The crisis in Lebanon

In mid-July 2006 a month-long conflict broke out between Israel and the militant Hizbollah movement in Lebanon. A strengthened UN peacekeeping force has been deployed to southern Lebanon to reduce tension and strengthen the capacity of the Lebanese state. However, political violence and deadlock within Lebanon and growing tension across the Middle East have reduced the prospects for the negotiated disarmament of Hizbollah and for a durable solution that addresses the root causes of instability. Consequently, some observers believe a resumption of violence is now likely in the coming months.

This Research Paper surveys Lebanon's development since the outbreak of civil war in the mid-1970s and examines the issues behind the instability and violence of recent decades. It provides details on the conflict of July-August 2006, the subsequent expansion of the UN force, and the current political crisis affecting the country.

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Summary of main points

In mid-July 2006 a month-long conflict broke out between Israel and the militant Hizbollah movement in Lebanon after the latter took two Israeli soldiers hostage during a cross-border raid. Israel responded with an intensive campaign of air-strikes and sent troops into the south, where strong resistance was encountered from Hizbollah. The latter fired nearly 4,000 rockets into Israel, hitting population centres as far south as Haifa. Around 1,200 Lebanese and 160 Israelis are believed to have died.

The fighting was the latest in a series of clashes dating back to the start of the Lebanese civil war in the mid-1970s. Among the factors that have contributed to the instability and violence are the weakness of the Lebanese state; the emergence of powerful non-state actors, like Hizbollah; foreign interference in the country's internal affairs; and the absence of a broader regional peace settlement.

A cessation of violence came into effect in mid-August 2006 after the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1701 authorising the deployment of an expanded UN peacekeeping force to southern Lebanon. The force has been tasked with preventing further hostilities and assisting the Lebanese government and its armed forces in extending their authority over the south.

Resolution 1701 also stressed the need to address some of the underlying causes of violence and instability by, among other things, securing the disarmament of Hizbollah through internal Lebanese political dialogue, resolving flashpoints, such as the status of the disputed Sheba'a farms sector on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, and by addressing issues relating to the Israeli soldiers held by Hizbollah and the Lebanese nationals imprisoned in Israel.

In the five months since the cessation of violence, there has been little progress towards resolving those underlying causes. Lebanon has entered a period of political deadlock following the decision by Hizbollah and its fellow Shia party, Amal, to withdraw from the government in November 2006. As of 19 January 2007 Hizbollah and its allies continued to stage large-scale political demonstrations aimed at forcing the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora from office. The outgoing UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned in his report on the Middle East from December 2006 that:

> In the past six months, Lebanon has suffered a severe setback. Instead of making further strides towards completing its political transformation and reaping the economic rewards of political progress, Lebanon confronts challenges of a magnitude unseen since the end of the civil war.

At a regional and international level, the situation is complicated by the moribund state of the Middle East peace process, rising tensions over Iran's nuclear programme, and concerns over growing Sunni-Shia sectarian divisions across the region. Consequently, some observers warn that Lebanon will continue to serve as a surrogate arena for the interests and rivalries of outside powers and argue that, unless the UN peacekeeping effort is buttressed by progress on the domestic political front within Lebanon and in the regional peace process, the prospects for avoiding further violence and instability in the future appear bleak.

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I   Overview

The conflict that erupted between Israel and the militant Hizbollah movement in Lebanon in July-August 2006 was the latest in a series of clashes over recent decades. Among the factors that have contributed to that instability and violence it is possible to discern four broad threads: the weakness of the Lebanese state; the emergence of powerful non-state actors; foreign interference in Lebanon's internal affairs; and the absence of a broader regional peace settlement.

The weakness of the Lebanese state and its institutions is due in large part to the complexities of the confessional system of government introduced at the time of independence in an attempt to reconcile the interests of the country's diverse religious and cultural groupings.[1] The political system has often struggled to adapt to the shifting sectarian population balance, undermining the authority of the central government and creating the perception among some groups that the state is either too weak to protect them or operating with a sectarian bias. Consequently, national institutions, including the army, have on occasion been seen as serving the interests of particular population groups, rather than a broader Lebanese national interest. That perception was one of the main triggers for the descent into civil war in 1975 and residual suspicions from that era persist.

One symptom of the absence of a strong central authority has been the way in which the state's monopoly on the use of force and its ability to enforce its writ over the whole of the country's territory have been challenged by the emergence of powerful non-state groups. At times, these groups have been able to establish their own independent militias and parallel government structures, as occurred in the 1970s with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and more recently, albeit to a lesser extent, with the militant Shia Hizbollah movement.

A second symptom, exacerbated by the security threat posed by non-state groups and the ease with which the mosaic of confessional groups can be "manipulated into lines of conflict",[2] has been the interference of foreign powers which have sought to shape the country's development to their advantage. Such hopes have often proved illusory. Syria sent forces into Lebanon in the mid-1970s and retained a strong military presence and a pervasive political influence until its enforced withdrawal in 2005. Israeli troops intervened in 1978 and 1982, and from 1985 maintained a security zone in the south until casualty levels became prohibitive and the troops were withdrawn in 2000. Western multinational forces entered Lebanon in 1982 with the aim of acting as an impartial buffer between the warring factions, but withdrew in 1984 after losing the support of significant parts of the local population, which had come to see them as just another party in the conflict.

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[1]   Under a confessional system of government, political and institutional power is distributed proportionally among the country's main religious communities. Parliamentary seats and government posts are apportioned according to the relative demographic composition of those communities in society.

[2]   Quotation from *Report of the Secretary-General on the Middle East*, S/2006/956, 11 December 2006, para 37.

Arguably the most significant factor that has fuelled the violence and instability has been the unresolved state of the Middle East peace process, particularly in relation to Syria and the Palestinians and the issues surrounding the occupation of Arab land. In the absence of a comprehensive regional peace settlement that resolves the issue of territory, Lebanon has often served as a surrogate arena for rivalries between, on the one hand, Israel (and now, some argue, the United States) and, on the other, Palestinian militant groups, Syria and Iran.

A second aspect to that regional context concerns Iran's close ties with Lebanon's Shia population, which have given rise to Sunni Arab anxiety about an emerging Shia axis and the growing power and influence exerted by an increasingly assertive Tehran. Those concerns appear most pronounced in Saudi Arabia which has provided significant financial backing and investment in Lebanon in recent years in an attempt to counter the influence of Syria and Iran in the political and security fields.

For much of the period since the 1970s the focus of the international community has been on attenuating the symptoms of the conflict – through the deployment of a UN force to southern Lebanon (UNIFIL), for example – rather than seeking to resolve the underlying causes.

One exception was the Madrid conference of the early 1990s, when efforts were made to foster a regional peace settlement by bringing together the main parties in the region. In the event, the Lebanese track was largely hamstrung by Washington's decision to accept Syria's dominant position within Lebanon in return for support from Damascus for the US-led action to expel Iraq from Kuwait. That effectively left resolution of the Lebanon track dependent on a breakthrough in Israeli-Syrian negotiations that failed to materialise.

Other exceptions were the periodic efforts to bolster the Lebanese state and its institutions, such as the training and support provided to the Lebanese military at the time of the multinational deployment to Lebanon in 1982-84. However, after the Taif Accords of 1989 that ended the civil war, the army was rebuilt but deliberately under-equipped to ensure it could not emerge as a dominant power-base in its own right and intervene in politics as it had done prior to the civil war.[3] Keeping the Lebanese state weak served the interests of Damascus, allowing it to safeguard its own position and ensure that its ally, Hizbollah, retained freedom of manoeuvre in the south to pressurise Israel, unconstrained by the presence of Lebanese army units.

Since 2004, however, there have been signs of greater international interest in addressing at least some of the underlying causes. By the autumn of that year – four years after Israel withdrew its forces – the international community's tolerance of Syrian ascendancy in Lebanon had begun to ebb away, due in part to a perception of heavy handedness on the part of Damascus in influencing Lebanese political affairs.

The UN Security Council took the lead by calling for the withdrawal of all remaining foreign (i.e. Syrian) forces from Lebanon and for the disbanding and disarmament of

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[3]   For more detail on the Taif Accords, see Section II B below.

militias (i.e. Hizbollah and Palestinian militant groups), so as to allow the Lebanese government to expand its authority over its territory. Suspicion of Syrian involvement in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in early 2005 increased the pressure on Damascus further and provoked widespread popular protests in Lebanon. Within weeks, the pro-Syrian government in Beirut had fallen and Syrian forces had withdrawn completely. By mid-2005 an anti-Syrian majority had taken control of parliament and formed a new government.

The disbanding and disarmament of militias has proved more intractable. A process of national dialogue was instituted in Lebanon in February 2006 with the aim of reaching a consensus on the issue. Those talks adjourned in late June without significant progress, but the subsequent outbreak of conflict with Israel that followed Hzbollah's cross-border raid on 12 July again returned the issue to the top of the domestic and international agenda.

Under UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which led to the cessation of violence in mid-August, the international community has stepped up its efforts to reduce tension on the Israeli-Lebanese border and to strengthen the capacity of the Lebanese state. An expanded UN force has been deployed to the south and international personnel have a role in policing Lebanon's coast and airports to interdict illicit weapons supplies.

Hizbollah, meanwhile, emboldened by what it perceives to have been its victories over Israel in 2000 and 2006, has rejected efforts to revive discussion of the disarmament issue, arguing that its militia is the sole protection that Lebanon has against Israeli aggression. Furthermore, it sought to capitalise politically on its enhanced standing by demanding a share of cabinet seats that would allow the party and its allies to block decisions. The rejection of those demands by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora led Hizbollah and other opposition parties to launch large-scale popular demonstrations in an attempt to bring down a government that they accuse of pursuing a pro-Israeli and pro-US agenda by seeking Hizbollah's disarmament.

Some observers detect the hand of Syria and Iran in these manoeuvrings, arguing that both have an interest in deflecting international pressure over the alleged involvement of the former in the Hariri assassination and over the latter's nuclear programme.[4] A change of government could enable Damascus to re-establish at least a measure of influence in Beirut. From an Iranian perspective, it would also stymie internal Lebanese efforts to pursue Hizbollah's disarmament, a move that would otherwise deprive Tehran of a key strategic asset at a time of growing tension with Israel and its US ally.

Given the political deadlock in Lebanon and heightened regional tensions, many observers believe a resumption of conflict with Israel during 2007 is becoming increasingly likely. Some conclude that the only effective means of preventing such an eventuality is to acknowledge the inter-connected nature of many of the region's crises and conflicts by convening a Madrid-style pan-Middle East conference. The outgoing

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[4]   See, for example, 'Israel's strategy towards Hizbullah', speech by former Israeli foreign minister Silvan Shalom to Chatham House meeting, 1 August 2006

UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, wrote in December 2006 of his conviction that the search for stability in Lebanon, Iraq and elsewhere would be

> greatly served by a concerted effort to address the legitimate aspirations of Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese to achieve two independent and secure States of Israel and Palestine; an end to the occupation of Arab land both in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Golan Heights; and the comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East […].

He concluded that:

> A regional approach is needed to resolve the various crises and conflicts in the Middle East today, not least because progress in each arena is to a large extent dependent on progress in others.[5]

Yet the inclination to pursue a major regional peace initiative appears to be lacking, not least in Washington whose active involvement would be vital for success. In announcing a new strategy for Iraq in early January 2007, the Bush administration rejected recommendations from the bipartisan Iraq Study Group for a major diplomatic initiative that would have involved talking to Iran and Syria without pre-conditions. Instead, Washington has said it intends to pursue progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track and to take a more robust approach towards Iran and Syria in an attempt to bring about a change in their behaviour, with the offer of talks and trade-related inducements if certain conditions are met.

The implications for Lebanon of these wider regional developments could prove critical. On the one hand, a reduction in tension that might flow from a "grand bargain" between the US and Iran or from an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement would significantly enhance Lebanon's chances of avoiding further conflict. Conversely, if there is an escalation in tension between Israel, the US and Iran, or if there is a worsening of the Sunni-Shia sectarian divide across the region, then it seems unlikely that Lebanon could remain immune.

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[5] *Report of the Secretary-General on the Middle East*, S/2006/956, 11 December 2006, para 3

II   Origins of the Crisis

A.   Civil War in Lebanon (1975-1989)

With the establishment of an independent Lebanese state in the early 1940s, a complex confessional system was developed to accommodate the country's diverse religious and cultural groups and to manage inter-community rivalries.[6] Executive and legislative posts were shared between Christians, who were in a slight majority at the time, and Muslims, with a Maronite Christian as president, a Sunni Muslim as prime minister and a Shia Muslim as speaker of parliament.

The influx of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees following the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1948-49 and 1967 exacerbated inter-communal tensions within Lebanon, but it was the arrival from Jordan after 1970 of large numbers of militia fighters from Yasser Arafat's PLO that provided the catalyst for civil war.[7] Using Lebanon as a base, Palestinian fighters mounted frequent cross-border raids into Israel, leading to Israeli retaliation. There was mounting pressure from Lebanon's Christian community for the government to curb the PLO's activities, but that was rejected by many Lebanese Muslims who, at the time, were sympathetic to the Palestinian cause.

