ISRAEL/HIZBOLLAH/LEBANON:

AVOIDING RENEWED CONFLICT

Middle East Report N°59 – 1 November 2006

International Crisis Group
WORKING TO PREVENT CONFLICT WORLDWIDE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

UN Security Council Resolution 1701 halted the month-long fighting between Israel and Hizbollah but did little to resolve the underlying conflict and, if poorly handled, could help reignite it. The resolution has held remarkably well, with only limited violations. However, the temptation by either party to overreach could trigger renewed fighting. The greatest threats would be attempts by Israel or UN forces (UNIFIL) to use 1701 as a blunt means of disarming Hizbollah in the south or by Hizbollah to test UNIFIL's resolve. 1701 should be seen as a transitory instrument that can stabilise the border by containing both sides' military impulses until bolder action is taken to address both domestic Lebanese matters (reforming and democratising the political and electoral systems; building a strong sovereign state and army; resolving the question of Hizbollah's armaments) and, especially, regional issues (in particular re-launching the Syrian track and engaging Iran). In short the international community must be modest in implementing 1701 for as long as it is not prepared to be ambitious in its regional diplomatic efforts.

Resolution 1701 achieved a surprising degree of consensus. All relevant parties – Israel, Hizbollah and the Lebanese government, as well as key regional and other international actors – accepted the Security Council as the arbiter of the conflict while agreeing to the extensive deployment of Lebanon's army (LAF) south of the Litani River, the expansion of UNIFIL with a strengthened mandate in the same area and the need to build up Lebanese sovereignty over its own territory. Core stumbling blocks (e.g., releasing the abducted Israeli soldiers; ending Hizbollah's armed presence in the south) were mentioned in the resolution, but as strong aspirations, not immediate prerequisites. All in all, this is not negligible, nor was it pre-ordained. 1701 came about at a time of high tension, after a fierce diplomatic battle, and was accepted only because all sides needed a face-saving solution. Collective exhaustion produced an ambiguous outcome that nobody whole-heartedly endorsed but all reluctantly accepted.

After more than a month of violent conflict, Israel and Hizbollah were chastened, conscious of the limits of their military power and reluctant to continue hostilities. Israel had insisted both that it would not stop fighting until its soldiers were returned and Hizbollah was disarmed; 1701's ambiguity notwithstanding, it achieved neither. Israel had limited appetite for continued confrontation and now, in the wake of a war that reawakened and reinforced anxiety about a Lebanese quagmire, has little stomach for resuming it. Rather, Israelis chose to invest cautious hope in the presence of international and Lebanese forces in the south to rein in Hizbollah and in UN mediation to free the abducted soldiers.

Hizbollah's perceived victory may have emboldened the organisation but it too labours under heavy constraints. With over 1,000 civilian deaths, the destruction of thousands of homes and the damage done to basic economic infrastructure, initiating another round of violence would be deeply unpopular with its own constituency, not to mention the country as a whole. The LAF's deployment to the south – for the first time in over three decades – and UNIFIL's strengthening in what heretofore had been a Hizbollah sanctuary was not the movement's preference. But it was deemed a price worth paying to end the fighting, avoid exacerbating domestic tensions and preserve as much as possible of the status quo, including its presence in the south.

The international community, and the U.S. in particular, were left with little choice. By allowing the war to rage on for weeks, they had lost much of their credibility and faced increasingly hostile Arab and Muslim publics. Washington claimed from the outset that only a solution that dealt with the roots of the conflict – in its view, Hizbollah's armed presence – was worth pursuing. In the end, it settled for far less, namely a denser UN and Lebanese army presence in the south and reiteration of the longer-term goal of disarming armed groups. Evincing signs of pragmatism, U.S. officials for now are not pressing UNIFIL or the LAF to disarm Hizbollah, hoping instead to strengthen the central government and extend its territorial reach.

Such shared modesty must be preserved lest the fragile stability unravel. 1701 is not the proper framework for the necessary resolution of underlying issues in the Israeli-Lebanese relationship, and it must not be construed as such. It is inherently ambiguous, allowing for different interpretations, offering vague timelines, and covering conflicting long-term goals behind similar wording: strengthening Lebanese sovereignty means neutralising Hizbollah for some and defending against Israel for others. It does not address Lebanon's domestic political situation. It places disproportionate emphasis on the question of Hizbollah and offers nothing to parties (Syria and Iran) with considerable interest and means of obstruction. Like its predecessor, Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004), it unwisely seeks to internationalise a particular aspect of the problem (Hizbollah's armament) without regionalising its solution (addressing the broader Arab-Israeli conflict or the growing U.S.-Iranian differences).

In sum, 1701 all at once elevates Hizbollah's armed status to the rank of core international concern; entrusts its resolution to a process (Lebanon's internal dialogue) that is structurally incapable of dealing with it; and defers the key political step (progress toward a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace) that is a precondition for settling it.

In carrying out 1701, therefore, the international community should keep its eye on the risks. With its deterrent power severely damaged by a military draw most interpreted as a defeat, Israel will not tolerate brazen attempts by Hizbollah to resupply. Conversely, Hizbollah will not accept efforts by Israel, UNIFIL or its Lebanese opponents to try to achieve politically what could not be done militarily. Implementation should focus on several interrelated goals:

- containing Hizbollah, not by aggressively seeking to disarm it, but through the presence of thousands of Lebanese and UN troops in the south who can constrain its freedom of action, ability to display weapons and, especially, capacity to resupply. Hizbollah will test UNIFIL's resolve; UN forces must be ready to respond in a measured way that does not trigger escalation. Indeed, the establishment of checkpoints throughout the area already is confronting Hizbollah with a far different environment than the one it faced between 2000 and 2006;
- containing Israel, by taking a clear stance against any violation of Lebanese sovereignty, in particular through over-flights. Neither UNIFIL nor the LAF can risk being perceived as securing Israel without securing Lebanon or as being more preoccupied with one goal than with the other;
- strengthening the Lebanese state by empowering the LAF to become a guardian of national borders and a protector of its lands, and forcing it to cede the place it has long held as the arbiter of internal disputes to other security organs and the police; and
- drying up the immediate potential triggers of renewed conflict through a prisoner exchange and setting in motion a process to resolve the Shebaa farms issue.

While these measures can help stabilise the situation, they are not sustainable in the longer term. Once again, regional and international actors are using Lebanese players as proxies to promote their interests, exploiting and exacerbating both pre-existing domestic tensions and the political system's dysfunctionalities. Solving the question of Hizbollah and achieving real stability on the Israeli-Lebanese border will require steps both by the Lebanese state to reform the political system and, crucially, by the Quartet and the wider international community to engage Syria and Iran and work toward a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the United Nations Security Council:

1. Promote effective implementation of Resolution 1701 on Lebanon by passing a follow-up resolution calling for:
   (a) comprehensive Lebanese security reform, with the assistance of outside parties, based on the need to effectively assert the state's sovereignty and defend its territorial integrity;
   (b) sustained and substantial international financial assistance;
   (c) intensive efforts to address outstanding Israeli-Lebanese issues, including a prisoner exchange, a halt to Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty and onset of a process to resolve the status of the contested Shebaa farms by transferring custody to the UN under UNIFIL supervision pending Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon peace agreements; and
   (d) intensive and sustained efforts to reach a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace.

To the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL):

2. Accept that its task is essentially to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces, refraining from proactive searches for Hizbollah arms caches.

3. Investigate, publicly condemn and take appropriate action against flagrant violations of Resolution 1701, particularly attempts to resupply Hizbollah and Israeli over-flights or other violations of Lebanese sovereignty.
4. Quickly provide financial and technical support for the clearance of unexploded munitions (UXOs) and other lethal war debris, including cluster sub-munitions that are sinking below the surface due to the onset of winter.
5. Avoid assuming an assertive armed posture in patrolling southern Lebanon so as to minimise anti-UN sentiment among the local population.
6. Complete UN demarcation of the Shebaa farms area and propose to Israel, Lebanon and Syria placing it under temporary UN custody pending final peace agreements between them.

To the Government of Israel:

7. Halt hostile operations in Lebanon, including the capture or assassination of militants and civilians, as well as violations of Lebanese waters and air space.
8. Cooperate with UN efforts to address remaining Israeli-Lebanese issues, including a prisoner exchange, provision of digital records of cluster-rocket launching sequences and logbooks with target coordinates, and resolution of the status of Shebaa farms and Ghajar village.

To the Government of Syria:

9. Engage in an open dialogue with Lebanon aimed at clarifying and addressing both sides' legitimate interests, in particular by normalising bilateral relations on the basis of mutual respect and exchanging embassies.
10. Cooperate with UN efforts to demarcate the Shebaa farms area and reach agreement with Lebanon on its final status.

To Hizbollah:

11. End all visible armed presence south of the Litani River and avoid provocative actions vis-à-vis Israel or UNIFIL.
12. Work within the context of the national dialogue on a mutually acceptable process that would lead to the end of its status as an autonomous force, notably through enhancement of the LAF's defence capabilities, reform of the political system and progress toward Arab-Israeli peace.
13. Limit territorial claims to those officially endorsed by the Lebanese government.

To the Government of Lebanon:

14. Undertake, in cooperation with international partners, a thorough security reform aimed at re-establishing and defending the state's sovereignty over its territory, emphasising defensive capabilities and reinforcing the army as an instrument of national defence.
15. Ensure that such security reform is not used to further any international or partisan domestic agenda.
16. Encourage Hizbollah's gradual demilitarisation by addressing outstanding Israeli-Lebanese issues (prisoner exchange, violations of Lebanese sovereignty and Shebaa farms); and reforming and democratising Lebanon's political system.
17. Tighten controls along its border with Syria, using international technical assistance.

To the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF):

18. Confiscate visible weapons south of the Litani River and seek to prevent arms transfers.

To the European Union and its Member States:

19. Provide technical and material assistance to Lebanon's security reform process, domestic security organs and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

To Arab States:

20. Support the building and equipping of the LAF.
21. Provide additional financial assistance to assist in reconstruction and reduce government indebtedness.
22. Cast off sectarian bias in dealing with Lebanon, ensuring that relations are established with the central government rather than particular communities.

