of the Bush administration, and Saudi Arabia repaired its relations with Syria, opponents of Hezbollah in Lebanon have also rebuilt their relations with Syria and have joined Hezbollah in a national coalition government.

### **The Threat of the International Tribunal**

This coexistence is recently being shaken by the expected announcement of indictments related to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) set up to investigate and adjudicate that and other subsequent assassinations has made no formal announcement, but diplomats and national leaders in the known agree that they expect the STL to issue indictments before the end of 2010 and that they will name members of Hezbollah.

Hezbollah views this as a grave threat and provocation. Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah responded pre-emptively, accusing the STL of being manipulated by the US and Israel to fabricate evidence and undermine the Lebanese resistance. Nasrallah denounced the credibility and legitimacy to the tribunal and its indictments, and called on Saad Hariri, the Lebanese Prime Minister and son of the assassinated former prime minister, to denounce the tribunal and to cut ties between the Lebanese government and the tribunal. The prime minister, as of this writing, has stood firm. This standoff has led to grave fears in Lebanon of another explosion of violence between Hezbollah and its opponents that might trigger a more drawn out sectarian Sunni-Shia confrontation.

### **Strong, but with a Troubled Future**

Despite its obvious overwhelming power, Hezbollah finds itself in troubled waters. The indictments against it appear set to come out regardless of what the Lebanese government does or does not do. This will hurt Hezbollah's image in the Arab and Muslim world, and provide new fodder for Israel, the US and other international enemies to use against it. Looking forward, it faces a future of either war or peace. If another war breaks out with Israel, which cannot be ruled out for 2011, this war will be more devastating than 2006, and regardless of how badly Hezbollah hurts Israel, the toll on Lebanon and on Hezbollah's own Shiite community will definitely be devastating. In the unlikely alternative scenario that peace breaks out – i.e. if Palestinians and Israelis make progress toward agreement, and Syria and Israel resume serious peace talks – Hezbollah is not in a good position either. Hezbollah knows that in any serious talks between Israel and Syria, Hezbollah will be on the table not at it. Israel and the US will demand the Syrian weakening of Hezbollah in exchange for the Golan Heights in any peace deal.

So, despite its obvious power, Hezbollah has made many enemies within Lebanon and still has strong enemies in the region. Whether war or peace break out in the region, Hezbollah will face considerable challenges. Its preferred option would be a continuation of the status quo of no war and no peace. But this precarious stability has never lasted long in the Middle East.

### **Perspectives and Policies:**

Hezbollah is a hybrid organization. It is a Leba-

nese party serving Lebanese political and defensive ends; at the same time, it is an extension of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and a proxy force for both Iran and Syria. While the overwhelming bulk of its funding, arming and training comes from Iran, its leadership and membership is entirely Lebanese. This dual reality impacts its perspectives and policies on both internal and regional affairs. In effect, it has to fulfil multiple purposes in order to maintain its domestic and regional support.

### **Sources of Power and Conflicting Agendas**

Internally, it draws its influence from many sources:

- It has proven to be an effective fighting force that has liberated Lebanese villages from 22 years of Israeli occupation and has fought Israel effectively when they struck again.
- It has about 60,000 people on its payroll, and given family size in the Shiite community – between 5 and 6 – it effectively directly supports around 300,000-360,000 people.
- In addition, it provides a wide array of social services – in health, education, agriculture, welfare, etc. – that ensures an even wider client base.
- It is an effective political party that has participated in all local and national elections since 1992, and has a strong position as the main political representative, along with the Amal movement, of the Shiite community.
- It has a strong religious message and has captured the Shiite Islamist revival that was spurred by the 1979 revolution in Iran and has touched Shiite communities throughout the region.

- With Iran's rise, Hezbollah's close relations with Iran have given the party additional prestige within Lebanon and the Shiite community.

Hezbollah has long abandoned its early goal, expressed in the mid-1980s, of wanting to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon along the lines of the Wilayat al-Faqih model in Iran. It realizes that Lebanon is a multi-communal state in which such a proposal would not be possible. Nor is the Lebanese Shiite community very eager to try out the Iranian model for themselves. While they remain supportive of Hezbollah's resistance and political and social-service roles, and have become increasingly religious and conservative, they are not attracted by the repressive religious totalitarianism that they see in Iran.

Hezbollah's domestic constituency imposes numerous goals and limitations on it. Before the Israeli withdrawal of 2000, Hezbollah's armed activity was fully in line with Shiite interests of liberating the occupied villages of the south, and driving the Israelis out of the country. After the Israeli withdrawal, Hezbollah supporters were eager that Hezbollah retain its arms in order to deter Israel, but did not have an interest in another war with Israel.

Hence, the war of 2006 put a lot of political pressure on Hezbollah. The war had been triggered by what even Nasrallah admitted was a miscalculated operation on July 12. It was an unnecessary war, and although Hezbollah fought extremely well, much to the pride of its supporters, the war left the Shiite areas of south

Lebanon and the southern suburbs devastated. Hezbollah is very aware that although it has overwhelming support among the Shiite community, that community cannot bear another war with Israel. In other words, the needs of Hezbollah's domestic constituency are clashing with the needs of its regional backers.

From another domestic perspective, Hezbollah has accepted the power-sharing formula of government that was negotiated in the Taif Agreement in 1989. Although many commentators claim that the Shiite community is dissatisfied with its share of power, and some in the Shiite community feel this way, it is important to note that Hezbollah has not put forward such a viewpoint nor has it pushed for a renegotiation of the Taif Agreement or a larger role for its community in the Lebanese state. Hezbollah's main function, both for its domestic and regional constituency, is as a large armed resistance movement counterbalancing Israel; at this point it mainly wants to be left alone by the Lebanese government, rather than claim a larger share in it. It effectively has more power than the Lebanese government and its national army, and likes to keep things that way. It is conceivable that at some later date, the issue of the Shiite community's share of power might be raised by Hezbollah or the Amal movement. However, it is important to note that this has not been the case to date.

### **Regional Roles**

For Iran, Hezbollah's role is rather clear. Beyond the general support that Iran is happy to extend to Shiite communities throughout the Islamic

world in a show of solidarity, and beyond the support that it extended in the 1980s and 1990s to overturn Israeli occupation, Iran's support of Hezbollah enables it to extend its influence in the Levant, inject Iranian power into the Arab-Israeli arena, and to use this organization as one of its main tools of deterrence against any Israeli or American attack on Iran. This last function is the decisive one. Regardless of its nuclear program, the leadership in Iran is convinced that Israel and the US are looking for ways to attack or topple them. After Hezbollah's effective war-fighting in 2006, Tehran knows that a heavily armed Hezbollah is one of the main factors that makes Israel and the US think twice about attacking Iran. As the US parks aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf to threaten Iran, Iran parks Hezbollah on the Lebanese-Israeli border to threaten Israel, and indirectly, the US. This deterrence does not need to be used to be effective. In other words, Iran is happy to keep Hezbollah fully armed without it having to harass or undertake active operations against Israel. While Iran will not push Hezbollah to trigger another war with Israel, Tehran has enough influence over Hezbollah to push it to retaliate against an Israeli or American attack on Iran if it so desires.