During 1974 clashes took place between Palestinian militias outside the PLO mainstream and a right-wing Christian militia, the Phalangists. By 1975 the fighting had degenerated into civil war, with a coalition of Christian groups known as the Lebanese Front confronting non-mainstream PLO factions and their Druze, left-wing and Muslim militia allies. The latter, which were less cohesive and organised than the Lebanese Front, were known collectively as the Lebanese National Movement (LNM). As the conflict developed, the balance of the country's confessional system emerged as the main divisive issue, with the Lebanese Front favouring retention of the status quo and the LNM arguing that it unduly favoured the Christians, who no longer formed the majority of the population.

Heavy fighting continued into 1976, with the main forces of the PLO joining battle on the side of the LNM. In October of that year an uneasy truce was imposed by a 30,000-strong force of predominantly Syrian troops, which had intervened against the LNM to forestall the fragmentation of Lebanon into smaller states that might be hostile towards Damascus. Intermittent fighting continued and the country remained divided between the rival factions: east Beirut and much of northern Lebanon lay under Maronite control, while west Beirut was dominated by the groups of the LNM. The Palestinians controlled much of south-west Lebanon.

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[6]   The diversity underlines the area's historical role as a refuge for persecuted minorities. The principal Christian denominations in Lebanon are Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic and Armenian, while the main Muslim groups are the Sunni and Shia. There is also a significant community of Druze, a distinct religious community that was an early off-shoot of Islam and that draws on other religions and philosophies.

[7]   The PLO had been expelled from Jordan after it had come into conflict with the Jordanian government in September 1970. The Jordanian government had become uneasy about the threat posed to its own authority by the emergence of a PLO "state within a state".

a. Israeli Invasion of 1978 and UN Security Council Resolution 425

Further cross-border clashes with the PLO led Israel to mount a major incursion into southern Lebanon during early 1978.[8] Around 25,000 troops of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) occupied positions as far north as the Litani river. The Lebanese government protested to the United Nations Security Council, arguing that it had no responsibility for the PLO's operations. The UN Security Council responded by adopting Resolution 425 on 19 March 1978, which called for "respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognised boundaries", an immediate cessation of Israeli military action and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory.[9] The Council also agreed to deploy a UN Interim Force (UNIFIL) to southern Lebanon for the purpose of "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".[10]

Israeli forces withdrew in June 1978, but left the border area in the hands of the pro-Israeli Christian militias of Major Saad Haddad. The ensuing period saw a series of political realignments and inter-factional disputes, as the Shia militia, Amal, began to challenge the PLO presence in the south, and the Phalangists asserted their dominance over the other Christian militias. Muslim disillusionment with the failure of the Lebanese LNM, the PLO and Syria to bring stability to the areas under their control provided an opportunity for the Lebanese government to re-establish its authority and for the Christian parties to increase their influence.

b. Israeli Invasion of 1982 and the Emergence of Hizbollah

Resolution 425 and the deployment of UNIFIL did little to resolve the underlying tensions and cross-border fighting between Israel and the PLO continued. In June 1982 Israeli forces again entered Lebanon in retaliation for the assassination attempt on the Israeli ambassador in London. The declared aim of the operation was to eliminate the PLO's military threat from its northern border. Israeli troops rapidly defeated PLO forces in the south of the country, although they suffered heavy casualties in the process. Fighting was then joined with Syrian forces in eastern Lebanon, resulting in the destruction of Syrian air defence missile systems in the Beka'a valley and a heavy defeat for the Syrian air force.

A truce with Syria allowed Israel to turn its attentions to Beirut, where it succeeded in trapping around 6,000 Palestinian fighters in the west of the city. An intense bombardment by Israeli forces inflicted serious losses on the PLO and on the civilian population, damaging Israel's reputation abroad and undermining morale among its soldiers.

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[8] See maps of the region and of Lebanon in Appendices One and Two.
[9] S/RES/425, 19 March 1978
[10] In Resolution 426 the Security Council approved UNIFIL's operational mandate, as set down in a report of the UN Secretary General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (document reference: S/12611, 19 March 1978))

The PLO leadership under Yasser Arafat pledged to fight to the last man, but rising civilian casualties were undermining Lebanese support for the PLO's presence and the PLO was petitioned to abandon the city. Arafat agreed, on condition that French, Italian and US peacekeepers be deployed to protect Palestinian civilians left behind. The evacuation to Syria and Tunisia took place during August and September, although some PLO elements remained in the east of the country. The multinational forces withdrew shortly afterwards.

Hopes of an end to the fighting disintegrated with the assassination in September 1982 of the president-elect, Bashir Jumayyil, who was a senior member of the Phalangist Party. In apparent reprisal, Phalangist militia forces entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in west Beirut and, over the course of three days, killed more than 800 Palestinians and Lebanese, most of them civilians.[11] An Israeli commission of inquiry concluded that IDF forces, which had surrounded the camps, had not taken part directly in the killings, although it did record that reports that a massacre was underway had been made to senior Israeli officers and a cabinet minister, but that no serious steps had been made to halt the violence. The Israeli defence minister, Ariel Sharon, was found to be indirectly responsible for failing to halt the killings and resigned.

The Lebanese government requested that multinational forces return to Beirut with a mandate to serve as a neutral "inter-positional force" separating the IDF from the Lebanese population, and to assist the Lebanese army in restoring central government authority over Beirut. The US, France and Italy each deployed around 1,400-2,200 troops during the autumn of 1982 and the British sent a contingent of 100 men, backed by air power, in January 1983. The deployment was initially a success: the Lebanese army moved into Beirut, clearing away the barricades that had been in place since 1975 and rounding up criminal gangs.

With the arrival of the multinational forces, Israel increasingly found itself acting as a garrison force in the south, caught in the cross-fire between rival factions and facing an emerging threat from indigenous Shia militias, such as the Hizbollah movement ('The Party of God').[12] Initially formed in 1982 as a splinter group from the mainstream Amal movement, Hizbollah took its theological inspiration from Ayatollah Khomenei, who had come to power in Iran three years earlier. Its fighters received extensive training and support from an expeditionary force of Iranian Revolutionary Guards, which had been sent to Lebanon in July 1982. During the 1980s Hizbollah was to evolve from a loose grouping of factions to become an increasingly influential political, social and military force within Lebanon.

Rising casualties and a lack of clarity about the IDF's role in Lebanon undermined Israeli domestic support for the troop presence and pushed the Israeli government towards a reduction in troop levels and a withdrawal south. The IDF began its redeployments during 1983-84, precipitating renewed fighting between Lebanese factions as they sought to fill the vacuum. The fighting, which for the first time involved solely Lebanese

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[11] The exact casualty figure is disputed, with some observers claiming as many as 3,500 died.
[12] Resentful of the PLO's dominance in southern Lebanon, the Shia population initially welcomed the Israeli intervention in 1982 as a "liberation", but that goodwill rapidly dissipated as the PLO's influence receded and public resentment grew over the IDF's bombardment of Beirut and occupation of the south.

militias, undermined hopes that a withdrawal of foreign forces would bring an end to the conflict.

As Israeli forces prepared to reduce their presence around Beirut, so the function and perception of the multinational forces began to change. Initially welcomed as a neutral protector by many Lebanese, the forces increasingly came to be seen as a prop for the government and therefore protagonists in the civil war. In May 1983 US efforts to broker a normalisation of relations between Israel and Lebanon faltered in the face of opposition from Lebanese factions and Syria, with the latter refusing to countenance the withdrawal of its 40,000 troops. The formation in July of the Syrian-backed National Salvation Front, comprising Druze, Shia, Sunni and Christian elements, underlined both the weakness of the government and its dependence on the United States.

Militant Shia elements, some of which may have been affiliated to Hizbollah, initiated a spate of attacks on the multinational forces from mid-1983: in April a suicide bomb attack destroyed the US embassy, killing 63 people, and by August the US Marines were coming under almost daily fire. On 23 October further suicide bombings hit the US Marine compound and the French headquarters, resulting in the death of 241 US personnel and 56 French troops. The attacks coincided with a series of setbacks for the Lebanese army in heavy fighting with Shia and Druze forces, which in turn encouraged large numbers of disaffected soldiers to desert.

In early 1984, as the security environment deteriorated, Britain, France, Italy and the US withdrew their forces. UNIFIL forces remained in the south of the country, behind Israeli lines, with the role of providing protection and, where possible, humanitarian assistance to the local population.

The withdrawal of multinational troops and the reduction in the IDF presence left Syria as the dominant foreign power in Lebanon, but attempts between 1985 and 1988 to assert its authority were undermined by heavy factional fighting, most notably during the so-called 'war of the camps' between the remaining elements of the PLO and the Shia Amal militia during 1986-87.

c.   Establishment of the Israeli Security Zone in 1985

During 1985 the IDF withdrew to southern Lebanon where it established a "security zone" measuring between ten and twenty kilometres in depth on the Lebanese side of the joint border. The declared aim of the zone was to prevent guerrilla attacks on Israeli towns and villages in the Galilee region. Israel's Lebanese Christian allies in the South Lebanese Army (SLA), which operated with a small number of IDF troops and military advisors, were given primary responsibility for policing the zone. Hizbollah's armed wing, the Islamic Resistance, emerged as the main source of resistance to the SLA and IDF presence. Aided by military assistance from Iran, Hizbollah fighters mounted regular attacks on SLA and IDF outposts, ambushed convoys, and fired mortars and Katyusha-style rockets into northern Israel.

B.   Developments during the 1990s

a.   Taif Accords of 1989 and the end of the Civil War

It took until 1989 for the main Lebanese factions to agree a durable peace plan in the form of the Taif Accords. The confessional system was rebalanced, with greater powers given to the cabinet at the expense of the Maronite Christian presidency. Most notably, the power to appoint the prime minister was transferred from the presidency to the legislature, and the ministries and seats in the national assembly were divided equally between Christians and Muslims. The accords also called for the disbandment of all militias within six months of the formation of a new government. Opposition to the changes came from the Maronite Christian former commander in chief of the Lebanese army, Michel Aoun, who had retained the loyalty of sections of the military and who had been fighting Syrian forces since early 1989. Aoun's forces were defeated and he was eventually forced into exile in France as part of a deal between the US and Syria, which saw Washington agree to back Syria's involvement in Lebanon in return for support from Damascus for the multi-national coalition against the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, which had invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Implementation of the Taif Accords was patchy, firstly in relation to the demobilisation of the militias, with Hizbollah retaining its status as both an armed group and a political party represented in parliament. The group was able to point to its role in resisting the Israeli presence in the south as a reason for retaining its weapons, while its provision of social services and healthcare helped broaden its base of support among the country's Shia. Secondly, the planned redeployment of Syrian forces away from Beirut to the east of the country was much delayed, prompting renewed Israeli warnings that the country had effectively become a Syrian protectorate.

Throughout the 1990s Israel, Syria and Iran continued to use Lebanon as a surrogate arena for their rivalry, with Syrian and Iranian assistance proving critical in the rise to prominence of the militant Hizbollah movement. IDF troops and their SLA allies engaged in frequent clashes with Hizbollah guerrillas as both sides launched raids and reprisals on targets across southern Lebanon and northern Israel. In July 1993 Israel launched its heaviest bombardment of Lebanon since the 1982 invasion, and in April 1996 it carried out a sustained air and artillery offensive against southern Lebanon and the suburbs of Beirut, with the aim of diminishing Hizbollah's ability to strike northern Israel. There was a constant danger of escalation, raising fears that the fighting might draw in the sizeable Syrian forces stationed in eastern Lebanon.

C.   Israeli withdrawal in 2000

Unlike Judaea and Samaria (the biblical name for the West Bank), which occupy a special place in the Israeli national consciousness, there is no similar emotional attachment to southern Lebanon. From the Israeli perspective, the imperative has been predominantly one of ensuring the security of the northern border and preventing Palestinian and Hizbollah rocket attacks on the northern Galilee region.

By the late 1990s the security zone had become increasingly expensive in both financial and human terms. In addition, public support for the zone began to fall sharply after a

substantial rise in the Israeli casualty rate that was widely attributed to improvements in Hizbollah's intelligence and organisational capabilities.

The future of the zone had become a major domestic issue by the time of the Israeli election of May 1999, with the victorious Labour Party under Ehud Barak pledging to withdraw by July 2000. The pledge provoked considerable debate in Israel as to how best this could be achieved. A unilateral pullback without an overall peace deal with Syria and Lebanon was considered highly problematic, with some fearing it would indicate weakness on Israel's part, diminish its military deterrent and bolster the standing of Hizbollah in the region. Any attempt to deal directly with the Lebanese government without addressing Syria's demands over the Golan was also considered likely to fail, given Damascus's influence in Beirut. In early 1998 Prime Minister Netanyahu had offered to withdraw on condition that Lebanon agreed to deploy its army into the vacated areas to prevent Hizbollah from operating right up to the border. Both Beirut and Damascus rejected the proposal, stating that any withdrawal had to be unconditional, although the Lebanese government had initially appeared more receptive to the idea. Nonetheless, Lebanese officials warned that a unilateral withdrawal that failed to address issues such as the status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon would not bring peace.[13]

Fighting in southern Lebanon flared on several occasions during early 2000, as Israel responded to Hizbollah attacks with a series of raids, including an attack on the Lebanese power grid. Israeli forces began to scale back infantry and special-forces operations in the zone in favour of lower-risk artillery and air strikes, in an effort to reduce casualties among their own troops.