To Members of the Quartet (U.S., Russia, UN and EU):

23. Conduct parallel discussions with Israel, Syria and Lebanon to re-launch Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese peace negotiations, making clear that the goal is a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace.

Beirut/Jerusalem/Amman/Brussels, 1 November 2006

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I. INTRODUCTION

Triggered by Hizbollah's capture of two Israeli soldiers on 12 July 2006, Israel's fierce war against the movement came to an abrupt halt on 14 August, following the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1701 three days earlier. The conflict, variously called the "July War" (*Harb Tammuz*), "Sixth War", or "33-Day War" (*Harb Thalatha wa Thalatheen Yawm*),[1] left death and destruction in its wake. In Lebanon, 1,191 people (civilians, as well as armed fighters) were killed and several thousand injured; up to one million were displaced; infrastructure, such as roads, bridges and runways at Beirut's international airport, was damaged or destroyed; some 15,000 homes and 900 factories, markets, farms, shops and other commercial buildings were wrecked. [2] Vast but unknown quantities of unexploded ordnance (UXOs) still litter the south, including cluster sub-munitions doubling as anti-personnel landmines. Having only recently emerged from a bloody civil war and having faced destructive Israeli military campaigns in 1993 and 1996, as well as a military occupation of part of its territory until 2000, Lebanon's fragile hope for a return to normalcy was shattered.

In Israel, 43 civilians were killed, and tens of thousands were displaced[3]; many others spent time in bomb shelters. In both countries, estimated economic losses were significant, amounting to $12 billion in Lebanon[4] and $4.8 billion in Israel.[5]

Once the official time to cease hostilities became known, both sides intensified the conflict to secure advantage before guns, by UN decree, would have to fall silent. Israel stepped up its ground campaign as well as artillery barrages, flattening villages and saturating them with cluster bombs, while Hizbollah launched its fiercest salvo of rockets on the war's last day, 13 August, as if to prove that its arsenal remained intact and its will to fight undiminished.

Resolution 1701 brought quiet but no sustainable peace to the border region. Its operative paragraphs establish several goals along different and often ill-defined timelines; while the resolution covers a wide array of issues, its confused organisation and frequent lack of specificity testify to the difficult diplomatic battle that gave it birth.[6] It is most successful when it addresses

[1] Depending on how one counts, the war can be said to have lasted 34 instead of 33 days. Some commentators have referred to it as the "Two-Soldier War" (*Harb al-Jundiyain*). The Israelis dubbed their campaign "Operation Changing Direction" (*Shinui Kivun*). Hizbollah called its initial assault "Operation Dependable Promise" (*Amaliya al-Waad al-Sadeq*), a reference to its leader's long-standing pledge to gain the release of Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails.

[2] Data on Lebanon were provided by the government, as well as UN agencies. Data on Israel were provided by the government. Both data sets are reported in "Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)", UN Security Council, S/2006/730, 12 September 2006. In addition to Lebanese and Israeli casualties, five UN staff were killed during the fighting, including four military members of the Observer Group Lebanon that is part of UNTSO, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation established following the 1949 armistice agreements between Israel and its neighbours.

[3] An Israeli survey revealed that, contrary to wartime perceptions that northern towns had emptied out, most residents stayed put throughout the war or left for only a few days. According to the survey, carried out by the Taub Centre for Social Policy Studies, 85 per cent of men and 66 per cent of women never left. *Haaretz*, 21 September 2006.

[4] Figure provided by the Lebanese University, http://www.ul.edu.lb/warleb/French2.htm. It includes $2 billion in damage to infrastructure, $3 billion in homes and properties, $2 billion in business, $3 billion in both direct and indirect costs to the tourism sector, and $2 billion from loss of economic activity. While citing slightly lower figures, Paul Salem calls this "the costliest Arab-Israeli war in Lebanon's history". Salem, "The Future of Lebanon", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 6, p. 18.

[5] *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 September 2006. For a full discussion of damage, casualties and violations of international humanitarian law, see the report of an investigation by the UN General Assembly's Human Rights Council in Lebanon and Israel in September 2006, A/HRC/2/7, 2 October 2006.

[6] A French diplomat involved in the negotiations described his government's struggle with the U.S. in terms that evoked the degree of tension surrounding the Iraq war. Crisis Group interview, 12 August 2006.

short-term objectives: an immediate cessation of hostilities followed by new security arrangements – the dual deployment of an expanded UNIFIL[7] and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in the south and a simultaneous withdrawal of Israeli troops across the official border, the "Blue Line". These were the uncontroversial parts, whose implementation marked steady, even surprising progress.

After that, matters become messier. The resolution "emphasizes the importance of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory" and specifically mentions in this respect the need for there to be "no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon" – an unmistakable reference to Hizbollah. It speaks, too, of the need for "full respect for the Blue Line" and respect for the "territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognised borders" – a reference, no doubt, to Israeli air, sea and land incursions and, in all likelihood, Syrian interference.

The most interesting and controversial section is paragraph 8, which calls for a "permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution based on", inter alia:

- "full respect for the Blue Line";
- "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 UNIFIL. . .";
- "full implementation of the Taef Accords, and of Resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), that require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon"; and
- "no sales or supplies of arms and related materiel to Lebanon except as authorized by its Government".

In order to implement these provisions, the enhanced UNIFIL is asked to assist the LAF "in taking steps towards the establishment of the area as defined in paragraph 8", while the Lebanese government is called upon to secure its "borders and other entry points" (with, at its request, the help of UNIFIL). Article 15 provides further muscle and detail to the arms embargo by enjoining all states to "take the necessary measures to prevent, by their nationals or from their territories or using their flag vessels or aircraft", the sale or supply of arms, ammunition, military vehicles, equipment, spare parts and related materiel, as well as technical training and assistance, unless authorised by the Lebanese government or UNIFIL.[8]

In addition, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to "develop...proposals to implement the relevant provisions of the Taef Accords, and Resolutions 1559 and 1680, including disarmament, and for delineation of the international borders...including by dealing with the Shebaa farms area". As the phrasing indicates, no schedule was attached to most of these matters.

Finally, in its last paragraph, the resolution "stresses the importance of, and the need to achieve, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East", though, once again, without any more specificity.

By late October, roughly 8,000 UNIFIL II soldiers (including 6,420 ground and 1,580 naval troops) were deployed in theatre, chiefly from France (1,546), Italy (1,058), Spain (796), India (761) and Ghana (651). Ground troops spread throughout the territory between the Blue Line and the Litani, a river that flows south from its sources in the Shouf mountain range separating the Beqaa valley from the coastal region, then turns sharply westwards to empty into the Mediterranean just north of the city of Tyre. An additional 5,000-7,000 UN soldiers are still expected, their deployment delayed by late pledges and logistical obstacles.[9] UN forces are under the command of a French officer, Major General Alain Pellegrini; their headquarters is in Naqoura, a Lebanese town on the coast just north of the border. Although there has been some muttering about "these

[7] UNIFIL, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, was established by Security Council Resolution 426 in 1978 following an earlier round of fighting. Its troop strength, which has waxed and waned, was some 2,000 at the outbreak of hostilities in July 2006. The original UNIFIL is now known as UNIFIL I, the force deployed after August 2006 as UNIFIL II.

[8] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1701 (2006), S/RES/1701, 11 August 2006.

[9] UN officials predicted a total ground force of 10,000-12,000, below the 15,000 authorised by Resolution 1701. When fully deployed, the UN force will include soldiers from Bangladesh, Belgium, China, Finland, France, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Nepal, Norway, Poland, Spain and Turkey. Russian forces are in Lebanon as part of a bilateral agreement, not UNIFIL. In addition to these forces, several countries have provided naval vessels, with total crews of about 1,500, to the Maritime Task Force, which became part of UNIFIL under German command on 15 October 2006. These include Denmark, Germany, Greece, Sweden and Turkey. Crisis Group email communication, UNIFIL spokesman, 18 October 2006.

new occupiers",[10] the local population generally appears to accept them.[11]

Along with UNIFIL, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) began deploying four brigades, eventually to total 15,000 soldiers, south of the Litani, a region from which they had been absent for decades.[12] This deployment also occurred smoothly, with no opposition from either Hizbollah or the local population. By late October, some 10,000 LAF troops had set up camp in the south. The LAF had been operating a small liaison office at the Naqoura headquarters even before UNIFIL II's arrival; through it, UN officers have been able to pass messages to Hizbollah. The Lebanese army claims to have rejected direct communications with the Israeli army (the IDF), and UNIFIL officially denies such direct contacts exist, though there are persistent reports to the contrary, and the IDF insists that issues can be addressed effectively only if they take place.[13]

As UNIFIL and LAF troops moved south, the IDF began to pull out. The Israeli government had indicated at the outset that it would withdraw its forces fully if at least 5,000 UNIFIL troops had deployed. By the end of September, only a small number of IDF troops remained in ten posts along the border, awaiting the further arrival of UNIFIL soldiers, but in the early hours of 1 October they, too, pulled back across the Blue Line, though neither the Lebanese government nor Hizbollah deemed the withdrawal complete.[14] The territory IDF forces vacated was handed over to UNIFIL, which waited 24 hours before allowing LAF troops to deploy – in order to verify Israel's withdrawal and Hezbollah's absence as well as to avoid any possible friction if the LAF and IDF were to encounter each other. Local IDF commanders maintained communications with their UNIFIL counterparts via weekly meetings at Naqoura. By late October a dedicated Israeli-UN liaison channel had been established at both ends.