For Syria, the role of Hezbollah is slightly different. Syria does not need Hezbollah to make it a player in the Arab-Israeli conflict or for it to have influence in Lebanon. Nor does it need Hezbollah as a deterrent, because Syria is not at real risk of attack by Israel or the US. Actually, Syria and Israel have had a quiet understanding over the rules of their proxy war-games for sev-

eral decades now. For Syria, Hezbollah's main benefit was to harass Israel continuously and to make it pay a continuing price for its ongoing occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights. Hezbollah served this function well throughout the 1980s, 1990s and up until 2006. However, since then Hezbollah has not been in a position to launch a single operation against Israel. Israel now has a peaceful front both with Lebanon and in the Syrian-occupied Golan Heights; a situation that is unsatisfactory to Damascus. Syria's only option has been to encourage and enable Iran to rearm Hezbollah well beyond pre-2006 levels, so that even if Hezbollah might no longer be able to harass Israel, at least the larger threat from Hezbollah – which can now probably hit all major cities and installations in Israel – should put renewed pressure on Israel to come to the negotiating table over the Golan Heights.

These multiple roles and constituencies impose complexity on Hezbollah's agenda. It wanted to liberate the south and has done so. It wants to deter Israel from attacking Lebanon, but has not succeeded in doing so, instead triggering an Israeli war in 2006, and risking triggering another one in the years to come. With regard to Syria and Iran, it is currently serving their needs simply by being heavily armed and standing by. But this is a precarious balance, and while another war with Israel might not hurt Syria and Iran, it would undoubtedly devastate Lebanon and Hezbollah's domestic constituency in particular. Thus, Hezbollah has to tread a fine line between selling its ability to play the game of deterrence and brinkmanship, without actually stumbling into another war.

### **What Hezbollah Wants**

Currently what Hezbollah wants is fairly clear. It wants to be left alone to maintain its independent military power in Lebanon. It wants to be a player in the Lebanese state, but does not want to integrate its army with the Lebanese national armed forces. It wants to play a major regional role in counterbalancing and deterring Israel, but does not want another war with Israel. It wants the Lebanese government to denounce and break its relations with the Special Tribunal on Lebanon. It does not want Israel and Syria to make peace (which is unlikely anyway). In effect, it wants to consolidate and maintain the status quo both in Lebanon and in the region. This status quo has served it well. It would do considerably less well were this status quo threatened – either by war or by peace.

### **Unlikely Endgames**

At the end of the day, Lebanon's compromised security and Hezbollah's major regional role is the result of ongoing conflict in the region. The key conflict is that between Israel and Syria. This conflict destroyed Lebanon's sovereignty back in the late-1960s, and will continue to prevent Lebanon from regaining its sovereignty for decades to come if left unresolved. In other words, the only development that would put Lebanon on the road to regaining sovereignty would be a full peace treaty between Syria and Israel. In such circumstances, Syria would no longer need Lebanon as a proxy arena. Indeed, Syria would actually force Lebanon to join the negotiations and sign peace with Israel. In so doing, Syria would lean on Hezbollah to accept the new

peaceful status quo. However, given that Syrian-Israeli peace appears very unlikely, Lebanon's lack of sovereignty and Hezbollah's freedom of movement look to be assured for years and maybe decades to come.

Another development that might impact Hezbollah is the even unlikelier eventuality of a grand bargain between Iran and the US. While such a grand bargain was apparently floated by Iran in 2003, without a US response, it appears very unlikely from the perspective of current realities. In the unlikely event that such a bargain is struck, Iran might conceivably agree to disarm Hezbollah in exchange for gains elsewhere. However, this would not fully resolve the problems of Lebanese sovereignty and proxy warfare across the Lebanese-Israeli border. Even if Iran and Hezbollah resign their roles there, Syria will find others to play the proxy role – perhaps using Palestinian groups again.

Both scenarios outlined above are very unlikely. Israel seems uninterested or unable to achieve real peace either with the Palestinians or with the Syrians, and it is unlikely that the current Iranian leadership will negotiate a grand bargain with the US. Therefore, Hezbollah is likely to remain a major player in Lebanon and the region for the foreseeable future. Another war will not eliminate Hezbollah, but will devastate Lebanon again. Only peace can provide a permanent solution.

## 4. US Policy toward Lebanon – Continuity and change

– By Birthe Hansen

Lebanon is a small country that, while not producing a single barrel of oil, manages to produce serious political conflicts. This set of circumstances fuels curiosity about US interests in Lebanon, about what influences US policy toward Lebanon, and about the current policy dilemmas the US faces in Lebanon. Scholars and commentators point to different factors: the wish to preserve a pro-Western democratically-elected government in the region, the risk of another civil war in Lebanon, and the risk of conflict spreading from Lebanon to the rest of the Middle East.

In general, US policy toward Lebanon is strongly influenced by broader global and regional concerns. As a small, vulnerable and troubled state, Lebanon has the potential both to cause, and be subject to, regional problems. In combination with wider US concerns, this potential encourages an instrumental US policy that is dominated by alliance concerns and which seeks to avoid further fuelling Lebanon's domestic problems. Currently, Iran's nuclear program dominates the agenda and is linked to Lebanese politics via Iranian support for Hezbollah, an organization which challenges the Lebanese state's monopoly on violence. Furthermore, Lebanon has to be dealt with in the geopolitical context of the Levant, with the US's close ally Israel to the south, Syria to the east, and the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean to the west.<sup>1</sup>

From 2005, US support for Lebanon dramatically increased in spite of its hitherto limited engagement. This increased support followed

Syria's withdrawal, which took place after international pressure and political changes in the Lebanese leadership propelled by the so-called Cedar Revolution. Both developments were in accordance with the US strategy for a new Middle East, and it was hoped that Lebanon would become a visible part of this renewal. However, developments soon took a turn for the worse, and the US has had to reconsider its policy toward Lebanon. Not least, it faces the challenge of how to manage Hezbollah in association with managing the even bigger challenge from Iran.