Despite Prime Minister Barak's apparent preference for the Lebanese issue to be settled as part of a wider deal with Syria on the Golan, it became clear during the early part of 2000 that negotiations with Damascus were making little progress.[14] As a result, Israel was faced with the prospect of withdrawing unilaterally from Lebanon.

Fears among SLA members about their post-withdrawal situation led to a collapse in morale during early May 2000. As a result, Israel was forced to bring forward its timetable for withdrawal to 24 May when it became apparent that the SLA was disintegrating.

Hizbollah units moved into the evacuated areas, but kept a low profile. Lebanese Prime Minister Selim al-Hoss declared that the government would guarantee the security of residents in the south. Lebanese police and plain-clothed security officials were deployed in the south during May and June 2000, but Mr al-Hoss ruled out an army deployment until the UN had verified the Israeli withdrawal.[15]

Initially, around 7,000 civilians and former-SLA members sought refuge in Israel, some perhaps fearful of accusations that they had been involved in alleged human rights

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[13] *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 18-24 November 1999
[14] For more detail, see Section VI A, B & C of Library Research Paper 01/08, *Developments in the Middle East Peace Process 1991-2000*, 24 January 2001.
[15] *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, 2 June 2000

abuses that took place in the zone, particularly at the Khiam detention centre.[16] A few SLA members were granted Israeli citizenship, and it was suggested that others could be transferred to third countries, such as the United States.[17] The restricted nature of Hizbollah reprisals against SLA members appeared to have encouraged others to return to Lebanon.

a.   Border demarcation and the Sheba'a Farms sector

The issue of border demarcation took time to resolve, primarily due to differences between British and French maps that demarcated the boundary during the 1920s. By 7 June a UN cartographer had established a line (known as the Blue Line) that both sides agreed to respect, despite certain reservations. On 16 June the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, duly reported to the Security Council that Israel had withdrawn its forces from Lebanon in accordance with Resolution 425, although it took a further month for a number of violations involving the route of the Israeli border fence to be rectified.

However, two outstanding areas of contention remained. The first was the continued detention of Lebanese nationals in Israeli prisons following the withdrawal in 2000, while the second was the tract of land on the flank of Mount Hermon known as Sheba'a Farms, which Israel captured during the 1967 conflict with Syria. The Beirut government and Hizbollah – backed by Syria – claimed Sheba'a was Lebanese territory and said that Hizbollah military activity in that sector constituted legitimate resistance to the Israeli occupation. Israel accused Hizbollah of seeking an excuse to maintain its militia and to continue its attacks. The UN concluded that the question of Sheba'a should be addressed in the future as a bilateral issue between Syria and Lebanon after the Golan Heights had been returned from Israeli to Syrian control as part of a broader regional peace agreement.

UNIFIL troops began deploying into the vacated border zone in late July 2000, and Lebanese army and internal security forces followed in early August. Administrators and police also re-established their presence and worked towards reintegrating the area into the infrastructure of the rest of the country. However, the Lebanese government took the position that, so long as there was no comprehensive peace with Israel, the army would not act as a border guard for Israel and would not be deployed to the border. *De facto* control of the immediate border area was left to Hizbollah, whose members worked unarmed and in civilian attire. In addition to maintaining public order, Hizbollah expanded its social, medical and education services into the area.

In October 2000 Kofi Annan reported tangible progress in Lebanon's efforts to restore services to the territory vacated by Israel, but stressed the need for the Lebanese government to take control of the whole area and assume full responsibilities there, including putting an end to continuing provocations on the Blue Line. Citing the steps set out in Resolution 425, he noted that after the restoration of the effective authority by Lebanon, both the Lebanese and Israeli governments were to be fully responsible, in

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[16] For further information, see *Amnesty International Annual Report 2000: Israel and the Occupied Territories*.

[17] *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, 2 June 2000

accordance with their international obligations, for preventing any hostile acts from their respective territory against that of their neighbour. He also cautioned that, unless the Lebanese government took effective control of the vacated area, there was a danger that Lebanon could once again become "an arena, albeit not necessarily the only one, of conflict between others."[18]

In 2001 Kofi Annan concluded that UNIFIL had completed two thirds of its mandate: confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and assisting, as far as possible, Lebanese authorities as they returned to the area vacated by Israel. The operation increasingly took on the functions of an observer mission, with the focus on restoring international peace and security by seeking to build confidence between the two sides and reducing the potential for a return to violence.[19] In line with this reduced role, the strength of UNIFIL declined steadily from 5,700 personnel in March 2001 to around 2,000 at the end of July 2006.

b.   Dilemma for Hizbollah

Following the Israeli withdrawal, Hizbollah was faced with a choice. On the one hand, its pan-Islamic, jihadist mission dictated that it should continue its resistance as long as Israel occupied Arab land and the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. This view was compounded by its exalted status among Palestinian militant groups following its successful resistance to Israeli occupation, and by its desire to pass on assistance and expertise to those groups as the second Palestinian Intifada began in September 2000. On the other hand, with the liberation of Lebanese territory, there was pressure for it to become an exclusively political party and to avoid contradicting the strong desire among many Lebanese for stability and reconstruction by engaging in further conflict with Israel.

In the event, as one commentator noted in April 2002, Hizbollah

> deferred the choice by declaring the liberation incomplete. By suddenly discovering and proclaiming that the Shebaa farms are actually Lebanese, not Syrian, territory it retained a rationale for its continued "resistance" under a Lebanese banner.

> Then, four months after the Israeli withdrawal, the eruption of the intifada greatly favoured the jihadist option. And, from being an inspiration and model for Palestinian militancy, Hizbullah has ever since been drawn inexorably towards direct involvement in it.[20]

This position manifested itself primarily in two ways in the period after 2000. Firstly, there were sporadic clashes along the Israeli-Lebanese border, most frequently in the Sheba'a Farms sector. Hizbollah forces periodically fired rockets at towns and villages in northern Israel and mounted attacks on Israeli military positions, capturing and killing a number of soldiers. These were met with Israeli artillery bombardments and air

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[18]   *Interim report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon*, S/2000/1049, 31 October 2000, para 18

[19]   United Nations Fact Sheet, *The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon*, last updated 10 August 2006

[20]   David Hirst, 'Ready to pounce, the enemy in the shadow', *The Guardian*, 6 April 2002

incursions. The second approach adopted by Hizbollah involved an increase in logistical assistance, advice and training for Palestinian military groups in the West Bank and Gaza, who sought to replicate Hizbollah's successes against Israel's militarily superior forces. Israeli officials argued that this assistance had been provided with the encouragement of Syria and Iran.

Nonetheless, there were signs of increased back-channel contacts between Hizbollah and Israel and efforts to build confidence. In January 2004 the two parties reached an agreement through German intermediaries for a prisoner exchange. The agreement resulted in the release by Israel of 23 Lebanese, 400 Palestinian, and 12 other Arab prisoners in exchange for a kidnapped Israeli businessman and the bodies of 3 soldiers. In January 2005 Kofi Annan reported that there had been considerably fewer violent incidents along the Israeli-Lebanese border, although hostile rhetoric remained the norm and air incursions continued, including, for the first time, an incursion into Israeli airspace by a Hizbollah remotely-piloted drone aircraft.[21] Palestinian militant factions were also reported to have fired rockets into northern Israel.

D.   UN Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004)

International pressure for change in Lebanon began to build in the autumn of 2004 during discussions about extending the mandate of the pro-Syrian president, Emile Lahoud. Damascus was reported to have put heavy pressure on the Lebanese government to endorse the extension, prompting condemnation from the international community. In September the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1559[22] in which it called for respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon. The Security Council said it was "gravely concerned at the continued presence of armed militias in Lebanon, which prevent the Lebanese government from exercising its full sovereignty over all Lebanese territory". It called upon all remaining foreign (i.e. Syrian) forces to withdraw from Lebanon and called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias (i.e. Hizbollah), so as to support the extension of control of the Lebanese government over all Lebanese territory.[23] Kofi Annan reported in October 2004 that the only significant foreign forces in Lebanon, aside from the UN presence, were an estimated 14,000 Syrian troops.[24]

a.   Political changes in Lebanon and the Syrian withdrawal of 2005

Lebanese and international concerns about Syrian interference in the country's internal affairs were heightened by the assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri in mid-February 2005. The identity of the perpetrators was initially unclear, although some Lebanese suspected Syria had been involved. This view was at least partly corroborated by an international independent commission that was set up by the UN

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[21] *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the period from 21 July 2004 to 20 January 2005)*, S/2005/36, 20 January 2005

[22] Tabled by France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

[23] S/RES/1559, 2 September 2004. See Appendix Three for the full text.

[24] *Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)*, S/2004/7771, October 2004

Security Council to investigate the killing.[25] In Lebanon opposition politicians, backed by popular demonstrations, called for a peaceful "independence uprising" to force the resignation of the government and to push for a Syrian withdrawal. Large counter-demonstrations in favour of continued Syrian involvement were organised by Hizbollah, whose leaders dismissed calls for their fighters to disarm, arguing that they played a key role in deterring Israeli aggression against Lebanon.

As a result of the domestic pressure for change, the government resigned on 28 February 2005, in what subsequently became known as the "Cedar revolution". On 6 March 2005 President Bashar al-Assad announced a phased withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. An initial redeployment to the Beka'a valley in eastern Lebanon began in mid-March and the UN reported that Syrian military personnel had completed their withdrawal in late May. However, doubts were expressed by UN officials as to whether intelligence personnel had also been withdrawn fully.

Parliamentary elections were held in four stages during May and June 2005, resulting in a victory for the anti-Syrian opposition bloc, which won 72 seats in the 128-seat assembly. The new parliament voted to re-elect Nabih Berri as speaker, a position he has held since 1992. Mr Berri heads the mostly Shia Amal party and established himself as an intermediary between the government and the Hizbollah leadership. Fouad Siniora, formerly a close associate of Mr Hariri, was approved as Prime Minister. President Lahoud remained in power, despite pressure for him to step down. Hizbollah, now the most powerful military force in Lebanon, was given two seats in the Lebanese cabinet.

The new government, backed by the United States and the European Union, embarked on a programme of political and economic reform. In February 2006 a National Dialogue was instituted, consisting of high-level talks between the various parties and factions. The aim was to seek agreement on two outstanding issues: the future of the country's pro-Syrian President, Emile Lahoud, whose mandate had been extended by parliament beyond 2004 following intense pressure from Damascus, and the disarmament and demobilisation of Hizbollah's militia. The National Dialogue reconvened in April and May 2006, but the tense political climate, rising sectarian tensions and the resumption of assassinations and bombings, meant little progress was achieved before the process was adjourned on 29 June.

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[25] The International Independent Investigation Commission was established by the UN Security Council under Resolution 1595 of 7 April 2005. The Commission declared in its preliminary findings that it was highly unlikely that the Syrian or Lebanese intelligence agencies had been unaware of the assassination plot, adding that there was "converging evidence" pointing at both Lebanese and Syrian involvement in the attack. Syria denied the allegation. Source: *Report of the International Independent Investigation Commission established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1595 (2005)*, S/2005/662, 19 October 2005.

III   Conflict of July-August 2006

A.   Evolution of the conflict

The Israeli-Lebanese border area remained comparatively quiet in the months preceding the conflict of July-August 2006, although there were sporadic outbreaks of more serious violence. In mid-2005 fighting broke out in the Sheba'a Farms sector and in November 2005 fighters from Hizbollah's military wing, the Islamic Resistance,[26] crossed the border to mount a raid on Ghajar village. Israel responded with artillery and tank fire and aerial bombing along the length of the Blue Line, but chose not to escalate the crisis further, perhaps leading Hizbollah to conclude that similar raids in the future would bring only a limited Israeli response. Further clashes were reported in February and May 2006, but the ceasefire was restored on both occasions within a matter of hours.

The situation worsened dramatically, however, on 12 July 2006 when a group of Hizbollah fighters crossed the Lebanese border into Israel and attacked an Israeli military patrol, capturing two soldiers and killing eight. Israeli forces sent troops over the border into Lebanon in a failed rescue bid, suffering a further five casualties and the loss of a tank in the process.[27]

Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, described the attack as an "act of war". Hizbollah said it had seized the two men in an effort to secure the release of Lebanese prisoners held in Israeli jails, perhaps expecting Israel to agree to a prisoner exchange as it had in 2004. Israel admits to holding three Lebanese men, including Nissim Nasser, who has been convicted of spying for Hizbollah, and Samir Qantar, who is serving several life sentences for murdering a policeman, another man and his four-year-old daughter, during an attack on an Israeli apartment block in 1979. Hizbollah has frequently called for Qantar's release, but Israel refuses to discuss the matter, linking his status to its search for information about the Israeli pilot, Ron Arad, who was shot down over Lebanon in 1986.