At the UN's urging, on 6 September Israel announced it would begin lifting its comprehensive blockade on Lebanon.[15] This consisted of a naval presence in Lebanese territorial waters, as well as a near-total prohibition on flights to and from Beirut International Airport[16] and air strikes against movement at Lebanon's official border crossings with Syria. The blockade, aimed at preventing Hizbollah's rearmament from abroad, was replaced in the Mediterranean by a temporary presence of seven European naval vessels[17] and on land by further deployments of Lebanese troops along the 330-km. (205-mile) border with Syria. The Lebanese government asserts it has 8,000 troops along the border and is starting to receive technical support from European countries to improve monitoring both there and at Beirut airport.

[10] For example, comment made by a member of Lebanon's Internal Security Forces (ISF) to Crisis Group, Tyre, 13 September 2006. Crisis Group observed Italian forces in armoured vehicles travelling near Tyre with their machine guns pointed both towards the road ahead and the road behind, as if expecting an attack. This posture, while defensive in nature, suggested the possibility of an action that could spark conflict.

[11] Some residents expressed relief at UNIFIL's new deployment, as well as hope for economic benefit from the European troops' buying power and need for local employees to sustain their operations. Crisis Group interview, Lebanese army officer, Tibnin, 13 September 2006. See also, Associated Press, 7 September 2006.

[12] The Lebanese Armed Forces' previous inability to deploy throughout the country reflected the weakness of the Lebanese state. The LAF's absence from the south dates to the 1969 Cairo Accords between the LAF chief and PLO leader Yasser Arafat. Shortly afterwards, more Palestinian fighters arrived from Jordan, after "Black September", and they helped turn the border region into "Fatah Land". Following its 1982 invasion, which brought its forces to the gates of Beirut and precipitated the departure of PLO fighters from Lebanon, Israel gradually withdrew but continued to occupy a belt running west to east along the border that curved northwards where Israel juts into Lebanon (at the towns of Kiryat Shmona and Metulla) until reaching the Shouf mountain range. This belt was patrolled jointly by Israeli troops and the South Lebanese Army, a proxy force recruited from local villages. In 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak withdrew all Israeli forces from Lebanon, and the SLA collapsed. (For the disputed area of Shebaa farms, see below.) Hizbollah fighters took positions along the border in lieu of the LAF, which was not equipped nor politically empowered to deploy.

[13] Even as they said this, Israeli officials also praised the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) deployed on the Golan Heights for acting as an effective liaison between Syria and Israel, implying that it might be a useful model for southern Lebanon.

[14] Both the government and Hizbollah called on Israel to relinquish the part of Ghajar village that lies inside Lebanese territory and that Israel has held since 1967. (See below.) Associated Press, 1 October 2006.

[15] It lifted the aerial blockade on 6 September 2006 and the maritime blockade on 7 September.

[16] Israel permitted Royal Jordanian Airlines flights between Beirut and Amman, as well as flights by Middle East Airlines, the Lebanese state carrier, on condition that equipment was checked in Amman by Jordanian security police. Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in 1994, and its security services have cooperated closely on some issues.

[17] Following the lifting of the blockade in the first week of September, seven military vessels under overall Italian command patrolled the Mediterranean off the Lebanese coast, including four Italian ships, one French, one British and one Greek. They were awaiting the deployment of eight German warships following approval by the Bundestag on 20 September. The new force took charge in mid-October (see below).

Post-war Lebanon not only faces the challenge of repairing the extensive damage to its infrastructure and restoring confidence in the economy; it also has to cope with a humanitarian catastrophe deriving from the IDF's widespread and intensive use of cluster shells and rockets. Due to their high failure rate, many unexploded sub-munitions, as small as cell phones, lie scattered through villages and the countryside or hang from tree branches, little bombs set to explode on inadvertent touch, for example during the October olive harvest. De-mining experts complain that they are still dealing with lethal detritus from the 1996 conflict, as well as antipersonnel landmines left behind when Israeli forces withdrew in 2000, and that they do not have the resources to address this much greater challenge.

The presence of so much unexploded ordnance – expert studies suggest between 170,000 and 340,000 unexploded sub-munitions[18] – combined with the destruction of many villages close to the Blue Line, hinders the return of displaced inhabitants, making much of the territory south of the Litani inaccessible and unsuited for agriculture and shepherding. As Crisis Group noted in a previous report, this historically has been a factor contributing to conflict, allowing both sides to "treat the area less as a hindrance to military activity than as a relatively cost-free shooting range".[19] Israel handed over some maps marking cluster strikes but these, the UN reported, were "not specific enough to be of use to operators on the ground".[20] According to an IDF artillery unit commander responsible for firing cluster munitions during the war, the IDF has a digital record of launching sequences and logbooks with target coordinates, in addition to maps.[21]

[18] The UN initially identified 451 individual cluster strike locations, while reports from Israel suggested that the IDF had fired at least 1,800 rockets containing 1.2 million sub-munitions, with a dud rate ranging from 15 to 40 per cent, depending on environmental conditions. See UN Human Rights Council report, op. cit., pp. 13-14, 22; reporting by Meron Rapoport in *Haaretz* (in English), 8 and 12 September 2006; "Report of the Secretary-General", op. cit., pp. 10-11; and "Lebanon: Protect Civilians From Unexploded Weapons", Human Rights Watch, 16 August 2006, and "Lebanon: Israeli Cluster Munitions Threaten Civilians", Human Rights Watch, 17 August 2006, at http://www.hrw.org.

[19] Crisis Group Middle East Report N°7, *Old Games, New Rules: Conflict on the Israel-Lebanon Border*, 18 November 2002, p. ii.

[20] "Report of the Secretary-General", op. cit., p. 10.

[21] Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 21 September 2006.

II. RESOLUTION 1701

A. THE ISRAELI VIEW

Although some Israeli officials maintain that Israel won,[22] many of their fellow citizens saw the war as a serious setback that significantly eroded their country's deterrent capability. Having failed to accomplish the goals they had set for themselves – return of the two abducted soldiers and Hizbollah's disarmament – leaders were left with a Security Council resolution that held out the vague promise of achieving those objectives by other means at some future date. They took solace in their belief that the IDF had dealt Hizbollah at the least a severe blow, claiming it had eliminated most of the movement's long-range rockets, killed some 700 of its fighters, destroyed a number of its assets and had inflicted such hardship on the population that Hizbollah would have little appetite to reignite the conflict in the foreseeable future.[23]

Resolution 1701 also brought the Lebanese army back to the Blue Line for the first time in decades, leading local IDF commanders to express satisfaction at the absence of Hizbollah military posts and fighters pressed up against the border.[24] One military expert declared

[22] "Not only did we win the war, we made quite some achievements", declared a senior government official. "We are quite astonished about what is happening". The UNIFIL force, he said, was "big and effective, with a decent mandate….No one had ever thought that 15,000 UNIFIL soldiers would be deployed". Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.

[23] "Out of 1,000 full-fledged fighters and 4,000 to 7,000 part-time fighters, 700 were killed", said a senior security official. "This is very significant and the main reason for our assessment that Hizbollah will remain quiet for some time". Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006. He noted that Israel was satisfied with the war's operational results, as, moreover, Hizbollah's "assets" had been "severely hit". Ephraim Sneh, the deputy minister of defence, estimated that 90 per cent of Hizbollah's long-range rockets had been destroyed. Moreover, of its 12,000 short- and medium-range rockets, Hizbollah had fired 4,000, he said, and the IDF had destroyed another 2,000. Finally, he claimed, Hizbollah was "losing the hearts and minds of the Lebanese, and this undermines their intention to take over the country and establish an Islamic republic". Therefore, "Hizbollah and its patrons are not going to use Lebanon as the staging ground for another round". Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 21 September 2006. (Sneh was reappointed deputy defence minister in October 2006. At the time of the interview he was head of the Labour Party's parliamentary bloc.)

[24] "This is a new reality", remarked Major Zvika Golan, spokesman for the IDF Northern Command. "We don't have

that because of the LAF's deployment "Hizbollah has been denied the title of defender of the south. This is why we believe they lost.".[25] Finally, the UN resolution reiterated the call for Hizbollah's disarmament and ordered an arms embargo designed to check its ability to rearm. Resolution 1701, while far from the optimal outcome, "is good for Israel and, if implemented, will lead to a substantive change in the rules of the game in Lebanon".[26]

Acknowledging that the more ambitious goals set out in 1701 are unlikely to be achieved in the foreseeable future, however, Israel has set its aims on two principal objectives, according to foreign ministry officials: preventing Hizbollah from regaining a strategic weapons capability with access to the border ("We are less concerned if they have mortars and light weapons"), and strengthening the Lebanese government relative to the armed group.[27] A "major concern", in this respect, relates to reports of "a certain degree of arms smuggling from Syria" after the war.[28] In the words of one official, Hizbollah has been "refuelling" since the war: "We could perhaps postpone the issue but we cannot ignore it."[29]

According to a U.S. source, Israel's most insistent demand regarding 1701 has to do with Syrian activities, particularly the transfer of explosives.[30] Iranian influence also causes considerable anxiety, leading a government minister to argue: "Hizbollah is not a terrorist organisation. It is a battalion of the Iranian army – structured and trained by the Revolutionary Guards".[31] Another official stated: "Even some of our own experts were surprised about the depth of Iranian involvement", from command and control of some Hizbollah operations by elements of the Pasdaran, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, to general guidance and, he suggested – albeit without any substantiation – perhaps even participation in the kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers. Since the war, Iranian money for reconstruction, he assessed, is coming into the country "on such a scale that everyone is in shock."[32]

Of central importance from a political standpoint is the fate of the two soldiers. For Prime Minister Olmert, securing their release is critical in order to show that the war yielded at least some of its intended fruits. Israel appears to have sent clear messages it is prepared to release all Lebanese prisoners it currently detains in order to get them back – namely the three it held prior to the war, including the Samir Kuntar, who was convicted for killing an Israeli father and his four-year old daughter, and the five it captured during the recent conflict.[33] What Olmert is just as adamantly refusing, for now at least, is the release of non-Lebanese detainees upon which Hizbollah is insisting.