The main issue to consider in relation to US policy toward Lebanon is therefore US strategy toward Iran with due emphasis on Israel and Syria. Centered in the midst of these concerns stands Hezbollah: partly integrated into and partly undermining Lebanese politics; partly acting locally and partly acting independently; partly sponsored and inspired by Iran and partly a dual relationship with Syria; and an enemy to Israel.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the US is engaged in efforts to fight terrorism globally, and Hezbollah – in addition to its other activities – is a terrorist organization. Cooperating with Iran, being a terrorist organization, threatening Israel, and at the same time being a key player in Lebanon and to Lebanese stability: how then should the US deal with Hezbollah?

### **Attention to Lebanon**

In the middle of October 2010, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad once again chal-

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1 For an in-depth analysis of the Lebanese relationship to Israel and Syria see Zisser, chapter 1.

2 For an in-depth assessment of Hezbollah see Salem, chapter 3.

lenged US policy makers. He was touring the southern part of Lebanon in order to whip up support among Hezbollah and its supporters. Indeed, he succeeded. On the one hand, the US was dealing with an international provocation. Ahmedinejad's visit to south Lebanon was portrayed as the inspection of an Iranian base by several media organizations, and the visit was clearly well suited to stir up tensions in an already volatile context. Furthermore, Ahmedinejad chose to demonstrate his ability to get close to the border with Israel, thereby incarnating his threatening statements against the Jewish state. The fact that the Lebanese head of state, Michel Suleiman, had invited Ahmedinejad to Lebanon was a clear rebuff to US support for the Lebanese establishment. On the other hand, the US had no interest in provoking further tensions in Lebanon. Nor did the time seem right to abandon Lebanon, given the potential for it to fall completely into the hands of Iran.

In the wake of 9/11, the Bush administration adopted a security strategy explicitly built on democratization in the Middle East. At that time, Lebanon was categorized by scholars as a "fragmented democracy".<sup>3</sup> While setbacks have taken place during the first decade of the 21st Century, Lebanon still has a democratically-elected government and is one of the few 'democratic bastions' in the region. In reference to the 2009 Lebanese parliamen-

tary elections, in which the Saad Hariri-led March 14 coalition with its vision of Lebanese sovereignty maintained its majority, Schenker stated that:

*"Given what is currently at stake in Lebanon – the survival of the only pro-West democratically-elected government in the Arab world – continued US interests and robust bilateral ties are all but assured for the immediate future. The defeat of March 14 would be a real setback for both Washington and Beirut".*<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, in a 2009 article emphasizing the fragility of the Lebanese state and the regional context, Time warned that *"[I]f the Obama administration can't pull off a regional peace deal, there may well be another civil war"*<sup>5</sup>

The 1975-1989 Lebanese Civil War was bloody and brutal, and since the 1989 Taif Accord, which ended the conflict, numerous incidents that reflect continuous tensions have taken place. Most notably, the rise of Hezbollah in south Lebanon has illuminated deep political divisions. Moreover, the conflict between democracy and authoritarian rule in the Middle East has widespread roots, and domestic conflict in Lebanon may spread to other countries in the region as a result of these neighboring states' interests and proxy affiliations: *"[O]ther members of the Islamo-nationalist camp might join in...And in this*

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3 Clement M. Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

4 David Schenker, "America and the Lebanon Issue" in Barry Rubin (ed.): *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict, and Crisis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 234.

5 Time 19 April 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1892260,00.html#ixzzoylqGidns>, accessed 1 September 2010.

case, the 'small state' of the Middle East would no longer be its battleground, or, at least, no longer its only one".<sup>6</sup>

While these factors are of great importance, US policy toward Lebanon appears to be predominantly instrumental; i.e. primarily shaped by other regional goals rather than by specific Lebanese issues. In addition, this instrumental approach seems to be consistent across time. During the Cold War, the bipolar balance of power and related top regional objectives shaped US policy. After 1989, US policy toward Lebanon has been guided by the management of regional objectives and the prevention of major international problems – the Iranian nuclear program in particular. Still, the US has had a Lebanese engagement prior to the emergence of Iran's nuclear program – an engagement which has so far resulted in two interventions.

### **US Middle East Policy During the Cold War**

As the Cold War spread to the Middle East, American policy toward Lebanon became driven by superpower rivalry. Basically, this policy was characterized by special arrangements less important than strategic relations and political cooperation.<sup>7</sup> As such, it was instrumental, and was often determined by US relations to Israel and Syria, and the peace process. The US aimed at preventing Soviet gains in the Middle East by suppressing the rise of or take-over by leftist regimes in the region, and by preventing

and controlling conflict escalation (which might ultimately rise to a nuclear level). It sought to do this, particularly after 1973, by engaging in proxy-proxy conflicts, by promoting its own interests and ideas, and by protecting its allies. This engagement was often reactive rather than proactive, that is, it took the form of responding to local and regional developments rather than initiating them.

The US first intervened in Lebanon in 1958 in accordance with the Eisenhower Doctrine, so as to prevent regime change in the Soviet Union's favor. Fear of Nasserism, and the impact of the formation of the United Arab Republic, compelled the US respond to an insurrection in Beirut following a request from then Lebanese President, Camille Chamoun. The deployment involved 14,000 marines who were soon withdrawn.<sup>8</sup> The US intervened again in 1982-84. Following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent evacuation of PLO forces, a multinational force including 1,400 marines was deployed. However, after serious Hezbollah terrorist attacks against the force inflicted heavy losses, President Reagan ordered a troop withdrawal. The 1984 withdrawal blew back many years later as it served to encourage the likes of al Qaeda; a superpower could be forced to retreat by means of terrorism. For the rest of the Lebanese Civil War, US policy remained cautious, marked by the fear of being caught in an internal quagmire. It focused on providing support

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6 David Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*. London: Faber and Faber, 2010, p. 427.

7 Alan R. Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1991, p. 115.

8 See David Schenker, "America and the Lebanon Issue" in Barry Rubin (ed.): *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict, and Crisis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

for the proxies involved in the conflict so as to prevent escalation and the total disintegration of the Lebanese state.

These two interventions were carried out despite Lebanon's low priority in the US's national security strategy. The 1958 intervention was carefully planned, and aimed at preventing a Nasserist take-over following escalating domestic unrest. It thus reflected a response to regional developments in the name of the global balance of power. While the aims of 1982-84 intervention were less clear and it was less well-planned, it likewise took place in a Cold War context of escalating tensions following regional conflict. As such, both interventions related to the super-power balance of power, were limited, and aimed to stabilize Lebanon. They therefore constituted dramatic but exemplary representations of the general US approach during the Cold War.