The fighting spread rapidly along the whole Lebanese-Israeli border with both sides exchanging artillery and rocket fire. Hizbollah rockets struck IDF positions and Israeli towns, while Israel retaliated with ground, air and sea attacks. Israeli aircraft struck roads and bridges across southern Lebanon, in what was claimed to be an attempt to prevent Hizbollah from transferring the abducted soldiers away from the border.

On 13 July the conflict escalated further, as Israel imposed an air and sea blockade on Lebanon in an attempt to prevent military supplies reaching Hizbollah from Iran and Syria. It launched large-scale air strikes on infrastructure and strategic targets country-wide, with attacks reported on Beirut international airport, port facilities, roads, bridges,

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[26] Estimates of the strength of the Islamic Resistance vary: *Jane's World Insurgency And Terrorism* of 11 January 2006 reported that: "At the higher end of the spectrum, there have been estimates of as many as 5,000 regular forces with perhaps 15,000 reserves. Other estimates suggest a hardcore of about 300 well-trained guerrillas, backed by up to 3,000 reserve fighters."

[27] For a description of the events of 12 July, see *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon* (For the period from 21 January 2006 to 18 July 2006), S/2006/560, 21 July 2006, para 3

fuel depots and petrol stations. Beirut suburbs where Hizbollah was believed to be active were also struck, while Hizbollah positions and rocket launchers in the south were attacked with air and ground forces. Israeli ground incursions into the south encountered fierce resistance from well-entrenched Hizbollah fighters, and an Israeli gunboat patrolling the Lebanese coast was struck by an anti-ship missile, causing severe damage. Israeli officials said the offensive would continue until the captured IDF soldiers had been freed, Hizbollah had been disarmed and the Lebanese army had taken control of the border area.

As the conflict escalated, Hizbollah launched nearly 4,000 Katyusha-style unguided rockets in indiscriminate attacks on northern Israel, killing more than 40 civilians and forcing around 500,000 to seek refuge further south. Most of the estimated 12,000-15,000 rockets and missiles in Hizbollah's inventory were believed to be short-range weapons, like the Soviet-era BM-21 Grad rocket system with a range of around 25 kilometres, but strikes on the Israeli city of Haifa demonstrated that it also had longer-range weapons, like the Iranian manufactured Fajr-3 and Fajr-5 missiles, with ranges of up to 45 kilometres and 75 kilometres respectively. Unconfirmed reports suggested it might also have even longer-range Zelzal-2 missiles in its inventory, which would be capable of reaching as far south as Tel Aviv,[28] although no such weapons were fired during the conflict, perhaps due to Israeli successes in destroying the launchers.[29] Other reports suggested that Hizbollah had hidden weaponry in residential areas and, in some cases, in private homes, thereby making it difficult for Israel to destroy the rockets and their launchers without causing civilian casualties.

B.   International response and diplomatic efforts

International observers criticised Hizbollah for initiating the conflict with its raid of 12 July and for deliberately targeting civilians with its rocket attacks. An estimated 3,970 rockets landed in Israel during the conflict, 901 of them in urban areas.[30] The then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, said Hizbollah's "provocative attack" on 12 July had been the trigger for the crisis, adding that it was clear that the Lebanese government had had no advance knowledge of the attack. He said that Hizbollah's actions, which the group portrayed as defending Palestinian and Lebanese interests, in fact, did neither, but instead held an entire nation hostage.[31]

There was unusually strong criticism of Hizbollah from some Arab states – during the early part of the conflict at least – with the Saudi government declaring that Hizbollah had created a "gravely dangerous situation" and that its leaders alone should "bear the full responsibility of these irresponsible acts and shoulder the burden of ending the crisis

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[28] Some analysts believe the longest-range rockets are held under the control of Iranian Revolutionary Guards units based in the Beka'a valley in eastern Lebanon and are intended as a deterrent to be used only in the event of an Israeli attack on Iran.

[29] According to a report from the Washington Institute of Near East Policy, the Israeli air force destroyed 59 intermediate and long-range missile launchers during the second day of the war in Lebanon. Quoted in 'Report: IAF wiped out 59 Iranian missile launchers in 34 minutes', *Ha'aretz* newspaper, Israel, 24 October 2006.

[30] *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, S/2006/730, 12 September 2006, para 5

[31] *Briefing of the Security Council by the Secretary-General*, 20 July 2006, SC/8780

they have created.[32] One Israeli analyst suggested that two factors lay behind that shift in tone from the Saudis and their Gulf state neighbours:[33] firstly, a distrust of non-state actors like Hizbollah and a desire on the part of governments in the Arabian peninsula to preserve their monopoly on power, especially on questions of war and peace; and secondly, a concern about the growth of Shia/Iranian power and influence across the region, not only with the establishment of a parallel government by Hizbollah in Lebanon, but also with the emergence of a predominantly Shia government in Iraq.[34]

Israel drew criticism from some quarters for its use of "disproportionate" force in its military response, particularly in attacks on civilian areas in Beirut and in towns and villages across the south.[35] A series of Israeli air strikes on the Lebanese village of Qana left at least 28 people dead, many of whom were children. A further 13 were reported missing.[36] UN observers based in southern Lebanon as part of UNIFIL lost four soldiers in an Israeli attack, despite repeated warnings to Israel that its artillery was putting the observation post at risk. The fighting resulted in the internal displacement of nearly one million Lebanese. That movement of population prompted concerns about a potential humanitarian crisis that would be exacerbated by the damage to critical infrastructure.

Mr Annan acknowledged the deplorable nature of Hizbollah's actions and Israel's right to defend itself, but warned that "the excessive use of force is to be condemned." He cautioned that a number of Israel's actions had hurt and killed Lebanese civilians and military personnel and had caused great damage to the infrastructure of a country whose government "clearly espoused democratic values and deserved all possible support from the international community". He concluded that both the deliberate targeting by Hizbollah of Israeli population centres with hundreds of indiscriminate weapons and Israel's disproportionate use of force and collective punishment of the Lebanese people should stop.[37]

A number of observers criticised Israel's targeting of non-Hizbollah Lebanese infrastructure. Israeli officials had hoped this would serve a dual purpose of inhibiting Hizbollah's re-supply and focusing Lebanese anger against Hizbollah for initiating the conflict, thereby perhaps forcing it to back down, although a UN mission to the region warned that Israeli attacks were doing little to decrease popular support for the movement.[38]

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[32] 'Saudi Official Comments on latest events in Lebanon and Palestine', press release from the Saudi Embassy in the United States, 14 July 2006

[33] Some in Israel and the US apparently hoped that the change in tone would endure, but the intensity and duration of the Israeli military offensive against Lebanon resulted in a shift back to the traditional lines of criticism of Israeli aggression. See for example, 'Watching Lebanon', Seymour Hersh, *New Yorker*, 21 August 2006

[34] See for example, Dr Mark A. Heller, Director of Research at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies in Israel, 'Regional Reactions to the Israel-Hezbollah Confrontation', 15 August 2006, British Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) website.

[35] For an assessment of Israeli and Hizbollah actions during the conflict, see *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-2/1**, UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/3/2, 23 November 2006.

[36] Initial reports had suggested that 54 Lebanese civilians had been killed, at least 34 of them children. Revised figures were released by the US body Human Rights Watch in a preliminary report of 2 August 2006. See 'Israel/Lebanon: Qana Death Toll at 28', Human Rights Watch press release, 2 August 2006.

[37] *Briefing of the Security Council by the Secretary-General*, 20 July 2006, SC/8780

[38] *ibid.*

As the fighting continued into its third week, pressure for an end to the violence continued to build. At an international conference in Rome on 26 July the Lebanese Prime Minister outlined a seven-point plan that called for an "immediate and comprehensive cease-fire and a declaration of agreement on the following issues":

> 1- An undertaking to release the Lebanese and Israeli prisoners and detainees through the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross].
>
> 2- The withdrawal of the Israeli army behind the Blue Line, and the return of the displaced to their villages.
>
> 3- A commitment from the Security Council to place the Shebaa Farms area and the Kfarshouba Hills under UN jurisdiction until border delineation and Lebanese sovereignty over them are fully settled. While in UN custody, the area will be accessible to Lebanese property owners there. Further, Israel surrenders all remaining landmine maps in South Lebanon to the UN.
>
> 4- The Lebanese government extends its authority over its territory through its own legitimate armed forces, such that there will be no weapons or authority other than that of the Lebanese state as stipulated in the Taef national reconciliation document.
>
> 5- The UN international force, operating in South Lebanon, is supplemented and enhanced in numbers, equipment, mandate and scope of operation, as needed, in order to undertake urgent humanitarian and relief work and guarantee stability and security in the south so that those who fled their homes can return.
>
> 6- The UN, in cooperation with the relevant parties, undertakes the necessary measures to once again put into effect the Armistice Agreement signed by Lebanon and Israel in 1949, and to insure adherence to the provisions of that agreement, as well as to explore possible amendments to or development of said provisions, as necessary.
>
> 7- The international community commits to support Lebanon on all levels, and to assist it in facing the tremendous burden resulting from the human, social and economic tragedy which has afflicted the country, especially in the areas of relief, reconstruction and rebuilding of the national economy.[39]

The British and US governments declined to endorse the idea of an immediate ceasefire, arguing that it would not prove durable and that the underlying causes of the conflict needed to be addressed in order to prevent a recurrence of the fighting. On 28 July President George Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair announced a three-point plan to achieve that goal. At a joint press conference, President Bush declared:

> Our top priorities in Lebanon are providing immediate humanitarian relief, achieving an end to the violence, ensuring the return of displaced persons and assisting with reconstruction. We recognise that many Lebanese people have lost

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[39]   'Lebanon under siege', Lebanese government website, posted 2 August 2006

their homes, so we will help rebuild the civilian infrastructure that will allow them to return home safely.

Our goal is to achieve a lasting peace which requires that a free, democratic and independent Lebanese government be in power to exercise full authority over its territory. We want a Lebanon free of militias and foreign interference, and a Lebanon that governs its own destiny, as is called for by UN security resolutions 1559 and 1680. We agreed that a multinational force must be despatched to Lebanon quickly to augment a Lebanese army as it moves to the south of that country. An effective multinational force will help speed delivery of humanitarian relief, facilitate the return of displaced persons and support the Lebanese government as it asserts full sovereignty over its territory and guards its borders.[40]

Mr Blair commented:

The purpose of what we are doing therefore is to bring about, yes, the cessation of hostilities which we want to see as quickly and as urgently as possible, but also to put in place a framework that allows us to stabilise the situation for the medium and longer term.[41]

Talk of a ceasefire intensified further following the Israeli bombing of Qana on 30 July. A visit by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Beirut was cancelled when it became clear that Lebanese politicians would refuse to meet her unless Washington backed a ceasefire. Prime Minister Fouad Siniora criticised what he called "heinous Israeli war crimes" in Qana and elsewhere and warned that diplomatic contacts with the US would not resume until a ceasefire was in place.[42] At an emergency session of the UN Security Council that day Kofi Annan said he was "deeply disturbed" that previous calls for a ceasefire had gone unheeded. In response to US pressure, Israel said it would not support a ceasefire, but would institute a 48-hour partial halt to air strikes in southern Lebanon. Ms Rice said the US would seek a UN resolution calling for a cessation of hostilities during the coming week and on 1 August European Union (EU) foreign ministers called for "an immediate cessation of hostilities to be followed by a sustainable cease-fire".[43]

Attention then switched to the UN Security Council. A draft resolution presented by Washington and Paris was criticised by the Lebanese government and other Arab states for omitting a requirement that Israel withdraw immediately from southern Lebanon. Israel said an immediate withdrawal would leave a power vacuum in the south and insisted it would only withdraw once Lebanese army units and an expanded UNIFIL were in a position to take control. An emergency meeting of the Arab League in Beirut on 7 August endorsed a revised Lebanese proposal to deploy 15,000 Lebanese Army troops to southern Lebanon to fill the security gap between an Israeli withdrawal and the arrival of a reinforced UNIFIL

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[40] Press Conference with President Bush, No.10 Downing Street website, 28 July 2006
[41] Ibid.
[42] Guardian, 31 July 2006
[43] Press release 12023/06 (Presse 230), EU General Affairs and External Relations, 1 August 2006

Security Council negotiations culminated on 11 August with the adoption of Resolution 1701 and a call for an immediate cessation of hostilities.[44] Kofi Annan said that, provided the fighting stopped, he believed the resolution would make it possible to conclude a sustainable and lasting ceasefire, which could be the beginning of a process to solve the underlying political problems in the region through peaceful means. He expressed disappointment, however, that the Council had taken so long to act, warning that:

> All members of this Council must be aware that this inability to act sooner has badly shaken the world's faith in its authority and integrity. War is not politics by other means, but represents a catastrophic failure of political skill and imagination.[45]

C.   Casualties and costs

The cessation of hostilities came into effect early on 14 August after two more days of heavy fighting. Both sides claimed victory: Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that the military campaign had been successful and would lead to the elimination of Hizbollah's "state within a state", while Hizbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah claimed the movement had won an "historic victory".