In the longer run, Israel has not relinquished its broader goal of disarming Hizbollah. It views Resolution 1701 as a means to implement the outstanding goal of Resolution 1559 (2004), namely "the disbanding and disarming of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias"[34] through a three-pronged process: the presence of UNIFIL II and the LAF and the curbing of Hizbollah's activities south of the Litani;[35] a sea and land arms embargo, particularly at the Syrian border; and formal as well as informal international intelligence sharing aimed at monitoring

armed Hizbollah guys on the border any more". Crisis Group interview, Shomera, 20 September 2006.

[25] Crisis Group interview, Ephraim Sneh, Tel Aviv, 21 September 2006.

[26] Israeli foreign ministry briefing, 13 August 2006.

[27] Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, 20 September 2006.

[28] Crisis Group interview, Israeli security official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006; Crisis Group interview, Israeli official, Washington, October 2006.

[29] Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.

[30] "They have not really asked us to pressure UNIFIL to go after Hizbollah. Their main complaint has been vis-à-vis Syria, and that is who they want us to pressure". Crisis Group interview, U.S. official, Washington, October 2006.

[31] Avi Dichter, Israeli minister of public security, presentation at Brookings Institution, Washington, 19 October 2006.

[32] Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006. In the view of numerous Israeli officials and security experts, Hizbollah is not an autonomous actor. "There is no such thing as Hizbollah per se", said Ephraim Sneh. "It's all by remote control from Tehran, and Iran has a great interest in destabilising the region. Watch out, therefore, for the booby traps of the next phase in Lebanon". Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 21 September 2006. He and others predicted that Iran would use Hizbollah if its nuclear program came under military attack and that Syria, Hizbollah's other sponsor, needed the movement as "its last and only lever to get the Golan Heights back". Crisis Group interview, Dan Meridor, a former justice minister, Tel Aviv, 20 September 2006. In Meridor's view, "there is a new Iran-Hizbollah-Hamas axis, with new declarations that Israel has no right to exist. This is a serious *Weltanschauung*, rooted in religious foundations, and therefore, unlike Nasser's Arab nationalism, not subject to compromise. Such a conflict cannot be resolved, only perhaps be managed".

[33] Crisis Group interviews, Arab and European diplomats, September-October 2006.

[34] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1559 (2004), S/RES/1559, 2 September 2004.

[35] While at times critical of these forces' performance, Israeli officials welcomed the LAF's dispersal of Hizbollah supporters demonstrating in proximity to the Blue Line fence on Jerusalem Day (20 October 2006), and action by Spanish UNIFIL II forces to interrupt what Israel alleged was Hizbollah training activity in the south. Crisis Group interview, Israeli foreign ministry official, Jerusalem, October 2006.

this border area.[36] The ultimate objective, as Israeli officials see it, is to "take advantage of the situation" in order to "expand UNIFIL II's mandate as close as possible to Chapter VII".[37] However, should the UN not follow up, it will be "a crucial mistake, sowing the seeds of the next round".[38]

B. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW

The government, its two Hizbollah cabinet ministers included, initially threw its support behind Resolution 1701. Although it quibbled with some aspects that, in the words of a senior official, "didn't go far enough", it regarded the resolution as "generally positive": it brought a cessation of hostilities, set up a framework for a "more permanent resolution of the issues in the south" (short of a comprehensive peace settlement), and set in motion a process that would address pressing matters, such as border disputes (especially the status of Shebaa farms), prisoners, landmine maps and policing the border.[39] The LAF's deployment in the south has proceeded far better than anticipated; by creating an atmosphere of control, the large troop presence generated a new and positive dynamic in a matter of days. The army's mission, officials and senior military officers said, was unambiguous: to defend the country against Israeli aggression, impose state sovereignty throughout the land, guarantee security and stability, remove residual enemy presence,[40] cooperate with the humanitarian relief effort and coordinate with other security agencies.[41]

Concerning Hizbollah's weapons, they made clear that the army would confiscate any it observed south of the Litani but had no obligation under Resolution 1701 to look for them.[42] In other words, its position is that what is not seen does not exist, and if it is not seen, the area south of the Litani could be declared "free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL" in compliance with Resolution 1701. As for the arms embargo, the prime minister indicated that Lebanon fully intended to provide as watertight a blockade as possible but would not accept international forces on the Syrian border – a Syrian redline – only technical assistance.[43] If UNIFIL were to be deployed there, predicted an official, strong opposition from Syria and pro-Syrian forces would "spawn an internal conflict that could threaten the country's existence".[44]

Officials, aware of both Hizbollah's power and constraints, appeared unanimous that the movement's disarmament could not be imposed but would have to result from a consensual, internal political process. "The problem in Lebanon today is political, not military", declared a Lebanese security chief:

[36] Israeli officials advocate enhancement of such intelligence sharing. Concerned that Resolution 1701 contains "no formal or regular monitoring mechanism", they urge the creation of a UN "commission of violations" charged with daily reporting and sanctioning of transgressions. The goal would be to induce "Syria and Iran to be more careful" in implementing the embargo and minimise the risk of Hizbollah's "gradual penetration" south of the Litani. Crisis Group interview, Israeli foreign ministry official, Jerusalem, October 2006.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Crisis Group interview, Israeli security official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.

[39] Crisis Group interview, government official, Beirut, 12 September 2006. In particular, Lebanon had wanted the Security Council to call for a ceasefire rather than a mere cessation of hostilities and to place the Shebaa farms area under UN jurisdiction as a first step toward resolving its status. See the government's seven-point plan discussed further below.

[40] The army recognises that this directive merely expresses an aspiration. It made no attempt to push Israeli forces out of Lebanon, knowing full well, its own military inability aside, that Israel was already withdrawing – of its own accord and by its own declaration – in compliance with its obligations under Resolution 1701.

[41] Crisis Group interview, General Rafiq Hamoud, commander of the LAF's 11th Brigade, Tibnin, 13 September 2006. Reflecting fissures in domestic politics, Defence Minister Elias Murr declared that the army had two roles: to defend the borders and prevent the enemy from exploiting any pretext to return to southern Lebanon. Quoted in *L'Orient le Jour*, 11 October 2006. This latter phrasing was read by Hizbollah officials as a cloaked warning that the LAF would act proactively against Hizbollah, a departure from its stated rules of engagement. And they responded angrily. "We have victory, a popular base and weapons", political bureau member Mahmoud Qumati said. "We therefore have no reason whatsoever to agree with this new strategy". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 11 October 2006. Other senior Hizbollah officials were far less agitated, viewing the statement as intended chiefly for a foreign audience. Crisis Group interviews, Beirut, Tyre, October 2006.

[42] Hizbollah still is referred to as a partner. At the time of the LAF's deployment to the south, Michel Soleiman, the commander in chief, called on soldiers to "prepare yourselves to deploy side by side with our resistance [*muqawamatina*] and with our people whose resilience continues to surprise the world". *As-Safir*, 17 August 2006.

[43] President Bashar al-Assad was quoted as saying that UNIFIL's presence on the Lebanese-Syrian border would "be considered a hostile action and further complicate problems". United Press International, 21 September 2006.

[44] Crisis Group interview, General Saleh Hage Sleiman, LAF spokesman, Beirut, 12 September 2006.

> The Shiites, and Hizbollah, do not want to lose what they have gained, and they have the sense that everyone inside and outside Lebanon is against them. The Shiites used to be very poor. To them their land is sacrosanct. When attacked, they fight back. They are very proud of having defended their land against Israel. Now, if there is further pressure from the international community on Hizbollah, this will have a very negative impact on Lebanon's internal stability. It is better to have a dialogue with them, and then, once things have calmed down, we will be able to control the situation so much more easily.[45]

In the words of an official, "This should not be presented as a conflict between a government and a rebellious militia".[46]

That said, the interplay between 1701 and domestic politics has been a source of increasing tension and has coloured various constituencies' views of the resolution. The Lebanese government emerged from the war weakened; the country was shattered, its economy a shambles, its population demoralised and its politics more polarised than before.[47] If during the war support for Hizbollah was widespread, recriminations started even before the ceasefire came into view. Leaders of the 14 March movement, established after former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's assassination in early 2005, denounced Hizbollah early on for recklessly provoking a devastating war. After the guns had fallen silent, Samir Geagea, a Christian leader and former warlord, and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt severely criticised the movement. "The majority of the Lebanese people do not feel victory", declared Geagea. "Rather, they feel that a major catastrophe has befallen them and made their present and future uncertain".[48] Therefore, "Hizbollah's weapons are an issue that is not negotiable for us. We won't give up on this matter even though we know disarmament must be done through political means".[49]

Hizbollah's supporters in turn accused their detractors of betrayal in a time of war, argued that they alone had stood up against Israel and concluded that they had done what the state could not: defend the country from external aggression. The party's claim to serve as a deterrent set off a stormy internal debate. In the words of an official close to the prime minister,

> Hizbollah has said that its weapons deter an Israeli attack. You could counter this by arguing that the recent war showed that its deterrence failed: Israel *did* attack. But Hizbollah is now saying that, true, it did not stop Israel this time, but it still showed Israel that it cannot win this kind of war and so it is unlikely to try again. Because of this, the issue of Hizbollah's weapons remains very much alive.[50]

As Prime Minister Siniora and his allies see it, the solution is to avoid overtly provoking Hizbollah or Syria – hence his objection to the placement of UN troops along the Syrian border – while gradually building up the state's capability and presence throughout the country, strengthening the LAF and showing that it can credibly defend the country's sovereignty, thereby undermining Hizbollah's justifications for retaining its weapons. As a result, he has repeatedly raised the issue of Israeli over-flights – his defence minister going as far as to threaten to shoot down any plane that violated Lebanese sovereignty (something Hizbollah in the past has found to be far easier said than done)[51] – and criticised Israeli actions as violations of the resolution.[52]

Siniora also is counting on donors to take the lead in rebuilding the country. So far, despite impressive international pledges, the state has been less visible than Hizbollah activists who, the moment hostilities ended, surveyed the damage and offered cash compensation to those who had lost their homes so they could rent for a year as the reconstruction process proceeded. As far as one can tell, Hizbollah by and large has lived up to this vow, as confirmed by numerous inhabitants interviewed by Crisis Group.[53] The government, by focusing on