In summary, US policy toward Lebanon during the Cold War was instrumental under the headlines of: 'must not rock the Middle East boat', 'must not drain US resources' and 'must not fully disintegrate'.

### **The New World Order**

After the end of the Cold War, the US's global role changed. Balancing Soviet power was replaced with the demanding task of international management,<sup>9</sup> and specific challenges such as preventing horizontal nuclear proliferation, failed states and terrorism became more urgent. Among the most prominent management chal-

lenges confronting the US in the new Millennium was Iran's nuclear program. So far, despite negotiations and sanctions, Iran has continued to enrich uranium and to insist on its right to do so. If Iran crosses the nuclear threshold, the US will face substantial problems: a changed balance of power in the Middle East, a strengthening of opposition to the world order, and an increased threat to traditional allies. Furthermore, other states in the region may be tempted to respond by building up their own programs. If so, US management efforts to prevent horizontal proliferation would be severely complicated and hampered. Currently, Iran's nuclear policy is therefore the prism through which US policy towards challenges in Lebanon should be viewed.

However, the post-Cold War era began without this challenge, and in the case of Lebanon, developments appeared rather encouraging. In 1989, the parties agreed on the Taif Accords<sup>10</sup> that ended the civil war, Lebanon engaged in the Madrid peace process, and Syria was rewarded by the US with a free hand in Lebanon for its participation in the Desert Storm campaign. In this way, "the Lebanese time bomb was temporarily defused by a US-endorsed Pax Syria that guaranteed stability in exchange for Beirut's submission to its neighbor's domination".<sup>11</sup>

During the 1990s, the US devoted less attention to the Middle East. Hezbollah began to build up in Lebanon, Syria and the US fell out again, and Syria increased its control in Lebanon. While the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Wash-

<sup>9</sup> Birthe Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*. Richmond: Curzon, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Deirdre Collings (ed.), *Peace for Lebanon?* Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Malley and Peter Harling, "Beyond Moderates and Militants". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89:5, September-October, 2010, p. 20.

ington induced a more active US policy emphasizing democracy in the Middle East, the situation in Lebanon had already begun to deteriorate. Lebanon returned to the US agenda following an aggravation of US-Syrian tensions as a result of Syria's perceived complicity in the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri, and in allowing foreign insurgents to cross the Iraqi border. These developments increased US and international pressure on Syria, which, when combined with the emergence of the Cedar Revolution in the wake of domestic discontent over the Hariri assassination, contributed to Syria's withdrawal and to changes in the Lebanese political leadership. After the 2005 Syrian withdrawal, the US increased its Lebanese engagement to historically high levels diplomatic, economic and military support. Militarily, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) benefited from US efforts to weaken Hezbollah and to promote the Lebanese state's monopoly over the use of force.

The chance for progress in Lebanon, however, was soon halted by the 2006 conflict with Israel, which was triggered by Hezbollah's kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers. The post-conflict process implied that the US was compelled "not to break Lebanon in the process of trying to fix it".<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the US had to contend with the danger that a "war with Iran would necessarily include Lebanon".<sup>13</sup> Although Hezbollah claimed victory in the 2006 conflict, it was severely weakened in terms of military capabilities and has not dared to challenge Israel since. The US

did not engage directly in the aftermath of the 2006 conflict. Instead, a strengthened UNIFIL II was deployed. Despite its initial skepticism about UNIFIL II, owing to its rather unsuccessful record and manifested in the negotiations prior to UNSC Resolution 1701, the US ultimately drafted the resolution with France.

### **Continuity and Change**

Both before and after the Cold War, US policy toward Lebanon has been instrumental, in the sense of being subordinate to global and regional concerns. Furthermore, it has predominantly been of a limited priority. During the Cold War, the main concern was the superpower balance of power and to avoid conflict escalation. The main challenge to these concerns originating from Lebanon was the civil war. After the Cold War and the US's transition to a global management role, the situation in Lebanon remains fragile, with the US's main regional concern being Iran's development of a nuclear program.

### **Obama and the Future**

When President Barack Obama took over after George W. Bush, the question of whether the new administration had a policy on Lebanon was posed. 2005-2009 had been years of unprecedented US support for Lebanon. Would this support survive a change in US Presidents?

In the *National Security Strategy 2010*, Lebanon is mentioned once, in relations to the Israeli-Lebanese peace:

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Salem, "The future of Lebanon". *Foreign Affairs*, (November 2006).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

*"As we pursue peace between Israelis and Palestinians, we will also pursue peace between Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Syria, and a broader peace between Israel and its neighbors".*

This focus is not surprising given that US efforts to establish Arab-Israeli peace have been a stable element of US policy in the region since the days of President Truman, and that Israel remains an important US ally. The US clearly faces many troubling questions in Lebanon: will increased Iranian support result in more arms falling into the hands of Hezbollah?; what will be the consequences of the Hariri report?; and how should the political process be interpreted? While President Obama praised the democratic process prior to the 2009 Lebanese elections, he did not subsequently praise the winners specifically. As ever, the issue of Lebanese unity remains a fundamental challenge.

Currently, however, the most important question for the US administration regarding Lebanon is how to deal with Hezbollah in the light of the challenge from Iran. So far, the US has demanded that Hezbollah renounce violence and disarm in order to be considered a responsible and legitimate political actor. However, Hezbollah's multi-faceted character, which involves a political branch with representation in the Lebanese government, has nourished the debate. According to Malley:

*"Regional actors simply do not fit into a recognizable moderate-versus-militant template"<sup>14</sup> and "[i]t should come as no surprise that the West is finding it increasingly problematic to manage complex situations with a rigid, one-dimensional paradigm"<sup>15</sup>*

Basically, the US has two strategies available: the initiation of dialogue, or a continued resistance to contact.

A no-contact strategy consolidates the Global War on Terror (which although renamed remains the same in content), marginalizes Hezbollah internationally, serves to protect Israel (in light of Hezbollah's unpredictable development), and contributes to countering Iranian influence in Lebanon. However, this policy has so far provided only modest results, with Hezbollah's influence in Lebanon continuing to grow.

A dialogue strategy, on the other hand, may produce a welcome split within the movement if moderates are approached and respond positively, while radicals are further marginalized. Such a strategy could divide the groupings, and it would probably also stir internal debate within the groupings and generate additional divisions. In so doing, the US may be able to obtain direct influence over parts of Hezbollah, thereby easing tensions and strengthening its general policy toward the Muslim world. Initiating contact with Hezbollah after the 2006 conflict, and its long record of militancy, however, might also send a signal of rewarding endurance and long-term

<sup>14</sup> Robert Malley and Peter Harling, "Beyond Moderates and Militants". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89:5, September-October, 2010, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

opposition. In the short-term, much depends on how Hezbollah reacts to the crisis of government and the Hariri indictments.