During the month-long conflict, an estimated 1,200 Lebanese were reported to have been killed and over 4,000 injured. Most of them were civilians and many were children. Israel lost 117 soldiers and 43 civilians, and suffered nearly 1,500 wounded, 33 of whom had serious injuries. It claimed that its forces had killed 400-500 Hizbollah fighters and that the militia's rocket force had been significantly degraded. Others disputed that interpretation, suggesting that as few as 184 fighters had been killed.[46] Critics also noted that the two IDF soldiers seized in the initial raid had not been returned and that Hizbollah remained a potent fighting force. On the final day before the cessation of hostilities came into effect, Hizbollah had fired 250 rockets across the border, reportedly the highest number fired on any single day during the conflict.

Both sides suffered damage to property. In Lebanon, an estimated 15,000 homes were destroyed and 900 factories, markets, farms and other commercial buildings damaged, along with 31 airports, ports, water and sewage treatment plants, dams and electrical plants. 145 bridges and over-passes were also damaged.[47] The cost of repairing the damage to buildings and infrastructure, much of which had been only recently rebuilt after the civil war came to an end in 1990, was put at around $3.6 billion, while the Lebanese tourist industry, which earns the country an estimated $2.5 billion per year, was also badly affected. Hizbollah was reported to be handing out payments of around $10,000 to people whose homes had been damaged.

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[44] S/RES/1701, 11 August 2006. See Appendix Four for the full text.
[45] UN press release, SC/8808, 11 August 2006
[46] Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry, 'How Hezbollah defeated Israel. Part 2: Winning the Ground War', *Asia Times*, 13 October 2006
[47] Sources: *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, S/2006/730, 12 September 2006, paras 3-6, and 'Middle East crisis: Facts and figures', 31 August 2006, BBC News website.

Civilians and troops in southern Lebanon have had to contend with significant numbers of cluster munitions that were dropped by Israel during the conflict. UN estimates place the number of submunitions used at around four million.[48] The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre reported that an estimated 90 per cent of all cluster bombs were discharged between the time of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 on 11 August and the actual cessation of hostilities on 14 August. Kofi Annan commented in his September 2006 report that:

> The humanitarian impact of these explosive remnants of war on civilians has resulted in at least 14 deaths and 57 injuries. The vast majority of these casualties have been young men and boys. In addition to the threat to human lives, unexploded ordnance poses an obstacle to the return of displaced families, access to housing and agriculture activities affecting the livelihoods of the population of southern Lebanon. […] Based on funding requested and capacity, it is estimated that it will take well over a year to clear the cluster bomblets.[49]

On the Israeli side, more than 300 buildings, including houses and factories were reported to have been damaged. The cost of repairing the damage in Israel was put at around $1.1 billion, while the total cost of the war, including military spending and lost Gross Domestic Product (GDP), was estimated to be up to $4.8 billion.[50]

D. Political impact in Israel and Lebanon

The conflict also had significant political implications in both Israel and Lebanon. The coalition government in Israel, which came to power in elections in March 2006, faced heavy criticism for failing to achieve its declared objectives of securing the release of the two IDF soldiers and removing the Hizbollah threat from Israel's northern border. Concerns were also raised about the lack of adequate shelters and emergency supplies for civilians in northern Israel to protect against Hizbollah rocket attacks.

The IDF was criticised for poor planning and execution of the military campaign. Hundreds of army reservists signed an open letter demanding a full investigation into the conduct of the war and accusing the military and political leadership of indecisiveness and of changing the aims of the war. Analysts questioned the reliance on air power during the early stages of the conflict and expressed doubts about the decision to launch a major ground offensive towards the Litani River in the days prior to the cessation of hostilities, a move that they believe was undertaken too late, leaving Israeli forces dangerously spread out and exposed.

In the view of some, Israel should have mounted a stronger ground offensive at an earlier stage to clear the area south of the Litani River from where Hizbollah short-range rockets were being launched. Others dispute the view that a more powerful ground

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[48] Human Rights Watch provided the following comparative figures: "For comparison, Coalition forces used about 1.9 million submunitions in Iraq in 2003, and the U.S. Air Force used about 248,000 submunitions in Afghanistan in 2001-2002." Source: HRW webpage on cluster munitions in Lebanon, last updated October 2006, accessed 8 January 2007.

[49] *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, S/2006/730, 12 September 2006, paras 38-39

[50] Israeli Ministry of Finance figures quoted in *Ha'aretz* newspaper, 13 August 2006

offensive would have succeeded, pointing to the casualties Israel suffered during its occupation of southern Lebanon prior to 2000 and arguing that Hizbollah's heavy defensive positions would have inflicted even heavier losses on the IDF.

Mr Olmert admitted in a special Knesset session that there had been deficiencies in the way the conflict had been managed, but said that Israel's action had ensured that Hizbollah would no longer be able to act like a "state within a state as an arm of the axis of evil", adding that the "strategic balance" in the region had shifted against Hizbollah.[51] The leader of the Likud opposition, former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, said there had been "very many shortcomings" in Israel's preparedness and in the conduct of the fighting, adding that the policy of unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000 had given Hizbollah "a tactical advantage".[52]

An inquiry into the conduct of the military campaign concluded in mid-January 2007, prompting the resignation of the chief of the armed forces, Lt Gen Dan Halutz. Inquiries into the government's handling of the crisis were continuing as of 19 January, amid opposition calls for Mr Olmert and Defence Minister Amir Peretz to resign.

In Lebanon, both the Lebanese government and Hizbollah were left in somewhat delicate, yet potentially strengthened positions as the fighting drew to a close. On the one hand, Hizbollah faced domestic criticism for provoking a conflict with its raid of 12 July, a factor that prompted the group's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, to admit in a television interview that he had not anticipated the scale of the Israeli military response:

> We did not think, even 1 per cent, that the capture would lead to a war of this magnitude. You ask me if I had known on 11 July that the operation would lead to such a war, would I do it? I say no, absolutely not.[53]

On the other, Hizbollah's performance during the conflict and the very fact that it was still fighting one month on against a significantly superior military opponent, coupled with Lebanese anger at the extent of the destruction caused by Israel's response and Hizbollah's swift provision of reconstruction assistance in the aftermath, won the party at least grudging admiration from many Lebanese and allowed Sheikh Nasrallah to talk of a military and strategic victory for the movement that had dealt a "severe blow" to US plans for the region.[54]

The anti-Syrian ruling coalition government, commonly referred to as the "March 14th movement" after the popular revolution in 2005 that brought it to power, emerged with bolstered support and renewed plans to push forward on the issues of economic reform and militia disarmament, although that strength was tempered by criticisms of its slow response to the challenges of reconstruction and by concerns that an emboldened Hizbollah and its allies might seize the political initiative in a bid to overturn the changes put in place since the Cedar revolution of 2005.

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[51] 'Ceasefire holds as Olmert admits tactical deficiencies', *Guardian*, 15 August 2006
[52] Ibid.
[53] 'Hizbollah chief regrets kidnapping of Israelis that led to Lebanon war', *Independent*, 28 August 2006
[54] 'Hezbollah head praises 'victory'', BBC News website, 22 September 2006

During the autumn of 2006, relations between Hizbollah and the government deteriorated sharply, after the former called for the formation of a new government of national unity and demanded an increased number of cabinet seats for itself and its allies that would have provided them with a blocking minority. Prime Minister Siniora refused, accusing Hizbollah of attempting a political takeover on the back of its military successes.

By November the political scene had become deadlocked and analysts warned that the country was facing its worst political crisis since the civil war. Hizbollah and Amal ministers resigned from the cabinet on 11 November ahead of a vote on establishing a tribunal to prosecute suspects from the investigation into the assassination of Rafik Hariri. Government ministers accused Hizbollah of serving Syrian interests, while Shia leaders claimed the government was acting unconstitutionally as it was taking decisions without Shia representation in the cabinet. A counter-proposal from the March 14th group for a revised government of national unity was rejected by the opposition.[55]

Assassinations of political figures continued, the most prominent being the Maronite Christian politician and government minister, Pierre Gemayel, who was shot dead by unidentified gunmen on 21 November. The attack drew strong international condemnation and declarations of support from the US and EU for the Lebanese government.

During December 2006 the pro-Syrian opposition, including Hizbollah and supporters of the Christian leader General Michel Aoun, mounted large-scale demonstrations in Beirut to demand the formation of a national unity government or the holding of fresh elections. They criticised the government's reform programme of tax increases and privatisation that is aimed at reducing Lebanon's debt. Furthermore, they accused Mr Siniora of pursuing a pro-Israeli and pro-US agenda by seeking Hizbollah's disarmament, a move they argued would leave Lebanon defenceless against future Israeli aggression.

The ruling coalition, which enjoys the backing of the United States, key European governments, Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab states, responded by blaming Hizbollah for starting a destructive war with Israel and by claiming that, rather than deterring Israel, the presence of Hizbollah's militia had turned the country into "a battleground used by Iran to improve its bargaining position with the international community and by the Syrian regime to exercise its hegemony over Lebanon."[56]

As of 19 January 2007 mediation efforts by the Arab League had not made progress and the opposition demonstrations were continuing. The protesters said they would escalate their campaign ahead of an international donor conference on Lebanon in Paris on 25 January. There were fears that the protests could trigger street clashes between supporters of the government and opposition. The Shia Speaker in Parliament, Nabih Berri, warned on 15 January of a grave danger looming over the country: "The country is like a ticking time bomb. Its detonation will lead to a catastrophe".[57]

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[55] 'Hariri says Siniora unity offer 'remains in effect'', *Daily Star* (Lebanon), 22 November 2006
[56] Quoted in 'Lebanon after the war - Hizbullah's new offensive', *The Economist*, 14 September 2006
[57] Quoted in 'Speaker says Lebanon standoff a ticking time bomb', *Reuters*, 15 January 2007

IV   Post-conflict military and diplomatic developments

A.   Summary of UN Security Council Resolution 1701

UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which was adopted unanimously on 11 August 2006, contained a number of elements:

- Firstly, the Security Council called for a full cessation of hostilities based upon, in particular, the immediate cessation by Hezbollah of all attacks and the immediate cessation by Israel of all offensive military operations. It then called for the Lebanese government and UNIFIL to deploy their forces together throughout the south, and for Israel to withdraw all its forces from southern Lebanon, in parallel, as that deployment began;
- Secondly, the Council authorised an increase in the strength of UNIFIL to a maximum of 15,000 troops. The force was provided with an enhanced mandate that involved monitoring the cessation of hostilities, helping to ensure humanitarian access to civilians and the safe return of displaced persons, supporting the Lebanese armed forces as they deployed in the south, and helping the Lebanese government secure the country's borders to prevent the entry of illicit weaponry;
- Thirdly, the Council called for Israel and Lebanon to support a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution that would include, among other things, the removal of armed personnel belonging to Hizbollah or other non-state groups from southern Lebanon; full implementation of the 1989 Taif Accords that required the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon; the absence of foreign forces from Lebanon unless authorised by the government; and a prohibition on the sale or supply of arms to Lebanon unless authorised by the government.
- Fourthly, in support of a long-term solution, the Council requested that the Secretary-General develop proposals for delineating the international border, especially in those areas where the border remained disputed or uncertain, including by dealing with the Shebaa farms area, and to present to the Security Council those proposals within 30 days. Furthermore, the Council emphasised in the preamble to the Resolution the need to secure the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers, and said it encouraged efforts aimed at urgently settling the issue of Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel.
- Fifthly, the Council again stressed the importance of, and the need to achieve, a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East".

Each of these elements is considered in greater detail below.

B.   Cessation of hostilities and Israeli withdrawal

The cessation of hostilities has continued to hold in the five months since it came into effect, despite sporadic violence during the first week. On 19 August 2006 Israeli forces mounted a raid near Baalbek in the Beka'a valley deep inside Lebanon in what it claimed was an attempt to halt the re-supply of Hizbollah from Syria. The Lebanese government described the incident as a "naked violation" of the ceasefire.

The Israeli aerial and maritime blockades that had been imposed to restrict the re-supply of weaponry to Hizbollah were lifted on 6 and 7 September respectively. International forces operating as part of the expanded UN force assumed responsibility for monitoring Beirut international airport and patrolling the Lebanese coast.