[45] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 12 September 2006.
[46] Crisis Group interview, Lebanese official, Beirut, 12 September 2006.
[47] For an analysis of the Lebanese scene before and during the war, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°57, *Israel/Palestine/Lebanon: Climbing out of the Abyss*, 25 July 2006; Crisis Group Middle East Report N°48, *Lebanon: Managing the Gathering Storm*, 5 December 2005; and Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 April 2005.
[48] Quoted in Associated Press, 25 September 2006.
[49] Crisis Group interview, parliamentarian and member of Hariri's Future Current, Tripoli, 18 October 2006.
[50] Crisis Group interview, Lebanese official, Beirut, 12 September 2006.
[51] "After the withdrawal of the Israeli enemy, there are two types of violations: violations of the Blue Line . . . and violations that happen from the air. There are clear orders from the army command to fire at any planes that enter Lebanese airspace". Quoted in *Al-Hayat*, 13 October 2006.
[52] U.S. officials complained that Siniora was overly vocal in his criticism of Israel. Crisis Group interviews, U.S. officials, Washington, October 2006.
[53] Crisis Group interviews in, inter alia, Beirut's southern neighbourhoods, Nabatiyeh and Avta Shaab. However, Hizbollah has not compensated all those whose houses were

rebuilding housing units and infrastructure, has been less visible and slower to appear; its money distribution began only a fortnight or so ago.[54]

To bolster the armed forces, Siniora is banking on the international community, including UNIFIL, to provide equipment and training. There is a long and perilous road ahead. Although the army was rebuilt after the Taef Accords ended the civil war, it was deliberately under-equipped, principally out of fear that it would fracture along sectarian lines, emerge as an autonomous force and intervene in domestic affairs. As described by Timor Göksel, a retired UNIFIL official, LAF personnel "have no weapons, no tents, no sleeping bags. They travel in minibuses and ask the UN for water. People in the south try to look up to them, but they are the worst equipped military outfit in Lebanon." 90 per cent of its budget is allocated to salaries: "How can you train an army with the remaining 10 percent?"[55]

Any effort to beef up the LAF also will necessitate delicate political balancing and commitment by Lebanon's potential partners.[56] On the one hand, as currently viewed in the West – the U.S. in particular – the army's role ought to be (as it has been so far) predominantly inward-directed, rather than aimed at protecting the nation's sovereignty and borders.[57] For Hizbollah and its backers, however, this would imply that the ultimate goal is to protect Israel from Lebanon rather than Lebanon from Israel. On the other hand, the deployment of some 10,000 soldiers to the south, possibly reaching 15,000, and bolstering the troop presence on the Syrian border are stretching the abilities of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) – the domestic security branch under the aegis of the interior ministry – to take the army's place, creating a potential vacuum.[58] The government has, therefore, called for aid in the form of arms and equipment also for the ISF, and both institutions have launched recruitment drives.[59]

C. HIZBOLLAH'S VIEW

Whatever it may have lost in men, equipment and assets,[60] and whatever damage was done to villages in the south and their inhabitants, as well as Beirut's southern neighbourhoods, Hizbollah came away with a clear sense of victory for having withstood a month-long onslaught by a far superior military force. In a rally attended by hundreds of thousands in Beirut on 23 September, its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, declared a "strategic, historic and divine victory" that had left Israel's image in tatters: "We have done away with the invincible army. We have also done away with the invincible state." Now, he said, a new task was at hand, the building of a strong Lebanese state that by ability to defend its sovereignty would obviate the need for a resistance movement and its weapons:

> The resistance is the result of several causes – the occupation, the arrest of prisoners, the plunder of water, the threat to Lebanon and the attack on Lebanese sovereignty….Tackle the causes and the results will disappear. When we build a strong,

only damaged and need assistance for repairs; nor has it compensated the loss of non-residential businesses, such as stores and shops.

[54] The first government cash payments to help southern inhabitants rebuild their homes were received on 21 October 2006.

[55] UNIFIL, he said, should encourage people in the south to become more dependent on the army by improving it as an institution and make it look more credible: "It's the only national institution Lebanon has". He suggested that the international community offer assistance to the army. Adding a note of scepticism, he remarked: "The government is not interested in the south. To them, Lebanon ends at the airport [in southern Beirut]". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 10 September 2006.

[56] Ali al-Amine, a Lebanese journalist with the daily *al-Balad*, suggested that some Lebanese would resist the notion of empowering the army, "because before the civil war the military was quite interventionist in politics". Crisis Group interview, Deir Kifa, 14 September 2006.

[57] Crisis Group interview, U.S. official, Washington, October 2006.

[58] Several Lebanese security officials and experts warned against moving too fast in transforming the military from guardian of Lebanon's public order to protector of its borders, citing a threat posed by Lebanese groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, particularly in the north. "The main threat to UNIFIL and the Lebanese army comes from Islamist groups and al-Qaeda", declared a security official. Another agreed: "There are disquieting reports that al-Qaeda wants to come into Lebanon [from Syria]. This is why we want to fill the security vacuum as soon as possible." (During this interview, news broke that there had been an armed attack on the U.S. embassy in Damascus, something that strengthened the official's perception of the threat posed by al-Qaeda-affiliated groups.) Crisis Group interviews, Beirut, 12 September 2006.

[59] A senior government official said the army would need $1.2 billion in equipment and weapons, and the ISF $200-300 million. Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 11 September 2006. Military officials agreed, stressing the army's need for defensive weapons: anti-aircraft, anti-ship and anti-tank especially. Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 12 September 2006. The ISF, 24,000 strong, is seeking 3,000-5,000 new recruits, especially from among former soldiers, who already have a certain level of training. The army, some 50,000 strong, is hoping to induct 13,000-15,000 additional soldiers. Crisis Group interview, senior security official, Beirut, 12 September 2006.

[60] Denying Israel's estimate, the movement claims it lost only 200 fighters. Crisis Group interview, Hizbollah official, Beirut, October 2006.

> capable and just state that protects Lebanon and the Lebanese, it will be easy to find an honourable solution to the question of the resistance and its weapons.[61]

Although it claimed victory, Hizbollah was compelled to acquiesce in Resolution 1701 despite what – from the party's standpoint – were evident shortcomings. The resolution's practical elements deal essentially with steps to contain Hizbollah, through LAF deployment, reinforcement of UNIFIL and enhanced monitoring at the borders, with no parallel mechanisms to limit Israeli military actions. Symptomatically, the reference to the Taef Accords focuses on its disarmament provision whereas the accords themselves mention disarmament as part of a far more comprehensive process aimed at re-establishing the state's sovereignty.[62] Still, Nasrallah welcomed the enhanced UNIFIL "as long as" it abides by its mission, which he defined as "supporting the Lebanese army … not to spy on Hizbollah or disarm the resistance." Declaring that Hizbollah had "more than 20,000 rockets", he pledged at once to comply with 1701 and to "protect the land and citizens" against Israeli "violations, attacks and transgressions" if the Lebanese state failed to do so.[63]

Hizbollah has largely abided by the ceasefire. In meetings with Crisis Group, senior party officials said it respected resolution 1701 despite repeated Israeli "provocations", which they listed – continued military presence on Lebanese soil, firing at fishing boats, kidnapping Lebanese citizens, ongoing violations of Lebanese airspace[64] – and to which Hizbollah had decided not to respond.[65] They wanted UNIFIL to observe and report Israeli violations and assist the Lebanese army in preventing hostilities. Resolution 1701, they said, built on the Lebanese government's own "seven-point plan", which it presented at a conference in Rome on 27 July and in which it declared its intent to extend its authority over Lebanese territory "such that there will be no weapons or authority other than that of the Lebanese state".[66]

Hizbollah, they said, was part of the government, having two cabinet posts, and during the war all cabinet decisions had been unanimous. Therefore, they insisted, its disarmament remained a purely internal Lebanese matter to be worked out over time as the state gained the strength to defend its sovereignty: "We are in favour of strengthening the army", said Mahmoud Qumati, a member of Hizbollah's political bureau. "Once this is accomplished, there will no longer be a need for the resistance. But we are in favour of an army that will defend Lebanon and against a policy of strengthening the army and security services in order to counter the resistance".[67]

In the meantime, political bureau member Ghalib Abou Zeinab explained, Hizbollah would pursue a policy in the south of being "present but hidden" (*biqaa wa ikhfaa*): its fighters would remain, as legitimate inhabitants of the villages, but its weapons would be invisible.[68] It reached agreement with the LAF that the latter would

[61] He added: "Any talk of surrendering the resistance weapons under this state, this authority, this regime and the existing situation means keeping Lebanon exposed to Israel so it can kill as it wants, arrest as it wants, bomb as it wants, and plunder our land and water. We certainly cannot accept that". For a BBC translation, see http://justworldnews.org/archives/002139.html. As a UN official observed, it will be very hard for the Lebanese army to assume Hizbollah's role in the south: "The army is a conventional force, and Nasrallah has shown that the conflict with Israel is asymmetrical. This is why it can only be fought by Hizbollah". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 11 September 2006.

[62] The Taef Accord begins by listing extensive reforms needed in all major State institutions and goes on to call for the "abolition of political sectarianism", the pursuit of administrative decentralisation and the enactment of a new electoral law, before dealing with the dissolution of all militias and the reinforcement of the LAF and ISF.

[63] He said: "We have thus far been patient, because we do not want to commit any violation of Resolution 1701, which is not sacred, of course, because we know that any simple violation by us, even if it is done in legitimate self-defence, will cause a hue and cry. Israel has been committing violations, attacks and transgressions all the time, but the world remains silent. Be assured that we will not be patient for long. Hear me well. If the state and the government fail to carry out their responsibility towards protecting the land and citizens, the Lebanese people will assume this responsibility as they have done since 1982" – the year of Israel's invasion, which marked the birth of Hizbollah.