While several factors are important to the US regarding its future choice of strategy, so far its approach to Lebanon has been predominantly instrumental. Consequently, US policy toward Lebanon should be expected to serve in solving the main US challenge in the region: how to counter Iran's efforts. However, in addition to this goal of containing a regional superpower, US policy also includes general attempts not to antagonize the Muslim world and to prevent Lebanon from returning to chaos. These regional objectives are integrated into global US priorities, front and center of which has been the Global War on Terror since 2001. As Iran edges ever closer to crossing the nuclear threshold and the timespan for action shrinks, the US is becoming increasingly disposed to counter Iran's efforts, in order to protect Israel and to appease the "Arab street". The US therefore faces a difficult strategic decision: will a change to

a dialogue-strategy toward Hezbollah serve its policy toward the Iranian challenge better than the isolation strategy pursued so far?

While Hezbollah is often characterized as a movement that relies heavily on Iranian support, it also has its own agenda in a national context.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Hezbollah's future may be subject to outbidding, not least after internal debates following the 2006 Conflict.<sup>17</sup> Still, the threat remains that Tehran may seek to use Hezbollah or Hezbollah splinter groups to attack Israel in the event of mounting US pressure on Iran. Any potential dialogue strategy must therefore be based on an assessment of the capacity of potential splinter groups, and an analysis of whether moderates will act responsibly. While US policy toward Lebanon may not represent the most important of its post-Cold War policies, it provides a valuable illustration of the learning process involved in trying to deal with a minority that refuses to adapt to the world order, and becomes more radical instead.

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Salem, "The future of Lebanon". *Foreign Affairs*, (November 2006). ch. 3.

<sup>17</sup> For an analysis of the 2006 Conflict, see Mohamad ch. 2.

# Lebanon – Facts and Figures

– By Johannes Fromholt

## Background on Lebanon<sup>1</sup>

Following World War I, France acquired a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. The French separated out the region of Lebanon in 1920, and granted this area independence in 1943. A lengthy civil war (1975-1990) devastated the country, but Lebanon has since made progress toward rebuilding its political institutions. Under the Taif Accord – the blueprint for national reconciliation – the Lebanese established a more equitable political system, particularly by giving Muslims a greater voice in the political process while institutionalizing sectarian divisions in the government. Since the end of the war, Lebanon has conducted several successful elections. Most militias have been reduced or disbanded, with the exception of Hezbollah – designated by the US State Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization – and Palestinian militant groups.

During Lebanon's civil war, the Arab League legitimized in the Taif Accord Syria's troop deployment, numbering about 16,000 based mainly east of Beirut and in the Bekaa Valley. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000 and the passage in September 2004 of UNSC Resolution 1559 – calling for Syria to withdraw from Lebanon and end its interference in Lebanese affairs – encouraged some Lebanese groups to demand that Syria withdraw its forces as well.

The assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri and 22 others in February 2005

led to massive demonstrations in Beirut against the Syrian presence (the Cedar Revolution), and Syria withdrew the remainder of its military forces in April 2005. In May-June 2005, Lebanon held its first legislative elections since the end of the civil war free from foreign interference, handing a majority to the bloc led by Saad Hariri, the slain prime minister's son.

In July 2006, Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers leading to a 34-day conflict with Israel in which approximately 1,200 Lebanese civilians were killed. UNSC Resolution 1701 ended the war in August 2006, and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) deployed throughout the country for the first time in decades, charged with securing Lebanon's borders against weapons smuggling and maintaining a weapons-free zone in south Lebanon with the help of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). In May-September 2007, the LAF battled the Sunni extremist group Fatah al-Islam in the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp, winning a decisive victory, but destroying the camp and displacing 30,000 Palestinian residents. In November 2007, Lebanese politicians were unable to agree on a successor to Emile Lahud when he stepped down as president, creating a political vacuum until the election of LAF Commander General Michel Suleiman in May 2008, and the formation of a new unity government in July 2008. Legislative elections in June 2009 again produced victory for the bloc led by Saad Hariri, but a period of prolonged negotiation over the composition of the cabinet

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from: CIA – The World Factbook, *Lebanon*, accessed 11.12.10:  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>

ensued. A national unity government was finally formed in November 2009 and approved by the National Assembly the following month. In January 2010, Lebanon assumed a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2010-11 term.



### UNIFIL Background<sup>2</sup>

In the early 1970s, tension along the Israel-Lebanon border increased, especially after the relocation of Palestinian armed elements from Jordan to Lebanon. Palestinian commando operations against Israel and Israeli reprisals against Palestinian bases in Lebanon intensified. On 11

March 1978, a commando attack in Israel resulted in many dead and wounded among the Israeli population. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) claimed responsibility for the raid. In response, Israeli forces invaded Lebanon on the night of 14/15 March, and in a few days occupied the entire southern part of the country except for the city of Tyre and its surrounding area.

On 15 March 1978, the Lebanese Government submitted a strong protest to the Security Council against the Israeli invasion, stating that it had no connection with the Palestinian commando operation. On 19 March, the Council adopted resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978),<sup>3</sup> in which it called upon Israel to immediately cease its military action and withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territory. It also decided on the immediate establishment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with three broadly defined purposes: confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security, and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area. The first UNIFIL troops arrived in the area on 23 March 1978.

### Lebanon Invaded Again

In June 1982, after intense exchange of fire in southern Lebanon and across the Israel-Lebanon border, Israel invaded Lebanon again, reaching and surrounding Beirut. For three years, UNIFIL remained behind the Israeli lines, with its role

<sup>2</sup> Edited extract from United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, *UNIFIL Background*, accessed 13.12.2010 from: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/background.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the UNIFIL Mandate and the resolutions: 425 (1978), 426 (1978) see: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/mandate.shtml>

limited to providing protection and humanitarian assistance to the local population to the extent possible.

Over the years, the Security Council maintained its commitment to Lebanon's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. Despite the impasse, the Council has repeatedly extended the mandate of UNIFIL at the request of the Government of Lebanon and on the recommendation of the Secretary-General

On 17 April 2000, the Secretary-General received formal notification from the Government of Israel that it would withdraw its forces from Lebanon by July 2000. Starting on 16 May, much sooner than anticipated, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and the Lebanese de facto force (DFF) began to vacate its positions amid exchange of fire. On 25 May, the Government of Israel notified the Secretary-General that Israel had redeployed its forces. On 16 June, the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that Israel had withdrawn its forces from Lebanon in conformity with the line identified by the United Nations. The DFF had been dismantled and all detainees held at Al-Khiam prison had been freed.