Israeli forces completed their withdrawal from most of southern Lebanon on 1 October, and from around the divided village of Ghajar on 7 November, although as of mid-January 2007 IDF forces remained in control of the northern part of the village that lies on Lebanese territory.[58]

As the IDF withdrew during August and September, Lebanese army units moved into the vacated area, deploying into the south for the first time in three decades and taking up positions along the eastern part of the Blue Line for the first time ever. The plans envisioned a force of four brigades in the areas between the Blue Line and the Litani River, and another brigade and two battalions in reserve north of the Litani River.[59] Although the Lebanese Army stressed it would not be proactively seeking out and confiscating militia weaponry, it reached an understanding with Hizbollah that any arms left in the open in the area would be confiscated.[60]

Israeli over-flights of Lebanon, which Kofi Annan has described as "persistent and provocative", have continued since the cessation of hostilities. Israel maintains that such over-flights are vital for monitoring Hizbollah's movements in the south and its attempts at weapons re-supply across the Syrian border. Occasionally the flights have reached deep into Lebanese airspace and have generated sonic booms over populated areas. Kofi Annan has declared repeatedly that such air incursions violate Lebanese sovereignty and that he expects them to cease fully.[61]

C.   UNIFIL II

Repeating the language used in Resolution 1559 of 2004, the UN Security Council again emphasised in Resolution 1701 the importance of the extension of the control of the Lebanese government over all its territory, and for it to exercise full sovereignty. Resolution 1701 contains a number of provisions intended to support that aim, including Council authorisation for UNIFIL to be expanded in mandate and strength.

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[58] The northern part of the village is located inside Lebanon and the southern part lies on Israeli-occupied Syrian territory. IDF forces occupied the southern part when they seized the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 conflict and retained control following their withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000. Prior to the conflict of mid-2006 the village provided one of the main flashpoints between Hizbollah and the IDF. As of mid-January 2007, UN efforts to mediate an Israeli withdrawal from the northern part of the village were continuing, with progress reportedly made during the previous month.

[59] *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, S/2006/730, 12 September 2006, para 17

[60] 'Murr confirms Lebanese Army confiscated Hizbullah weapons', *Daily Star* (Lebanon), 11 October 2006

[61] *Fourth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)*, S/2006/832, 19 October 2006, para 21

a.   Expanded mandate

The Security Council has authorised an extension to the mandate of UNIFIL and to the geographical scope of its operations. In addition to the original role set out in Resolution 425 (i.e. to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon; restore international peace and security; and assist the government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area), UNIFIL has been tasked to:

- Monitor the cessation of hostilities;
- Accompany and support the Lebanese armed forces as they deploy throughout the south, including along the Blue Line, as Israel withdraws its armed forces from Lebanon, and to coordinate those activities with the government of Lebanon and the government of Israel;
- Extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons;
- Assist the Lebanese armed forces in taking steps towards the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani river of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Lebanese government and of UNIFIL;
- Assist the Lebanese government, at its request, in securing its borders and other entry points to prevent the entry without its consent of arms or related materiel.

UN officials cautioned that an expanded UNIFIL was intended to buy time for progress on the political track both within Lebanon and between Lebanon and its neighbours, but that peacekeeping could not substitute for a political solution.[62]

b.   Troop contributions

At the end of July 2006 UNIFIL consisted of 1,990 troops, assisted by 50 military observers from the UN Truce Supervision Operation (UNTSO) based in Jerusalem, and 100 international civilian personnel and 305 local civilian staff.[63] Contributors of military personnel were China (187 personnel), France (209), Ghana (648), India (673), Ireland (5), Italy (53), Poland (214) and Ukraine (1).[64]

Resolution 1701 (August 2006) authorised the deployment of a further 13,000 military personnel to Lebanon as part of decisions to expand the UN operation. However, concerns were initially raised within the international community over the ability to generate sufficient and robust forces within a relatively short timeframe and over the emerging diplomatic impasse regarding which country should take command of the expanded UN force. France, which had command responsibility for the existing UNIFIL operation, had initially declared its intention to commit only 200 additional troops to the UN operation having expressed concerns over the clarity of the UN mandate and

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[62] See comments made later by the UN Secretary-General in his *Report of the Secretary-General on the Middle East*, S/2006/956, 11 December 2006, para 32

[63] 'Lebanon - UNIFIL - Facts and Figures', UN DPKO website

[64] *Report of the UN Secretary General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon*, S/2006/560, 21 July 2006

subsequent rules of engagement. Consequently, Italy offered to deploy 3,000 military personnel to the region and to assume command of the peacekeeping force.

Commenting on the motivations of the Italian government, an article in *The Financial Times* stated:

> At home there are misgivings about whether Italy's centre-left government is overplaying its hand and being less than frank about the full range of motives behind its unusually prominent role in the Lebanon crisis […]

> The UN mission has clear risks, a point acknowledged by Arturo Parisi, Italy's defence minister. "What's at risk in Lebanon isn't Italy but the capacity of the international community to govern the world, prevent war and promote peace by means of the UN," […]

> Yet Italy's willingness to take the lead in Lebanon is driven by other factors as well. Italy aims to ease tensions with the US over its imminent troop withdrawal from Iraq by helping out in another regional hot spot central to US interests.

> Italy also wants to block Germany's demand for a permanent UN Security Council seat, a campaign that looks more convincing if Italy, unlike Germany, takes centre stage in such a dangerous UN military operation.[65]

In response France announced, ahead of an EU Foreign Ministers meeting on 25 August 2006, its intention to deploy 1,800 additional troops to UNIFIL and retain command of the operation. A number of analysts suggested that the French decision had come as a result of assurances that a clearer mandate for the force and more robust rules of engagement would be established. Others argued, however, that both domestic and international criticism had prompted a re-think by the French government. An article in *The Times* commented:

> Pique, shame and ridicule often play important roles in shaping foreign policy, even in countries that aspire to principle and responsibility. President Chirac's announcement that France would, after all, send a further 1,600 troops to Lebanon to join the United Nations force was prompted officially by assurances of a clearer mandate and more robust rules of engagement. In fact, his offer came in reply to the widespread ridicule, within France and abroad, of his Government's earlier proposal to send a mere 200 troops as part of the 15,000-strong international force that France, together with the United States, envisaged in its UN ceasefire resolution.

> It was not only domestic criticism that prompted a rethink, however. Italy's offer of 3,000 troops and its suggestion that it should lead the peacekeeping force embarrassed France and underlined the American accusation that the Europeans have neither the stomach nor the means to back their lofty moral positions with anything that demands commitment and cost. Indeed, Romano Prodi, the Italian Prime Minister, was quick to understand that the longer the bickering continued, the more desperate the situation in Lebanon became and precarious the

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[65] 'Mixed motives drive Italy to take leading role in peacekeeping force', *The Financial Times,* 1 September 2006

ceasefire. He also saw that, in the face of French funk, Italy had a chance to show that, despite allied misgivings over his centre-left coalition and his Government's withdrawal from Iraq, Italy remained a staunch Atlanticist and reliable Nato ally.[66]

At the meeting of EU Foreign Ministers it was confirmed that France would continue to lead the UN operation until February 2007; while a new Strategic Military Cell led by an Italian General would be established at the UN's Headquarters to provide strategic guidance to UNIFIL II operations and which would report to the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations.[67] It was also decided that Italy would assume command of UNIFIL on the ground from February 2007 onwards.

To date, commitments to expand the UNIFIL force have been made by a number of countries, although some of those personnel have yet to be deployed. As of 15 January 2007 11,570 military personnel were deployed as part of UNIFIL II, including 9,812 troops on the ground in southern Lebanon[68] and 1,758 personnel deployed as part of the maritime task force. The force also continues to be assisted by military observers from UNTSO and other international and local civilian staff.

In addition to forces already in southern Lebanon as part of the original UNIFIL operation, the expanded force once it is fully deployed will consist of the following troop contributions:

- **Italy** – has committed a total of 3,000 troops to UNIFIL.

- **France** – has committed an additional 1,800 troops to its existing contingent of 200 personnel. In total, France's UNIFIL commitment will be 2,000 troops.

- **Germany** – on 20 September 2006 the Bundestag gave its approval for the deployment of a naval taskforce consisting of 2,400 personnel. Germany will not, however, commit ground troops to the peacekeeping force.

- **Bangladesh** – has indicated its intention to deploy up to 2,000 troops.

- **Spain** – the Spanish Parliament approved the deployment of 1,100 troops to Lebanon on 7 September 2006.

- **Indonesia** – has committed 1,000 troops to the UNIFIL operation.[69]

- **China** – the Chinese government announced on 18 September that it would increase its contingent in Lebanon to 1,000 personnel, from its current level of

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[66] 'Where Rome leads an embarrassed France has been forced to follow in Lebanon', *The Times,* 26 August 2006

[67] UN press release, UN Information Service website, PKO/147, 22 September 2006

[68] A complement of 5,000 personnel, which had been identified as the milestone for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, was achieved on 20 September 2006.

[69] Israel initially opposed the deployment of troops from countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia that do not formally recognise Israel and have no diplomatic ties with the country, but has now relented.

187. This is the largest Chinese contribution to a UN peacekeeping mission to date.

- **Turkey** – on 5 September the Turkish Parliament approved the deployment of between 700 and 1,000 Turkish troops to Lebanon.

- **Nepal** – on 30 August the Nepal government approved the deployment to Lebanon of one mechanised infantry battalion, consisting of 850 troops.

- **Poland** – has committed an additional 286 troops to its existing contingent of 214 personnel in UNIFIL. Poland's total commitment to UNIFIL II will be 500 troops.

- **Belgium** – has committed to deploying 394 personnel, including anti-mine experts, medical units and engineers. A de-mining team from Luxembourg is expected to deploy with the Belgian contingent.

- **Malaysia** – on 20 September 2006 it was confirmed that 360 Malaysian peacekeeping troops would be deployed as part of UNIFIL. Initially an offer of 1,000 troops had been made by the Malaysian government, which has subsequently indicated that the remainder of those forces would remain available for deployment if necessary.

- **South Korea** – on 22 December 2006 South Korea's National Assembly approved the deployment of 350 troops as part of the expanded UNIFIL force. Following a period of intensive combat training those forces are expected to enter into theatre in April 2007.

- **Qatar** – on 4 September 2006 the Qatari Foreign Minister, Sheik Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, committed to deploy between 200 and 300 troops to UNIFIL, making it the first Arab country to contribute to the expanded UN force.

- **Finland** – on 8 September 2006 the Finnish President authorised the deployment of 250 personnel to Lebanon.

- **Ireland** – the Irish government indicated in mid-September 2006 that it would deploy 150 Irish military personnel to southern Lebanon in mid-November in order to provide security for deploying Finnish forces. Approval for that deployment was granted by the Irish Parliament on 12 October.

- **Portugal** – announced its intention to deploy 140 personnel in a reconstruction role.

- **Norway** – has committed 100 troops and four naval vessels to UNIFIL. Domestic opposition to the deployment has been considerable after it emerged that the Norwegian government had initially not sought parliamentary approval for the deployment.

- **Greece** – has committed to deploy two naval vessels (a frigate with its helicopter and a landing vessel for transporting humanitarian aid) and a specialist commando divers unit as part of the naval task force.

- **Bulgaria** – on 6 October 2006 the National Assembly of Bulgaria approved a decision to deploy a warship to assist in patrolling Lebanon's coastline. That warship is expected to remain in theatre until 15 December 2006.

- **Slovenia** – has committed to deploy 10-20 troops and a number of de-mining experts.

- **UK** – has indicated that it will provide six Jaguar aircraft, two AWACS reconnaissance aircraft and a frigate or destroyer to the UN force, although it will not commit ground troops. The UK has also offered the use of RAF Akrotiri on Cyprus as a staging post for other international forces.

- **Denmark** – has committed to sending three naval vessels to help patrol the coast but is unwilling to commit ground troops.

- **Sweden** – announced that it will commit a coastal patrol vessel to the UN force, but like the UK, Germany and Denmark, it will not commit ground forces.

Cyprus has been used as a staging post for international forces, while the US indicated that it would assist the expanded UN peacekeeping force with logistical support, command and control, communications and intelligence assets, rather than forces deployed in the region.[70]

c.   *Rules of engagement*

Under paragraph 12 of Resolution 1701, UNIFIL is authorised to:

> Take all necessary action in areas of deployment of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities, to ensure that its area of operations is not utilised for hostile activities of any kind, to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council, and to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.[71]

In response to concerns over the clarity of that mandate in determining the rules of engagement (RoE) for peacekeeping forces, a statement setting out the RoE guidelines for UNIFIL II was published on 3 October 2006. That document states:

> Should the situation present any risk of resumption of hostile activities, UNIFIL rules of engagement allow UN forces to respond as required. UNIFIL

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[70] American Forces Information Service press Release, 21 August 2006

[71] S/RES/1701, 11 August 2006. See Appendix Four for the full text.

commanders have sufficient authority to act forcefully when confronted with hostile activity of any kind. UNIFIL has set up temporary checkpoints at key locations within its area of operations. Permanent checkpoints are being established by the LAF [Lebanese Armed Forces] to stop and search passing vehicles. In case specific information is available regarding movement of unauthorized weapons or equipment, the LAF will take required action. However, in situations where the LAF are not in a position to do so, UNIFIL will do everything necessary to fulfil its mandate in accordance with Security Council resolution 1701.