[64] At the time of these interviews, Israel had yet to complete its withdrawal from southern Lebanon. The reported kidnapping, which Israel has acknowledged, was of short duration: Israeli forces took five men from the village of Aita al-Shaab in September and released them a day later.

[65] Crisis Group interviews with four members of Hizbollah's political bureau, including: Ghalib Abou Zeinab, Beirut, 11 September 2006; Nawaf al-Moussaoui, head of the movement's international relations department, Beirut, 11 September 2006; Ali Fayyad, director of the Studies and Documentation Centre, Beirut, 15 September 2006; and Mahmoud Qumati, Beirut, 11 October 2006.

[66] For an English translation, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siniora_Plan. In turn, the seven-point plan referred to the 1989 Taef Accords (officially known as the National Reconciliation Charter) ending the civil war that had employed similar language and had, moreover, promised the "disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias" within six months of signature. For an English translation, see http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Taif_Agreement.

[67] Crisis Group interview, Qumati, Beirut, 11 October 2006.

[68] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 11 September 2006.

not touch its weapons as long as its fighters were not seen to be carrying any. UNIFIL would have to be subordinate to the LAF. Hizbollah's response to perceived U.S. and Israeli attempts to paralyse the movement through Resolution 1701 would be to use the LAF as a barrier to neutralise UNIFIL.[69]

Abou Zeinab warned that any U.S. attempt to modify UNIFIL's mandate from assisting the army in defending Lebanese sovereignty to aggressively disarming Hizbollah and stationing international forces on the border with Syria, at harbours and at Beirut airport would have "very negative consequences".[70] Likewise, political bureau member Nawaf al-Moussaoui warned that should it try, UNIFIL would not succeed in disarming Hizbollah, something that the U.S., UK and Israel with their superior military force had failed to do.[71] To secure long-term stability on the border, Hizbollah officials demanded resolution of three principal concerns: Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails, Israel's occupation of the Shebaa farms area and Israeli violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, especially its airspace.

As further discussed below, increased domestic polarisation and the fear within Hizbollah that efforts are being made to reshape Lebanon's political map at its expense have begun to alter the party's approach to 1701. As the political divide has deepened, Hizbollah appears increasingly uncomfortable with the situation in the south to which they formerly acquiesced: with a far more dense military presence, multiple checkpoints, an army presence along the Syrian border and UN monitoring of territorial waters, Hizbollah's ability to manoeuvre and resupply has been sharply curtailed. As a result, the fear of an international "protectorate" has been voiced with increasing frequency by its officials and sympathisers.[72]

That said, the principal concern has less to do with the UNIFIL command or the UN – Hizbollah officials expressed trust in the UN's special envoy, Geir Pederson – than with the March 14 forces and several of the governments that dispatched troops to UNIFIL. Strong rhetoric from some Western leaders (the German chancellor and French ministers in particular) coupled with the party's deep conviction that March 14 members are "implementing foreign agendas",[73] amount in Hizbollah's eyes to evidence of renewed attempts to redraw Lebanon's map in the U.S.'s favour. For Hizbollah, any toughening of UNIFIL's rules of engagement or increased belligerency on the part of contributing nations would be unacceptable. In the words of Mahmoud Qumati, "after [Israel's] military defeat, they are trying to surround the resistance by other means".[74] Nabil Qawouq, the party's leader in the south, put it as follows: "Hizbollah's goal today is to protect UNIFIL from pressure emanating from Israel, contributing countries and March 14 forces".[75]

Hizbollah's calls to form a more inclusive government – one in which it, the Maronite Michel Aoun and other sympathetic parties would have a larger share capable of blocking decisions with which they disagreed – reflect its two conclusions: that the March 14 forces betrayed the original government understanding by turning against the resistance,[76] and that how 1701 is

[69] Crisis Group interview, Hizbollah official, Beirut, October 2006.

[70] On 3 October 2006, UNIFIL issued a press statement interpreting its rules of engagement to permit the use of force under certain circumstances: "Should the situation present any risk of resumption of hostile activities, UNIFIL rules of engagement allow UN forces to respond as required". Beyond self-defence, the use of force could also be applied in several other scenarios, including to prevent UNIFIL's area of operations from being used for hostile activity. Hizbollah and its allies saw this statement as a hardening of UNIFIL's mandate and protested vigorously. For example, Hizbollah political bureau member Mahmoud Qumati stated: "We reject any attempt by UNIFIL to extend its authority; it must stay strictly subordinate to the army". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 11 October 2006. A security expert close to Hizbollah argued that the U.S. had prodded European nations to deploy their soldiers in Lebanon to disguise its own role as Israel's protector, and that these countries were not so much U.S. "allies" (*halif*) as U.S. "adjuncts" (*mulhaq*), and as such should be treated with suspicion. Crisis Group interview, Staff General (ret.) Amine Hotaït, Beirut, 11 September 2006.

[71] Amine Hotaït contended that because of Hizbollah's victory in the war, the balance of forces had changed to the extent that there no longer was an armed force that could disarm Hizbollah. Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 11 September 2006.

[72] Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Fadlallah – who is not a member of Hizbollah but a voice that carries much weight among Shiites – worried that "the country has entered in the framework of direct international tutelage; with maritime encirclement and air coverage, I fear that it will become an international protectorate". Sermon on the occasion of International Jerusalem Day, Haray Hreyk mosque. *Al-Balad*, 21 October 2006.

[73] Crisis Group interview, Qawouq, Tyre, 11 October 2006. After the German cabinet approved plans to send German warships, Chancellor Angela Merkel stated: "This decision was made in view both of our particular responsibility for Israel's right to exist and for a solid solution for peace in the region". "Germany backs Lebanon naval force", BBC, 13 September 2006.

[74] Crisis Group interview, Mahmoud Qumati, Hizbollah political bureau member, Beirut, 11 October 2006.

[75] Crisis Group interview, Tyre, 11 October 2006. Qawouq complained about repeated visits by Western ministers to their troops. "They are not supposed to be international forces responding to orders issued by their states. They are UNIFIL II".

[76] The government explained in a statement upon coming to office in 2005: "The government considers the Lebanese

implemented in large part will depend on what UNIFIL and the LAF hear from Beirut. For Qumati:

> The attacks against us led by March 14 leaders [Jumblatt, Geagea, Hariri] forced us to react. In some ways, we felt they wanted UNIFIL to have a tougher mandate than even the U.S. or Israel desired. On top of that, they are claiming we were defeated, and we cannot accept that. That's when we understood that we could no longer trust the current government, that it was unable to fulfil its role. Above all, we had to ensure the government would not take hostile decisions, and we cannot do that without a change in government.[77]

The view was echoed by Qawouq: "The statements of March 14 forces demonstrate that they are seeking to implement a foreign agenda. That is why we are now advocating a national unity government, in order to protect the resistance".[78] In other words, in order to protect its military presence in the south, Hizbollah will fight politically in the capital.

D. THE UNITED NATIONS' VIEW

UN officials in the field appeared buoyant about the adoption of Resolution 1701.[79] Contrary to earlier resolutions, they noted, this one had teeth, involving the unprecedented deployment of a UN force possibly as large as 15,000 men,[80] as well as an arms embargo.[81] Moreover, the resolution created an active role for the secretary-general in effecting disarmament and delineation of Lebanon's international borders (Shebaa farms in particular) as part of efforts to bring about a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the conflict. Lending the resolution additional authority, it had been accepted unanimously, not only by Security Council members but also by such key actors as the concerned parties (Israel, Lebanon and Hizbollah) as well as (in principle at least) influential outsiders: the Arab League, Syria and Iran.[82] Finally, even though this was not part of the resolution but derived from a subsequent Lebanese request, the UN organised a naval force, the Maritime Task Force, to patrol international waters off Lebanon's coast as a way of assisting the government, which has no significant naval capability, in enforcing the arms embargo.[83]

These were robust steps, but ambiguities remain, especially concerning the key question of Hizbollah's arms. The resolution seemed to place the onus on the Lebanese government, not UNIFIL, which (aside from assisting the government in enforcing the arms embargo) merely was authorised (paragraph 12):

> 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.

resistance as the genuine and natural expression of the Lebanese people's right to free their land and defend their pride in the face of Israeli aggression and threats . . ." Reproduced in *Diary of the Israeli War on Lebanon* (Beirut, 2006), p. 324.

[77] Crisis Group interview, Qumati, Beirut, 17 October 2006.

[78] Crisis Group interview, Qawouq, Beirut, 17 October 2006.

[79] For an incisive and independent analysis of Resolution 1701 and its implications, see "Resolution 1701", a report issued by the non-governmental organisation Security Council Report, at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org.

[80] UN officials expressed some concern that contributing countries were sending a preponderance of engineering teams and other specialised troops over infantry units, the need for which was most pressing. Crisis Group interview, Naqoura, 14 September 2006.

[81] Although the arms embargo in Resolution 1701 was not established explicitly under the UN Charter's Chapter VII, which would have given UNIFIL enforcement power, the language of paragraphs 14 and 15 strongly suggests Chapter VII authority. "If arms come through", a UN official observed, "this will be seen as a threat to international peace and security", as envisioned by Chapter VII, and could prompt stronger UN action. Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 11 September 2006. A UN official referred to it as "Chapter VI and a half". Crisis Group interview, New York, September 2006.

[82] Iran's private reaction was far cooler. President Ahmadi-Nejad is said to have denounced 1701's imbalance, arguing that it should have required Israeli, U.S. and UK compensation for the destruction of Lebanon, and portraying it as a Western-inspired resolution that reflected the Security Council's unjust composition. Crisis Group interviews, Western officials, October 2006.