Following the Israeli withdrawal, the situation in the area of UNIFIL operation remained generally quiet. The Lebanese army, gendarmerie and police established checkpoints in the vacated area, controlling movement and maintaining law and order. UNIFIL monitored the line of withdrawal on a daily basis, patrolled the area together with the Lebanese authorities, and provided humanitarian assistance to local population.

### **New Crisis Erupts**

Until July 2006, despite numerous minor violations of the so-called Blue Line withdrawal line, including sea and air violations and occasional breaches of the ceasefire, some very serious, the situation in the area remained relatively calm. The focus of UNIFIL operations remained on the Blue Line and the adjacent area, where the Interim Force sought to maintain the ceasefire through patrols, observation from fixed positions, and close contact with the parties. The mission continued to provide humanitarian assistance to the local population, while the clearance of mines and unexploded ordnance in southern Lebanon also gained additional momentum.

New hostilities on the Israeli-Lebanese border commenced on 12 July 2006, when Hezbollah launched several rockets from Lebanese territory across the Blue Line towards IDF positions and in the area of the Israeli town of Zarit. In parallel, Hezbollah fighters crossed the Blue Line into Israel, attacked an Israeli patrol and captured two Israeli soldiers, killed three others and wounded two more.

Israel retaliated by ground, air and sea attacks. In addition to air strikes on Hezbollah positions, the IDF targeted numerous roads and bridges in southern Lebanon, within and outside the UNIFIL area of operations.

The new hostilities had radically changed the context in which UNIFIL operated. The Force continued to occupy all of its positions and played an active and constructive role under its mandate. Despite being severely impeded by ongoing violence, UNIFIL peacekeepers conducted military observations, assisted in humanitarian

efforts and provided medical assistance, all at great risk. The intense fighting in July and August injured 16 United Nations staff, and tragically caused the death of five.

On 11 August 2006, the Security Council, following intense negotiations, passed resolution 1701 (2006)<sup>4</sup> calling for a full cessation of hostilities in the month-long war based upon, in particular, “the immediate cessation by Hezbollah of all attacks and the immediate cessation by Israel of all offensive military operations” in Lebanon. It called upon both Israel and Lebanon to support a permanent ceasefire and comprehensive solution to the crisis. In resolution 1701, the Council has significantly enhanced UNIFIL (from about 2,000 troops just before the war to the authorized level of 15,000 military personnel) and expanded its original mandate. For the first time, the Council also decided to include the Maritime Task Force as part of UN peacekeeping operation.

### **Expanded UNIFIL Deployed**

Following the cessation of hostilities, the gradual withdrawal of the IDF forces and deployment of Lebanese troops, the first elements of the expanded UNIFIL were deployed with record-breaking speed for any peacekeeping operation of such complexity. Battalions from France, Italy and Spain arrived in the area of operation by 15 September, and joined the contingents already in place from Ghana and India.

### **Denmark, UNIFIL<sup>5</sup>**

Since December 2009, 147 Danish soldiers in DANCON (Danish Contingent) UNIFIL have been deployed in southern Lebanon. While the air force deployed the first two units, from August 2010 the army took over responsibility for the Danish contribution to the mission. The unit has the authority to use force if necessary to solve assignments. DANCON UNIFIL contains a staff element, a logistics unit, a military police unit, and a fire preparedness unit.

The Danish logistics unit is tasked with three assignments: administration, transport and maintenance/service. The transport unit accounts for half the company. The unit’s main assignment is to support the other nations in UNIFIL with transportation of goods and primary transport support in relation to the continuous substitution of personnel. The service sector mans the UN’s intern depots and manages everything from regular consumer goods to building materials.

The assignments for the Danish military police in UNIFIL include: providing support in traffic accidents, management of lost property, securing law and order, and supporting the Defence judge advocate. The assignment relating to traffic accidents is especially comprehensive due to the UN procedure that demands a military police report for every traffic accident. The role of the Danish fire preparedness unit, comprising 10 men, involves fire extinguishing in the camp and in their

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the expanded mandate to UNIFIL and the resolution 1701 (2006) see: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/mandate.shtml>.

<sup>5</sup> Edited extract from Hærens Operative Kommando, *Om UNIFIL*, accessed 13.12.10 from: <http://forsvaret.dk/HOK/INTERNATIONAL%20INFO/UNIFIL/Pages/default.aspx>.

area of responsibility. They are also responsible for providing education in fire prevention in their own and other camps, and in bigger accidents they cooperate with the military police.



# Timeline

- 1920** 1 September – After the League of Nations grants the mandate for Lebanon and Syria to France, the State of Greater Lebanon is proclaimed.
- 1941** 26 November – After Lebanon is occupied by Free French and British troops in June 1941, independence is declared.
- 1943** 22 November – The French relinquish their remaining control over Lebanon. This day is celebrated as Lebanon’s Independence Day. France agrees to transfer power to the Lebanese government from 1 January 1944.
- 1967** June – Lebanon plays no active role in the Arab-Israeli war but is to be affected by its aftermath when Palestinians use Lebanon as a base for activities against Israel.
- 1968** 28 December – In retaliation for an attack by two members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) on an Israeli plane in Athens, Israel raids Beirut airport.
- 1975** – Lebanon erupts in civil war between Christians, Muslims, and Palestinians.
- 1976** June – Syrian troops enter Lebanon to restore peace but also to curb the Palestinians. .
- 1978** 14/15 March – In reprisal for a Palestinian attack on its territory, Israel launches a major invasion of Lebanon, occupying land as far north as the Litani river.
- 1978** 19 March – The UN Security Council passes Resolution 425, which calls on Israel to withdraw from all Lebanese territory and establishes the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
- 1982** 6 June – Israel launches a full-scale invasion of Lebanon, “Operation Peace for Galilee”.
- 1982** 24 September – The first peacekeeping force, requested by Lebanon, arrives in Beirut.
- 1989** 22 October – The National Assembly, meeting in Taif, Saudi Arabia, endorses a Charter of National Reconciliation, which reduces the authority of the president by transferring executive power to the cabinet. The National Assembly now has an equal number of Christian and Muslims.
- 1990** October 13 – The civil war is declared over.
- 1991** – The National Assembly orders the dissolution of all militias by 30 April, but Hezbollah is allowed to remain active and the South Lebanon Army (SLA) refuses to disband.
- 1992** October – Rafiq Hariri, a rich businessman, born in Sidon but with Saudi Arabian nationality, becomes prime minister, heading a cabinet of technocrats.
- 1993** July – Israel attempts to end the threat from Hezbollah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command by launching “Operation Accountability”.