In implementing their mandate, all UNIFIL personnel may exercise the inherent right of self-defense. In addition, the use of force beyond self-defense may be applied to ensure that UNIFIL's area of operations, is not utilized for hostile activities; to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent UNIFIL from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council; to protect UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment; to ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel and humanitarian workers; and to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence in its area of deployment, within its capabilities.[72]

Some observers warn that UNIFIL, which is perceived by some Lebanese as primarily a NATO force, could become a target for al-Qaeda affiliated militants operating in northern Lebanon, with reports suggesting that cells have been seeking to infiltrate Palestinian refugee camps in the south. The UNIFIL commander said in December 2006 that the threat was taken seriously by his troops and that security measures had been stepped up to protect against any attacks.[73] Others believe Hizbollah has a strong interest, at present, in preventing such an attack on the grounds that it would carry the blame for any loss of life. Were Hizbollah to decide that the reinforced UNIFIL was acting counter to its interests and restricting its freedom of action, some suggest that the protection currently afforded to UNIFIL by Hizbollah might diminish.[74]

D. Implementation of the Taif Accords and disarmament of militias

In Resolutions 1559 and 1701 the UN Security Council referred back to the Taif Accords of 1989, which set out a post-civil war political framework for the country. In addition to political reforms aimed at rebalancing the confessional system and restoring the legitimacy of the Lebanese state institutions, the Accords called for the disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias and the transfer of their weaponry to the Lebanese state within six months of the Accords' approval.

In its resolutions, the Security Council explicitly calls for full implementation of the provisions of the Taif Accords that "require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that […] there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of

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[72] UNIFIL Press Statement, 3 October 2006
[73] *La Repubblica*, 20 December 2006
[74] See for example, Robert Fisk, Conflict in the Middle East is Mission Implausible', *Independent*, 15 November 2006

the Lebanese state."[75] The significance of the disarmament issue was underlined by Kofi Annan in his October 2006 report to the Security Council on implementation of Resolution 1559:

> The eventual disarmament of Hizbollah in the sense of the completion of its transformation into a solely political party, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Accords, is a key element in ensuring a permanent end to the hostilities and a critical provision to be realized in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and in the full restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.[76]

The Security Council adopted a twin track approach in Resolution 1701. Firstly, it acknowledged that the militia disarmament issue cannot be resolved by outside actors alone – it is noteworthy that UNIFIL has no mandate to enforce disarmament – and that an internal Lebanese political solution would be required. To that end, it requested that the UN Secretary-General develop proposals in liaison with relevant international actors and the local parties. Kofi Annan said in an October 2006 report to the Security Council that, in his view,

> disarmament must take place through a political process that will lead to the full restoration of the authority of the Government of Lebanon. If the ultimate purpose of disarmament is the establishment of a strong Lebanese State for all inhabitants of Lebanon, as the Taif Accords stipulated, then the disarming and disbanding of all remaining militias must be realized in such a way that it strengthens, rather than weakens, the central authorities. It is a definitional requirement of the state to enjoy a monopoly on the legitimate use of force throughout its territory.[77]

He went on:

> In the months ahead, Lebanon will have to engage again in a truly national and inclusive dialogue. The disarming and disbanding of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, which lies at the heart of the political transformation Lebanon has been undergoing and is a necessary element to complete, at long last, Lebanon's consolidation as a sovereign and democratic State, can only be achieved through an inclusive process that addresses the political and economic interests of all Lebanese and of those living in Lebanon.[78]

He noted the comments made by Prime Minister Siniora in April 2006 that:

> the future role of Hizbollah's weapons in defending Lebanon is a matter of national debate. That debate will be carried out in the context of a strategy agreed upon by all Lebanese concerning how best to defend Lebanon, against the backdrop of the provisions of the Taif Accords of 1989, United Nations resolutions regarding Lebanon and the continued occupation of the Shab'a Farms, as well as the long history of incursions and violations of Lebanese

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[75] S/RES/1701, 11 August 2006, paras 3 and 8
[76] *Fourth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)*, S/2006/832, 19 October 2006, para 21
[77] ibid., para 28
[78] ibid., para 46

territory by Israel. Reconciling those considerations with the natural obligation of the State to be the sole provider of security to all its citizens and residents, and the right of the State to have a monopoly over arms and to exercise its full authority throughout the country, is a major challenge to be addressed in the period ahead. [79]

The public position taken by Hizbollah was ambiguous. On the one hand Kofi Annan noted comments by the Hizbollah leader from September 2006 that:

> we are not saying that our weapons will remain forever. It is not logical for these weapons to remain forever. There is bound to be an end to them. […][80]

At the same time, he noted "further statements" by Hizbollah representatives that stood in contradiction to Resolution 1559. As of 19 January 2007, the process of national dialogue in Lebanon remained deadlocked with no signs of an imminent breakthrough.

The second track that has been pursued by the Security Council seeks to curtail arms supplies to the militias in Lebanon by means of enhanced border controls and an embargo on the sale of weaponry to non-state actors in Lebanon.

One of the main concerns with regard to halting the flow of weaponry is the potential for arms to come across the Lebanese-Syrian border. Damascus rejected an Israeli proposal for UN forces to deploy along the border, warning it would be interpreted as a hostile act. It did reportedly agree, though, to an increase in its own border personnel and to enhanced cooperation on this issue with the Lebanese border police.

There have been a number of reports since the cessation of hostilities of arms for Hizbollah being transported from Syria to Lebanon. The British Government said in November that it continued to be concerned by those reports, adding that it was working closely with its international partners to ensure full implementation of Resolution 1701. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Lord Triesman, told the Lords in November 2006 that:

> We are also working with our EU partners to assist the Government of Lebanon to improve security on the Lebanon/Syria border. To this end, the UK has committed £2.5 million to provide the Government of Lebanon with security sector assistance. [81]

E.   Resolving Sheba'a Farms and the prisoner issue

Resolution 1701 addressed the need to support a long-term solution by removing potential flashpoints between the two sides. The first of these is the Sheba'a Farms sector,[82] which Syria, Hizbollah and other Lebanese parties believe is Lebanese territory, but which was captured from Syria by Israeli forces during the 1967 conquest of the

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[79]   ibid., quoted in para 34, footnote 7
[80]   *Fourth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)*, S/2006/832, 19 October 2006, para 37, footnote 8
[81]   HL Deb 28 November 2006, c49WA
[82]   See Section II C a. on page 18 for more detail on the Sheba'a Farms issue.

Golan Heights. In Resolution 1701 the Council requested that the UN Secretary-General develop proposals for delineating the international border, "especially in those areas where the border remains disputed or uncertain, including by dealing with the Sheba'a farms area, and to present to the Security Council those proposals within 30 days".[83]

In his September 2006 report, Kofi Annan noted the repeated statements by the Syrian government that Sheba'a Farms was Lebanese and not (Israeli-occupied) Syrian territory, and said he believed that clarifying the status of the area was likely to facilitate the Lebanese Government's efforts to implement fully the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and of Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701. He said he had been encouraged by his talks with the Syrian and Lebanese governments, and expressed his "strong expectation of speedy steps towards an agreement on the delineation of the border".[84]

Kofi Annan also acknowledged an alternative approach proposed by the Lebanese Government that Sheba'a Farms and the adjacent Kafr Shuba hills be placed under United Nations jurisdiction until border delineation is completed and the issue of sovereignty over them is resolved. He said that:

> Implementation of such a measure would still require the determination of the precise geographic scope of the Shab'a Farms area […]. I am now studying carefully the complicated cartographic, legal and political implications of such an approach and will revert to the [Security] Council in due course. [85]

Reports from late October 2006 suggested the UN would appoint a cartographer to map the area and to define its boundaries.[86]

The second flashpoint highlighted in Resolution 1701 relates to the abducted Israeli soldiers held by Hizbollah and the Lebanese nationals imprisoned in Israel.[87] The Security Council emphasised in the preamble to Resolution 1701 the need to secure the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers, and said it encouraged efforts aimed at urgently settling the issue of Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel. Media reports suggested in September 2006 that German intelligence officials were again conducting back-channel negotiations between Hizbollah and Israel.[88] The UN Secretary-General alluded to such an approach in his report to the Security Council of 12 September:

> The unconditional release of the captured Israeli soldiers and the issue of the Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel are both of vital importance. […] I have appointed an experienced facilitator specifically tasked to address these vital issues. Because of the nature of such efforts, I am not at liberty to outline in detail

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[83] S/RES/1701, 11 August 2006, para 10
[84] *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, S/2006/730, 12 September 2006, para 45
[85] Ibid., para 46
[86] 'UN to map Shebaa Farms', *Ha'aretz* newspaper (Israel), 29 October 2006
[87] See Section III A on page 22 for more detail on the Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails.
[88] See for example, 'German spy chief en route to Lebanon', *Reuters*, 1 September 2006.

how the release of the captured and of prisoners may be accomplished. I do look forward to reverting to the Council on this matter at the earliest opportunity.[89]

F.   Advancing the Middle East peace process

Resolution 1701 contained little detail about reviving the moribund peace process beyond a final paragraph in which the Security Council again stressed the importance of a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East".

In the opinion of David Gardner of the *Financial Times*, writing in August 2006, the declared desire of the US and British governments to address the root causes of conflict in the region masks a "steadily diminishing ability" to acknowledge those root causes, "let alone the will or ability to deal with them".[90]   According to that view, the focus on Hizbollah, and the related fixation with the Palestinian militant groups of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, creates the false impression that these groups represent the source of the problem, rather than a symptom, leading to the incorrect conclusion that reducing their military power would reduce the potential for conflict in the future.

Brent Scowcroft, the former national security adviser to President George H W Bush, has argued that: "Hizbollah is not the source of the problem; it is a derivative of the cause, which is the tragic conflict over Palestine that began in 1948".[91]   Some observers contend that these militant groups, in some cases aided by other powers like Iran and Syria, emerged primarily as a response to Israel's decades-long occupation of Arab land and its humiliation and violent repression of Arab populations, particularly in the Palestinian Territories and Lebanon.   It has been argued that Israel's actions and its failure to address the roots of the conflict in a comprehensive and just manner have boosted the power and prestige of these groups beyond their natural constituency and created the conditions for them to thrive.   Gardner argues that: "The root cause of that conflict is land: principally the battle between Arab and Jew over how (or whether) to share the cramped and combustible Holy Land." In his view, an equitable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict would ultimately undermine the legitimacy and popularity of the militants and reduce support for their violent acts.[92]

The immediate aftermath of conflict, when trust between Israel, Lebanon and Syria was extremely low, may not appear the most auspicious time to be considering a renewed push for peace.   On the other hand, some observers have argued that such crises can offer rare chances to achieve breakthroughs by taking advantage of what the outgoing UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has referred to as the "opportunities born from conflict".[93]

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[89] *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, S/2006/730, 12 September 2006, paras 48 and 51

[90] See Section I above for a discussion of the root causes of the conflict. Quote from David Gardner, 'The neglected roots of conflict are buried in combustible land', *Financial Times*, 4 August 2006

[91] Brent Scowcroft, 'Beyond Lebanon: This Is the Time for a U.S.-Led Comprehensive Settlement', *Washington Post*, 30 July 2006

[92] David Gardner, 'The neglected roots of conflict are buried in combustible land', *Financial Times*, 4 August 2006

[93] *Fourth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)*, S/2006/832, 19 October 2006, para 47

Alvaro de Soto, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told the Security Council in October 2006 that, without a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian aspect, the prospects for a durable settlement of the Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian tracks were limited:

> A serious and systematic search for peace in the region requires dialogue with all the parties in the conflict, [without partiality], to ensure that crises are managed and opportunities explored, and that developments on one track are not undermined by developments on another. […]
>
> The UN's objectives remain security and full recognition to the state of Israel within internationally recognized borders, an end to the occupation for the Palestinian people in an independent, sovereign state, recovery of lost land to Syria, a fully sovereign and secure Lebanon – through the full implementation of all relevant resolutions of this Council.[94]

Following the cessation of violence in Lebanon in mid-August 2006, attention focused initially on the potential for a breakthrough on the Israeli-Syrian track. Press reports in early 2007 suggested that informal talks involving Israeli and Syrian representatives had taken place between September 2004 and July 2006 in an attempt to establish a framework for formal negotiations on a return of the occupied Golan Heights and a full peace treaty. The talks reportedly broke down during the conflict in Lebanon and hopes of a significant breakthrough began to fade during the autumn, amid signs that an increasingly confident Damascus was backtracking on some of its earlier, more moderate signals. An anticipated visit by the German Foreign Minister to Damascus during August 2006 was cancelled after President Bashar al-Assad gave a speech in which he ridiculed Israel's military offensive in Lebanon and warned against disarming Hizbollah. The Syrian President also claimed that Hizbollah's successful resistance to Israel had led to the collapse of US plans for a "new Middle East" and that Israeli and US efforts to isolate Syria and Iran had failed.[95]

The chances of a US-backed initiative on Syria receded further with the announcement of a new Iraq strategy by President Bush in January 2007 that includes an emphasis on countering what the US perceives to be Syria's destabilising influence in Iraq. Instead, the focus of US diplomatic efforts has switched to the Israeli-Palestinian track and to securing a Palestinian government of national unity in place of the current Hamas-run administration.