[83] See "Report of the Secretary-General", op. cit., pp. 9-10. This marked the first such force in the organisation's history and therefore opened up new questions, for example with respect to its rules of engagement. Early indications were that the force has no mandate to interdict ships but only to pass information to the Lebanese naval authorities. Agence France-Presse, 14 September 2006. The rules of engagement remain confidential. UNIFIL Commander Alain Pellegrini indicated merely that the force's mandate was: "ensuring, through supporting the Lebanese Navy, that this country's territorial waters are not utilised for any illegal or hostile activities". UNIFIL press release, 16 October 2006.

Although nothing in the resolution suggested that UNIFIL would be asked to disarm Hizbollah in the area of its operations, it left uncertain whether UNIFIL should intercept arms transports or disarm fighters it encountered while fulfilling its responsibility to assist the Lebanese government. Major General Alain Pellegrini, UNIFIL's commander, told Crisis Group that his force's mandate extended to "any illegal weapons and any hostile action"; it was not charged with proactively searching for weapons, but were UNIFIL to receive information about the presence of arms or armed fighters in a given location, it would pass this on to the LAF. In responding to the information, the army could then either act alone or request UNIFIL's assistance. "If they don't act, we can respond, but there are different ways of doing this". It could take the form of a demarche to the Lebanese government, a report to UN headquarters, or, in the extreme case, a direct effort by UNIFIL to verify the information and confiscate any weapons it might find.[84]

Generally, though, UN officials have counselled against both an expansive interpretation of Resolution 1701 and a proactive UNIFIL effort to disarm Hizbollah. Resolution 1701 "does not say that the area south of the Litani should be clear of weapons immediately", declared one official, who pointed at the reference to a weapons-free zone as being on a list of "principles and elements" in paragraph 8 that are supposed to form the basis for a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the conflict – objectives that could not be achieved overnight even in the best of circumstances. Hizbollah's disarmament, he offered, should be the result of internal Lebanese discussions, seeing as the request for paragraph 8 had come from the Lebanese government on the basis of a consensus decision – one, in other words, that had received Hizbollah's approval.[85]

Secretary-General Annan took the lead in interpreting 1701 conservatively, stating at a Brussels press conference in late August that "disarmament of Hizbollah has to be achieved through negotiation, and an internal Lebanese consensus, a political process, for which the new UNIFIL is not, and cannot be, a substitute".[86] He was no doubt encouraged by comments earlier that month of Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, who explained: "I don't think there is an expectation that this force [UNIFIL] is going to physically disarm Hizbollah…. [T]he disarmament of militias is essentially a political agreement, and the Lebanese Government has said that it intends to live up to its obligations under Resolution 1559 and … the Taef Accord".[87]

Expressing concern about the longer-term sustainability of UNIFIL II, a senior UN official predicted that problems would arise down the road "as Israel grows impatient with Hizbollah's armed presence, and as Hizbollah seeks to test our resolve". But the bigger problem, he lamented, was that "as usual, we are being asked to solve through military means a problem that demands a political solution. We can only be a short term band-aid if the international community does not resolve the issue of Hizbollah, which means resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict".[88]

[84] Crisis Group interview, Naqoura, 14 September 2006. Pellegrini was quoted in the media as stating that "if the [Lebanese army] fails to act, we must assume our responsibilities as a UN force. Someone will have to intervene, with all the consequences that this might have for the Lebanese authorities". Agence France-Presse, 17 September 2006.

[85] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 15 September 2006.

[86] European Jewish Press, 25 August 2006.

[87] She further clarified: "When people say, 'Are they going to disarm Hizbollah', that's not actually how militias disarm. They're disarmed by a plan under political agreement and then support can be given to the Lebanese in doing that". "Transcript of Condoleezza Rice interview", *USA Today*, 16 August 2006.

[88] Crisis Group interview, UN official, New York, October 2006.

III. POTENTIAL TRIGGERS OF RENEWED CONFLICT

With only few exceptions, the truce has held remarkably well, as neither Israel nor Hizbollah appears eager to resume fighting at this time.[89] But it remains fragile. A second round could be triggered by domestic dynamics, as pressure grows on Israel's leaders to reassert the country's deterrence and respond to criticism of their conduct of the war or as Lebanese political tensions rise and persuade Hizbollah of the advantage of renewed fighting. It might also be set off through miscalculations at the border, as Israel and Hizbollah each test the new rules of the game, Israel through continued over-flights or land operations, Hizbollah through visible military presence or attempts to resupply. Nor can one underestimate external variables, in particular the possibility that Syria or Iran may react to stepped-up efforts to isolate them. Syria has made clear that, should its repeated requests for renewed peace negotiations with Israel go unheeded, it would see no interest in "stabilising" the situations in Lebanon, Palestine, or Iraq – an unsubtle hint that it might then heat up one or more of them.[90]

Genuinely addressing potential causes of conflict would require tackling domestic Lebanese as well as regional Arab-Israeli matters, neither of which is on the immediate horizon. At this point, therefore, the priority should be to defuse potential trigger points at the border area by clarifying the new rules of the game and avoiding miscalculation on either side.

A. HIZBOLLAH'S WEAPONS AND POTENTIAL REARMAMENT

For now, Israel acknowledges that Hizbollah's disarmament, if it is to take place, will only occur as part of an internal political process. Underneath the at times belligerent rhetoric is quiet recognition that Lebanon can take Resolution 1701 "only in small doses" and that Israel will have to proceed with "a clever combination of carrots and sticks to reinforce the moderates in Lebanon".[91] As a U.S. official put it, there is little appetite for renewed confrontation: Israel has grown "allergic" to Lebanon, having repeatedly learned the hard way that "it is easier to get in than to get out".[92]

Still, given the war's inconclusive outcome and the desire to accomplish through UN resolutions at least part of what the IDF could not by force, Israeli officials have emphasised the importance of preventing Hizbollah from reconstituting an active armed presence in the south or rearming.[93] "The *casus belli* for us would be any sort of Hizbollah rearming and re-establishing itself along the Blue Line", an Israeli security official said. He suggested that Israel would convey intelligence on hidden arms caches or shipments to UNIFIL with the expectation that the international force, in cooperation with the LAF, would intercept and confiscate them.[94]

UNIFIL's position on how it would respond to such circumstances is unclear, though for now it appears to be making sure it will not inadvertently stumble upon illegal weapons, by leaving law enforcement to the

[89] As noted, Israeli troops conducted an operation within Lebanon after the cessation of hostilities, and over-flights have continued. An apparent Israeli attempt to add a strip of land several metres wide to its control at the border near Metulla also met with outrage in the Lebanese media and government protest. Photographs in mid-September showed Israeli earth removers digging a trench outside its security fence and laying rolls of concertina wire. See, e.g., *Al-Diyar*, 12 September 2006. A defence ministry official declared: "These sorts of things didn't happen for six years because the resistance was there. We complained to UNIFIL but nothing happened. If it fails to act, there will be a big problem. Israel should not be able to take a single centimetre". Crisis Group interview, General Saleh Hage Sleiman, Beirut, 12 September 2006. The LAF lodged a complaint with UNIFIL, which in turn complained to the IDF. The IDF declared its actions were a temporary measure to be removed at the time of its full withdrawal. Israeli forces did eventually vacate the additional terrain outside Metulla, but after their 1 October withdrawal. Crisis Group email communication, UNIFIL spokesman, 25 October 2006. Hizbollah clearly has not disarmed, and there are reports it is seeking to re-supply its arsenal. UN officials also told Crisis Group that they were looking into reports of visible military presence by Hizbollah in the south. Crisis Group interview, New York, October 2006.

[90] Crisis Group interview, Syrian official, October 2006.

[91] Crisis Group interview, Israeli security official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006. In the view of some security experts, "the core problem [with respect to Hizbollah's disarmament] is the Lebanese government's lack of accountability", or, more generally, the weakness of the Lebanese state. Crisis Group interview, Giora Eiland, former head of Israel's National Security Council, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006. Any attempt to disarm Hizbollah would at best be a lengthy affair fraught with obstacles. "We understand the difficult situation in which [Lebanese prime minister] Siniora finds himself", said a foreign ministry official. "We don't have a lot of illusions". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, 20 September 2006.

[92] Crisis Group interview, Washington, October 2006.

[93] Israeli officials and military officers also have expressed concern over potential provocations by Hizbollah to scuttle post-war de-escalation, for example by sending drones over Israeli airspace or encouraging rogue actors to fire rockets across the Blue Line.

[94] Crisis Group interview, Israeli security official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.

LAF. While UNIFIL troops have established checkpoints on roads in the south, they have not searched vehicles, citing "legal implications".[95] The LAF reportedly has been carrying out random checks, but has not requested UNIFIL assistance. "There is daily coordination, so no need for case by case requests for assistance. There has been no emergency, or special case, so far", said a UNIFIL spokesman.[96]

The Lebanese government is on record as stating that Resolution 1701 does not require it to look for Hizbollah's weapons. According to a Lebanese military official,

> If arms are displayed openly, that's forbidden, and they will be confiscated. We told Hizbollah this clearly, and they accept it. We have had five or six incidents already in which we captured Hizbollah rockets, munitions and explosives; these are now in our storage and will not be returned to them. But we agreed with Hizbollah about arms caches: we will not touch these.[97]

The danger, he said, was that if the LAF acted on intelligence about arms caches, "then, from one cache to the next, this would lead to direct conflict with Hizbollah".[98]

If placed in the awkward position of receiving information from Israel via UNIFIL concerning an arms cache and challenged on its stated position that Resolution 1701 does not mandate the LAF to carry out proactive searches, Lebanon is most likely to point to Israel's own violations of 1701 as a reason not to act.[99] "Hizbollah's leadership has said it will not violate 1701, and until now it hasn't, 100 per cent. But we have had Israeli air violations since forever. The Security Council should solve problems between countries fairly. In the case of Israel, the Council is not able to fulfil its mission".[100]

Israel has pointed to evidence of new weaponry crossing the Syrian border since the war ("some Iranian munitions and some Russian weapons"), criticising the Lebanese government for not doing enough and insisting it should make a broader appeal for international assistance in embargo enforcement, lest Israel be "forced to act unilaterally".[101] Lebanese officials disagree, saying they are doing the maximum possible under the circumstances. As noted above, the LAF asserts it has deployed some 8,000 troops on the Syrian border, including along smuggling trails. "We can't have a full-proof system, but perhaps 90 per cent", a senior military official said.[102] Visitors to the border area have reported not only a stronger Lebanese army and intelligence presence, with new checkpoints and patrols and tougher security measures against smuggling, but also enhanced Syrian border patrols.[103]

The problem, a Lebanese government official predicted, would come in winter, when effective monitoring of smuggling paths in the high mountains is likely to become very difficult. To fill the gaps, the government has requested bilateral technical assistance from friendly states, primarily to enhance electronic and perhaps also satellite monitoring. In response, German experts have

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[95] Crisis Group email communication, UNIFIL spokesman, 27 September 2006. Two Crisis Group analysts driving in the south for three days in mid-September were not stopped, let alone searched, at any time.