<sup>1</sup> (Edited extract from: BBC, Timeline: Lebanon, accessed 19.1.11: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/819200.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/819200.stm))

- 1996** April – “Operation Grapes of Wrath”, in which the Israelis bomb Hezbollah bases in southern Lebanon, the southern district of Beirut, and the Bekaa. US negotiates a truce and an “understanding” under which Hezbollah and Palestinian guerrillas agree not to attack civilians in northern Israel, and which recognizes Israel’s right to self-defence, but also recognizes Hezbollah’s right to resist the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Lebanon and Syria do not sign the understanding.
- 1998** April – Israel’s inner cabinet votes to accept UN Security Council Resolution 425 of 1978 if Lebanon guarantees the security of Israel’s northern border. Both Lebanon and Syria reject this. 1998 November – Army head Emile Lahoud is sworn in as president, succeeding President Hrawi.
- 2000** March – Israeli cabinet votes for the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon by July 2000.
- 2000** May – After the collapse of the SLA and the rapid advance of Hezbollah forces, Israel withdraws its troops from southern Lebanon.
- 2000** October – Rafiq Al-Hariri takes office as prime minister for a second time.
- 2004** September – UN Security Council resolution aimed at Syria demands that foreign troops leave Lebanon. Syria dismisses the move. Parliament extends the Pro-Syrian President Lahoud’s term by three years. Weeks of political deadlock end with the unexpected departure of Rafiq Al-Hariri.
- 2005** February – Rafiq Al-Hariri is killed by a car bomb in Beirut. The attack sparks anti-Syrian rallies and the resignation of Prime Minister Omar Karami’s cabinet. Calls for Syria to withdraw intensify.
- 2005** March – Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese attend pro- and anti-Syrian rallies in Beirut. Pro-Syrian former PM Omar Karami is asked by the president to form a new government.
- 2005** April – Mr Karami resigns as PM after failing to form a government. He is succeeded by moderate pro-Syrian MP, Najib Mikati. Syria says its forces have left Lebanon.
- 2005** – Anti-Syrian alliance led by Saad Hariri wins control of parliament following elections. New parliament chooses Hariri ally, Fouad Siniora, as prime minister.
- 2005** July – Lebanese PM Siniora meets Syria’s President Assad; both agree to rebuild relations.
- 2005** September – Four pro-Syrian generals are charged over the assassination of Rafiq Al-Hariri.
- 2006** July – Israel launches air and sea attacks on targets in Lebanon after Lebanon’s militant Hezbollah group seizes two Israeli soldiers. Civilian casualties are high and the damage to civilian infrastructure wide-ranging. Thousands of people are displaced.

- 2006** August – A truce between Israel and Hezbollah comes into effect on 14 August after 34 days of fighting and the deaths of around 1,000 Lebanese – mostly civilians – and 159 Israelis – mainly soldiers. A UN peacekeeping force, expected to consist of 15,000 foreign troops, begins to deploy along the southern border.
- 2006** September – Lebanese government forces deploy along the Israeli border.
- 2007** January – Hezbollah-led opposition steps up pressure on the government to resign.
- 2007** May – UN Security Council sets up a tribunal to try suspects in the assassination of Hariri.
- 2007** November – President Emile Lahoud steps down after parliament fails to elect his successor. Prime Minister Fouad Siniora says his cabinet will assume powers of presidency.
- 2008** – Parliament elects army chief Michel Suleiman as president. Suleiman reappoints Fouad Siniora as prime minister, entrusting him with the task of forming a new unity government.
- 2008** July – Political leaders reach an agreement on the make-up of the national unity government.
- 2008** – Israel frees five Lebanese prisoners in exchange for the remains of two Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah in July 2006. Hezbollah hails the swap as a “victory for the resistance”.
- 2008** October – Lebanon establishes diplomatic relations with Syria for first time since 1940s.
- 2009** March – International court to try suspected killers of former PM Hariri opens in Hague.
- 2009** April – Former Syrian intelligence officer Mohammed Zuhair al-Siddiq arrested in connection with killing of former PM Rafiq Al-Hariri. Four pro-Syrian Lebanese generals held since 2005 over Hariri murder freed after UN court in Hague rules that there is not enough evidence to convict them.
- 2009** May – US Vice-President Joe Biden visits ahead of June parliamentary elections, prompting accusations from Hezbollah that US is “meddling” in Lebanese affairs.
- 2009** June – The pro-Western March 14 alliance wins 71 of 128 seats in the elections while the rival March 8 alliance, led by Hezbollah, secures 57. Saad Hariri is nominated as prime minister.
- 2009** November – Saad Hariri succeeds in forming a government of national unity.
- 2009** December – Lebanon’s cabinet endorses Hezbollah’s right to keep its arsenal of weapons. Prime Minister Saad Hariri visits Damascus for talks with President Bashar Assad.
- 2010** August – Lebanese and Israeli troops exchange fire along border; two Lebanese soldiers, a senior Israeli officer and a journalist are killed.

- 2010** October – Amid signs of heightened sectarian tension, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad pays a controversial visit to Lebanon that culminates in a rally held at a Hezbollah stronghold near Israeli border. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah calls on the Lebanese to boycott the UN tribunal into the 2005 killing of former PM Rafiq Al-Hariri, saying the tribunal is in league with Israel.
- 2011** January – Government collapses after ministers from Hezbollah and its political allies resign.

## Fact Box

**Population:** 4,125,247 (Country comparison to the world: 127 - July 2010 est.)

**Population growth rate:** 0.621% (2010 est.)

**Area:** 10,400 sq km (Country comparison to the world: 169)

**Coastline:** 225 km

**Government type:** Republic

**Independence:** 22 November 1943 (from League of Nations mandate under French administration)

**GDP (PPP):** \$53.9 billion (Country comparison to the world: 89 - 2009 est.)

**Growth rate:** 6.9% (2009 est.); 9.3% (2008 est.); 7.5% (2007 est.)

**Religions:** 28% Sunni Muslim; 28% Shi'a Muslim; 22% Maronite Christian; 8% Greek Orthodox; 5% Druze; 4% Greek Catholic; and 5% Other (U.S. Department of State, Lebanon - International Religious Freedom Report 2008, accessed 29.12.10: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108487.htm>)

**Literacy:** 87.4%

**Refugees (country of origin):** 405,425 (Palestinian refugees (UNRWA)); 50,000-60,000 (Iraq)

**Military branches:** Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF): includes Army ((Al Jaysh al Lubnaniya), Navy (Al Quwwat al Bahiriyya al Lubnaniya) and Air Force (Al Quwwat al Jawwiya al Lubnaniya))

**Military expenditures:** 3.1% of GDP (2005 est.)

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<sup>1</sup> (Edited extract from: CIA - The World Factbook, Lebanon, accessed 29.12.10: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>)

# Key Publications

Deirdre Collings (ed.): *Peace for Lebanon? From War to Reconstruction*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994.