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[94] 'Top UN envoy says only dialogue with all parties in the Middle East will bring peace', UN News Centre website, 19 October 2006

[95] 'German foreign minister cancels Syria trip after Assad speech', *Financial Times*, 16 August 2006

V   Lasting ceasefire or temporary lull?

The expanded UNIFIL force has served to manage tensions thus far and is considerably more robust than its predecessor, but UN officials have warned repeatedly that a peacekeeping mission cannot plug the gaps indefinitely if no supporting political settlement is put in place.

The lack of progress on the political elements of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 has convinced some observers that the lull in violence since mid-August 2006 will not endure and that a resumption of hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah is likely around mid-2007. The British military historian, John Keegan, argued in November 2006 that a further conflict was "inevitable and unavoidable" because Israel could not tolerate the reconstruction of Hizbollah's fortified zone in southern Lebanon and would be forced to strike. In his view, there was a strong possibility that war with Syria would occur as a result.[96]

An additional complicating factor is the close political and military ties that Hizbollah has cultivated with Iran. Those ties have served a number of purposes over the years, not least, some believe, in providing Tehran with a deterrent against an Israeli or US attack on its nuclear facilities. Were such an attack to take place, some analysts believe that Hizbollah would open a northern front with Israel and use all the weaponry at its disposal to strike targets across Israel. From an Israeli and US perspective, therefore, the July-August 2006 conflict helped reduce the level of threat along the northern border and diminish that part of Iran's deterrent capability. Some suggest the strong Israeli military response to the Hizbollah raid was intended to re-establish the credibility of its military deterrent following the unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000 and from Gaza in 2005, and to underline its political will to respond to external aggression. That message was intended for a wider audience beyond Lebanon, as Prime Minister Olmert indicated in an interview in early August 2006:

> We responded in such a manner that it will be registered in the collective memory of not just the Lebanese, but any nation that has ever had any plans of attacking Israel with missiles. They know that we will respond and that sometimes the response will be very, very, very painful.[97]

A number of commentators believe the US has come to see Israel's confrontation with Hizbollah as a proxy for its own quarrel with Iran over the latter's nuclear programme and destabilising role in Iraq. The BBC's Middle East editor, Jeremy Bowen, wrote in January 2007 that:

> The United States was disappointed that Israel was not able to deliver its stated objective in the war last summer of eliminating Hezbollah as a military force in Lebanon. It saw Israel's fight as its fight, a battle in the War on Terror, its proxy against Iran's.[98]

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[96]   John Keegan, 'Why Israel will go to war again – soon', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 2006
[97]   'Our response to Hizbollah has been restrained', *Financial Times*, 3 August 2006
[98]   'Mid-East awaits answers from Rice', BBC News Online, 13 January 2007

Contrary to the recommendations of the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group in the US that Washington should engage with Iran on the issue of Iraq without pre-conditions, President Bush announced as part of his new strategy for Iraq that it would seek to halt Tehran's destabilising activities within Iraq and would work with others to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and dominating the region.[99]   That policy, coupled with the detention of Iranian individuals and officials in Iraq and the deployment of an additional US carrier strike group to the Gulf, appears to signal that the prospects of what some commentators have termed a "grand bargain" between the US and Iran have narrowed considerably.

Once again, political deadlock in Lebanon and a worsening regional security situation have left the country vulnerable to outside interference and renewed conflict. *Jane's Defence Weekly* suggests that Lebanon has already become an arena for renewed regional and Sunni-Shia sectarian rivalries, with Iran, Syria and Hamas on the one side and an unlikely alliance of the US, Israel and Sunni Arab states such as Saudi Arabia on the other.[100]   Jeremy Bowen draws a similar conclusion, asking if the divisions in the region are now "hardening into the shape of what might become the next war?"[101]   It will require a considerable and concerted effort, both within the countries of the region and at the international level, to prevent renewed confrontation.

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[99]   For more detail on the report of the Iraq Study Group and President Bush's announcement of a new Iraq strategy, see House of Commons Library Standard Notes SN/IA/4216, *The Iraq Study Group report: summary and reaction*, and SN/IA/4227, *New Strategy for Iraq: summary and reaction*.
[100]   '2006 Annual Defence Report', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 13 December 2006
[101]   'Mid-East awaits answers from Rice', BBC News Online, 13 January 2007

Appendix One – Map of the Eastern Mediterranean

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Please note: Map intended for briefing purposes only and should be taken as necessarily representing the views of the UK Government on boundaries or political status.

Appendix Two – Map of Lebanon

Reproduced with the permission of the Defence Geographic Centre at the Ministry of Defence.
Please note: Map intended for briefing purposes only and should be taken as necessarily representing the views of the UK Government on boundaries or political status.

Appendix Three – UN Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004)

Resolution 1559 (2004)
Adopted by the Security Council at its 5028th meeting, on 2 September 2004

The Security Council,

Recalling all its previous resolutions on Lebanon, in particular resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) of 19 March 1978, resolution 520 (1982) of 17 September 1982, and resolution 1553 (2004) of 29 July 2004 as well as the statements of its President on the situation in Lebanon, in particular the statement of 18 June 2000 (S/PRST/2000/21),

Reiterating its strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders,

Noting the determination of Lebanon to ensure the withdrawal of all non-Lebanese forces from Lebanon,

Gravely concerned at the continued presence of armed militias in Lebanon, which prevent the Lebanese Government from exercising its full sovereignty over all Lebanese territory,

Reaffirming the importance of the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory,

Mindful of the upcoming Lebanese presidential elections and *underlining* the importance of free and fair elections according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence,

1. *Reaffirms* its call for the strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon;

2. *Calls upon* all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon;

3. *Calls for* the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias;

4. *Supports* the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory;

5. *Declares* its support for a free and fair electoral process in Lebanon's upcoming presidential election conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence;

6. *Calls upon* all parties concerned to cooperate fully and urgently with the Security Council for the full implementation of this and all relevant resolutions concerning the restoration of the territorial integrity, full sovereignty, and political independence of Lebanon;

7. *Requests* that the Secretary-General report to the Security Council within thirty days on the implementation by the parties of this resolution and *decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

Source: UN Security Council website

Appendix Four – UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006)

Resolution 1701 (2006)
Adopted by the Security Council at its 5511th meeting, on 11 August 2006

The Security Council,

Recalling all its previous resolutions on Lebanon, in particular resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 520 (1982), 1559 (2004), 1655 (2006) 1680 (2006) and 1697 (2006), as well as the statements of its President on the situation in Lebanon, in particular the statements of 18 June 2000 (S/PRST/2000/21), of 19 October 2004 (S/PRST/2004/36), of 4 May 2005 (S/PRST/2005/17), of 23 January 2006 (S/PRST/2006/3) and of 30 July 2006 (S/PRST/2006/35),

Expressing its utmost concern at the continuing escalation of hostilities in Lebanon and in Israel since Hizbollah's attack on Israel on 12 July 2006, which has already caused hundreds of deaths and injuries on both sides, extensive damage to civilian infrastructure and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons,

Emphasizing the need for an end of violence, but at the same time *emphasizing* the need to address urgently the causes that have given rise to the current crisis, including by the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers,

Mindful of the sensitivity of the issue of prisoners and *encouraging* the efforts aimed at urgently settling the issue of the Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel,

Welcoming the efforts of the Lebanese Prime Minister and the commitment of the Government of Lebanon, in its seven-point plan, to extend its authority over its territory, through its own legitimate armed forces, such that there will be no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon, *welcoming also* its commitment to a United Nations force that is supplemented and enhanced in numbers, equipment, mandate and scope of operation, and *bearing in mind* its request in this plan for an immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces from southern Lebanon,

Determined to act for this withdrawal to happen at the earliest,

Taking due note of the proposals made in the seven-point plan regarding the Shebaa farms area,

Welcoming the unanimous decision by the Government of Lebanon on 7 August 2006 to deploy a Lebanese armed force of 15,000 troops in South Lebanon as the Israeli army withdraws behind the Blue Line and to request the assistance of additional forces from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) as needed, to facilitate the entry of the Lebanese armed forces into the region and to restate its intention to strengthen the Lebanese armed forces with material as needed to enable it to perform its duties,

Aware of its responsibilities to help secure a permanent ceasefire and a longterm solution to the conflict,

Determining that the situation in Lebanon constitutes a threat to international peace and security,

1. *Calls for* a full cessation of hostilities based upon, in particular, the immediate cessation by Hizbollah of all attacks and the immediate cessation by Israel of all offensive military operations;

2. Upon full cessation of hostilities, *calls upon* the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL as authorized by paragraph 11 to deploy their forces together throughout the South and *calls upon* the Government of Israel, as that deployment begins, to withdraw all of its forces from southern Lebanon in parallel;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) and resolution 1680 (2006), and of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords, for it to exercise its full sovereignty, so that there will be no

weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon;

4. *Reiterates* its strong support for full respect for the Blue Line;

5. *Also reiterates* its strong support, as recalled in all its previous relevant resolutions, for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders, as contemplated by the Israeli-Lebanese General Armistice Agreement of 23 March 1949;

6. *Calls on* the international community to take immediate steps to extend its financial and humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese people, including through facilitating the safe return of displaced persons and, under the authority of the Government of Lebanon, reopening airports and harbours, consistent with paragraphs 14 and 15, and *calls on* it also to consider further assistance in the future to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Lebanon;

7. *Affirms* that all parties are responsible for ensuring that no action is taken contrary to paragraph 1 that might adversely affect the search for a long-term solution, humanitarian access to civilian populations, including safe passage for humanitarian convoys, or the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons, and *calls on* all parties to comply with this responsibility and to cooperate with the Security Council;

8. *Calls for* Israel and Lebanon to support a permanent ceasefire and a longterm solution based on the following principles and elements:
– full respect for the Blue Line by both parties;
– security arrangements to prevent the resumption of hostilities, including the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani river of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL as authorized in paragraph 11, deployed in this area;
– full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords, and of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), that require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that, pursuant to the Lebanese cabinet decision of 27 July 2006, there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese State;
– no foreign forces in Lebanon without the consent of its Government;
– no sales or supply of arms and related materiel to Lebanon except as authorized by its Government;
– provision to the United Nations of all remaining maps of landmines in Lebanon in Israel's possession;

9. *Invites* the Secretary-General to support efforts to secure as soon as possible agreements in principle from the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel to the principles and elements for a long-term solution as set forth in paragraph 8, and *expresses* its intention to be actively involved;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to develop, in liaison with relevant international actors and the concerned parties, proposals to implement the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords, and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), including disarmament, and for delineation of the international borders of Lebanon, especially in those areas where the border is disputed or uncertain, including by dealing with the Shebaa farms area, and to present to the Security Council those proposals within thirty days;

11. *Decides*, in order to supplement and enhance the force in numbers, equipment, mandate and scope of operations, to authorize an increase in the force strength of UNIFIL to a maximum of 15,000 troops, and that the force shall, in addition to carrying out its mandate under resolutions 425 and 426 (1978):

(a) Monitor the cessation of hostilities;
(b) Accompany and support the Lebanese armed forces as they deploy throughout the South, including along the Blue Line, as Israel withdraws its armed forces from Lebanon as provided in paragraph 2;
(c) Coordinate its activities related to paragraph 11 (b) with the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel;
(d) Extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons;
(e) Assist the Lebanese armed forces in taking steps towards the establishment of the area as referred to in paragraph 8;

(f) Assist the Government of Lebanon, at its request, to implement paragraph 14;

12. Acting in support of a request from the Government of Lebanon to deploy an international force to assist it to exercise its authority throughout the territory, *authorizes* UNIFIL to take all necessary action in areas of deployment of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities, to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind, to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council, and to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General urgently to put in place measures to ensure UNIFIL is able to carry out the functions envisaged in this resolution, *urges* Member States to consider making appropriate contributions to UNIFIL and to respond positively to requests for assistance from the Force, and *expresses* its strong appreciation to those who have contributed to UNIFIL in the past;

14. *Calls upon* the Government of Lebanon to secure its borders and other entry points to prevent the entry in Lebanon without its consent of arms or related materiel and *requests* UNIFIL as authorized in paragraph 11 to assist the Government of Lebanon at its request;

15. *Decides* further that all States shall take the necessary measures to prevent, by their nationals or from their territories or using their flag vessels or aircraft:
    (a) The sale or supply to any entity or individual in Lebanon of arms and related materiel of all types, including weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned, whether or not originating in their territories; and
    (b) The provision to any entity or individual in Lebanon of any technical training or assistance related to the provision, manufacture, maintenance or use of the items listed in subparagraph (a) above; except that these prohibitions shall not apply to arms, related material, training or assistance authorized by the Government of Lebanon or by UNIFIL as authorized in paragraph 11;

16. *Decides* to extend the mandate of UNIFIL until 31 August 2007, and *expresses its intention* to consider in a later resolution further enhancements to the mandate and other steps to contribute to the implementation of a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution;

17. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Council within one week on the implementation of this resolution and subsequently on a regular basis;

18. *Stresses* the importance of, and the need to achieve, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all its relevant resolutions including its resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973 and 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003;

19. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

Source: UN Security Council website