- This book surveys the Lebanese Civil War from many different perspectives to show that it is far too simplistic and misleading to refer to it as a mere sectarian conflict, or one between Moslem Arab Nationalists and Christian Lebanese Nationalists. The papers are grouped into four parts: part one – From War to the "Peace" of Ta'if; part two – Enduring Regional and International Dimensions; part three – Toward Socioeconomic Stability; and part four – Toward Sociopolitical Stability.

David Hirst: *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*. London: Faber and Faber, 2010.

- A former Middle East correspondent's views on modern Lebanon, especially the Arab-Israeli struggle. Because of Lebanon's size, sectarian policy, and strategic location Hirst observes that Lebanon was almost designed to be a battleground for the political, strategic and ideological conflicts of others. Hirst clearly has Israel in his sights for having, in his opinion, blocked progress in the region.

Clive Jones and Sergio Catignani (eds.): *Israel and Hizbollah: An asymmetric conflict in historical and comparative perspective*. London: Routledge, 2010.

- This book examines the local and international dynamics and strategies that have come to define the often violent relationship between Israel and Lebanon. It focuses on the histori-

cal background of the conflict, while also considering the role that other external actors, most notably Syria, Iran and the UN, play in influencing the conduct and outcomes of the Israeli-Lebanese conflict. In addition, it looks at Hezbollah's increasing sway in Lebanese domestic politics, its increased military cooperation with Iran and Syria, and the implications of such developments.

Augustus Richard Norton: *Hezbollah: A Short History*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007.

- Norton analyses Hezbollah as more than just an Iranian-funded terrorist organization. Hezbollah is a comprehensive provider of social services to Lebanon's disenfranchised Shiite masses, and a highly respected political player known to forswear corruption. Formed in 1982 under Iranian tutelage, and prompted by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hezbollah has made a goal of fomenting Islamic revolution in Lebanon and authorizes violence to this end. In the 1990s, its policies in support of this goal began to include parliamentary participation. After the 2006 war with Israel, Hezbollah has emerged invigorated, flexing its military might and winning support through its rigorous post-war reconstruction.

Barry Rubin (ed.): *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict and Crisis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

- No country in the world has more political battles, military conflicts and ethnic complexity per person and per square mile than Lebanon. For 50 years non-stop, it has seen crisis

after crisis, often drawing in direct US and international involvement. Most recently, Lebanon has been the scene of a civil war, wars with Israel, a popular mass movement that expelled Syrian occupation, terror, hostage-taking, assassination, and the struggle between allies of Iran and the West. This book explains the issues, events and personalities involved in one of the globe's most dramatic and important stories.

# Short Curriculum Vitae

## **Professor Bertel Heurlin, University of Copenhagen**

Bertel Heurlin has been the Jean Monnet Professor of European Security and Integration in the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, since 1990. He is also the chairman of the Danish Institute of Military Studies, and the co-director of the Copenhagen Middle East Research Project, COMER. From 1996-2002, he was the research director for the Danish Institute of International Affairs, DUPI. He is acting as an expert advisor for Danish Governments, Danish Parliament and NATO. He has been a guest professor at leading American and European Universities. He has written and edited more than 50 books and numerous articles on strategy, security and foreign policy as they relate to the US, USSR-Russia, China, Middle East, and the Nordic countries. His books include: *Missile Defence* (2005); *The Threats of the 21st Century* (2006, in Danish); *The Defence of the Nordic Countries* (2007, in Danish); and *War and Peace in the 21st century* (2009).

## **Associate Professor, Birthe Hansen, University of Copenhagen**

Birthe Hansen, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen. She was a visiting scholar at The London School of Economics and Political Science in 2000 and a Schusterman Fellow at Brandeis University 2009. She is currently the director of a research project on unipolarity, democracy and the Middle East. She has published extensively on international security and the Middle East. Her books include: *Unipolarity and*

*the Middle East* (2001); *Security Strategies and American World Order* (co-authored with Peter Toft and Anders Wivel, 2009); and *Unipolarity and World Politics* (2011).

## **Professor Eyal Zisser, Tel Aviv University**

Eyal Zisser is the director of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies and the former Head of the Department of Middle Eastern and African History, both at Tel Aviv University. He was a visiting professor at Cornell University and a visiting research fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He has written extensively on the history and modern politics of Syria and Lebanon, as well as the Arab-Israeli conflict. His books include: *Asad's Syria at a Crossroads* (1999); *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition* (2000); *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence* (2000); *Faces of Syria* (2003); *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power* (2006); and *The Bleeding Cedar* (2009).

## **Associate Professor, Husam Mohamad, University of Central Oklahoma**

Dr. Husam Mohamad is a Professor of Political Science and Middle Eastern Politics at the University of Central Oklahoma. He was a former Fulbright Fellow at Qatar University and a lecturer at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus. His areas of research and publication include the Arab-Israeli conflict and peace process, US policy toward the Muslim world, democratization in Arab politics and Islamist movements in the Middle East.

**Dr. Paul Salem, Carnegie Middle East Center**

Paul Salem is the director of the Carnegie Middle East Center. Prior to joining Carnegie in 2006, he was the general director of the Fares Foundation. From 1989 to 1999 He founded and directed the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, Lebanon's leading public policy think tank. Recently, he was a member of the Lebanese National Commission for Electoral Law Reform, a blue ribbon commission tasked with revising Lebanon's electoral laws and proposing a new electoral system. In 2002, Salem was a member of the Senior Review Committee for the UNDP Arab Human Development Report. He has also held various positions at the American University in Beirut. He regularly appears in television and radio interviews, and contributes newspaper articles, on political issues relating to the Arab world.

**Johannes Fromholt, student at Centre for African Studies**

Johannes Fromholt holds a bachelor degree in history from the University of Copenhagen. He is presently a postgraduate student at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Copenhagen. Johannes is a former intern at the Institute for Strategy, Royal Danish Defence College. He is currently an intern at the Royal Danish Embassy in Nairobi, where he works on governance in Somalia.





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