[96] Crisis Group email communication, UNIFIL spokesman, 25 October 2006.

[97] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 15 September 2006. Hizbollah officials concur: "We agreed with the army that if they see us with weapons, they can take them. But they cannot search for caches; caches are not visible [*thaaher*]". Crisis Group interview, Ali Fayyad, Beirut, 15 September 2006. Defence Minister Elias Murr confirmed the confiscations publicly on 10 October and reiterated what the army would do if it found weapons: "Any armed person, even if it involves only an unlicensed pistol, shall be arrested and tried by a military tribunal, and any weapon found will be confiscated and deposited in army storage". *L'Orient le Jour*, 11 October 2006.

[98] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 15 September 2006.

[99] Another way might be for the LAF to warn Hizbollah fighters to clear the area when it receives intelligence on their presence, thereby avoiding the need to remove them. This is reportedly the IDF's view of what is happening. *Haaretz*, 15 October 2006.

[100] Crisis Group interview, Lebanese military official, Beirut, 15 September 2006. The bottom line, he added, is that Israel can count on the U.S. veto in the Security Council. "That's the problem. They know they can do whatever they want".

[101] Crisis Group interview, senior security official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006. For a view of the situation at the border in mid-September, see Craig S. Smith, "A Ceasefire Drives Into a Mirage on a Border That Disappears as It Gets Closer", *The New York Times*, 16 September 2006.

[102] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 15 September 2006. Asked about the Israeli reports, a U.S. official expressed some doubt, saying he had yet to see clear evidence of re-supplies via Syria. Crisis Group interview, Washington, October 2006.

[103] Crisis Group email communication from an international NGO official, 24 September 2006. He quoted smugglers as saying the border was "pretty solidly sealed" and reported that upon his return to Beirut he was approached by military intelligence to inquire about the reason for his visit to the border, suggesting heightened interest and monitoring. While this should be taken with some scepticism, Syrian diplomats reportedly have approached European capitals with the suggestion that they assist Syria in enhancing controls on its side of the border. EU officials opined that this was a tactic similar to the one Syria used previously in response to accusations that jihadi fighters were crossing from Syria into Iraq, which resulted in greater international support for Syria's efforts to control that border. Crisis Group interviews, Brussels, 3-4 October 2006.

reviewed measures put in place by the Lebanese government on the border as well as at Beirut airport,[104] and further technical assistance is expected.[105]

Still, some Israeli officials intimate that their patience may run thin: "If we get overhead intelligence on arms shipments, we will initially inform UNIFIL. But the bottom line is that the [Israeli] government would have to act".[106] They have raised additional concerns. One involves Hizbollah's role, aided by Iranian funds, in repairing the damage in southern Lebanon. "How could Hizbollah be prevented from using the cover of civilian structures to conceal its rearmament effort?"[107] Consequently, they call for close scrutiny of Lebanese non-governmental organisations involved in rebuilding homes, monitoring of money transfers, and greater international engagement in reconstruction, including through funding.[108]

Another Israeli concern is Hizbollah's rearmament north of the Litani River. Villages on the Nabatiya plateau and east of the Zahrani River are close to the Israeli border yet outside UNIFIL's jurisdiction. If Hizbollah were to stock a new missile base there, said Ephraim Sneh, Israel's deputy defence minister and leader of the Labour party's parliamentary bloc, "this could be the cause of a new round of fighting. No Israeli government could tolerate Hizbollah building there what they had south of the Litani".[109] Likewise, Israel is unlikely to countenance a Hizbollah arms build-up in the Beqaa valley, given the 200-km. range of its missiles.[110]

There also are concerns that armed Palestinian fighters in the three refugee camps located south of the Litani – Rashidiya, Al-Bas and Bourj al-Shimali – could provoke incidents with UNIFIL or the LAF.[111] An Israeli official suggested that Hizbollah might use such fighters to conceal its own role.[112]

Finally, from Israel's viewpoint, even sightings of unarmed Hizbollah fighters hoisting their flags, staging demonstrations in border-area villages or throwing stones at IDF soldiers are seen as provocations that might well trigger a military response, even if Resolution 1701 does not prohibit such activities.[113] Israel's army chief declared that IDF soldiers had received instructions to shoot at stone-throwers if they felt their lives were in danger[114] – a dangerously elastic concept. Underscoring the potential threat of such activities, the LAF prevented a group of Hizbollah supporters from reaching the border at the Fatima Gate to stage a protest;[115] that crossing has been the site of stone-throwing since Israel's 2000 withdrawal.

B. ISRAELI OVER-FLIGHTS

Lebanese officials, while noting that Hizbollah has complied with its obligations – short of moving towards disarmament – have accused Israel of repeated and continuous violations (some of which have been mentioned above). The issue of over-flights is of particular concern, a constant reminder of Israel's disregard for Lebanon's sovereignty, and a powerful argument in Hizbollah's case for the state's impotence. The threat of Lebanon's defence minister, Elias al-Murr, to shoot at any aircraft violating his country's airspace says more about the political sensitivity of the issue than any realistic danger, since the LAF lacks an air force and has little

[104] "Report of the Secretary-General", op. cit., p. 9.
[105] Lebanon has requested night-vision equipment but Israel reportedly raised objections, citing concerns that the gear would fall into Hizbollah's hands, which already has some. Crisis Group interview, Amos Harel, military correspondent with *Haaretz*, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.
[106] Crisis Group interview, Israeli security official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.
[107] Crisis Group interview, Israeli security official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.
[108] At a donors conference in Stockholm on 31 August 2006, governments pledged more than $900 million. Several Gulf states have provided direct support to village reconstruction and de-mining. For example, Qatar is rebuilding the villages of Khiyam, Bint Jbeil and Aita Shaab. Syria has taken charge of Qana, Siddiqin and Qlaiya.
[109] Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 21 September 2006.
[110] Crisis Group interview, Israeli security expert, Jerusalem, September 2006.
[111] Crisis Group interviews, Lebanese security officials, Beirut, 12 September 2006.
[112] Crisis Group interview, Israeli official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.
[113] Crisis Group interview, Lieutenant Colonel Yishai Efroni, deputy commander of the Baram Brigade at the northwest Galilee front, Shomera, 20 September 2006. While Israeli officials have welcomed the LAF's deployment in southern Lebanon, they express concern about its loyalty given its alleged (albeit unconfirmed) 70 per cent Shiite composition. Amos Harel, an Israeli journalist, pointed out in reply that the South Lebanese Army (SLA), an Israeli proxy force during its occupation in 1982-2000, was known as a Christian force even though it contained 30 per cent Shiites, and that this Shiite presence evidently was never considered a problem. Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006. Shiite members of the LAF deployed in the south would likely be sources of intelligence both for Hizbollah and on Hizbollah.
[114] Quoted by Naharnet, 5 October 2006.
[115] Naharnet, 5 October 2006.

anti-aircraft capability.[116] In September, Israeli officials claimed they had yet to formulate a position on the over-flights question, they realised its sensitive nature for the Lebanese but "we must be assured that there is no new arms build-up".[117] A month later, France brought the matter to a head when its defence minister, Michele Alliot-Marie, warned that over-flights, which she termed "extremely dangerous", should end lest UN peacekeepers fire at Israeli aircraft, suspecting hostile intent.[118] After a 48-hour lull, however, Israel resumed incursions into Lebanese airspace, stating they were justified by evidence Hizbollah was rearming.[119]

Lebanon's prime minister repeatedly brings this up with U.S. officials, who claim to be working on "technological" fixes so as to provide through other means the information Israel currently gets through over-flights.[120]

Lebanese officials also have condemned Israeli threats to strike against Hizbollah leaders, saying any such action – and Nasrallah's assassination in particular – could spark renewed warfare. An official noted: "Unilateral Israeli steps, actions taken blindly without concern for the consequences, such as killing Hizbollah leaders or bombing trucks suspected of carrying weapons, could trigger a rapid deterioration".[121]

C. UNDERLYING DISPUTES AND THE SHEBAA FARMS CONUNDRUM

In the wake of the ceasefire, the issue of Hizbollah's armed status remains a key flashpoint. As the war confirmed, it will not be resolved through military means; a domestic process might make some headway but it too is highly unlikely to yield conclusive results given the fractious and polarised nature of Lebanese politics. Most importantly, Hizbollah's weapons are intimately tied to regional and international factors, in particular the unresolved Israeli-Syrian conflict and mounting tensions between Iran and the U.S. Hizbollah is an intensely ideological movement, determined to resist what it sees as U.S. and Israeli attempts to reshape the region. Just as Israeli officials viewed the war as a proxy conflict driven by Syria and Iran, so Hizbollah saw Washington's hand. "Lebanon is the first stage in the new Middle East", Nabil Qawouq, the party's leader in the south, declared. "The [Israeli] attack was linked to this regional project".[122]

The war, in this sense, only further solidified Hizbollah's arguments for maintaining its weapons, validating its role "in resisting foreign encroachment and enhancing Arab and Lebanese steadfastness".[123] Close ties to Iran and Syria – which give Hizbollah critical logistical and political support – must be understood in this context. For both countries, the Islamists' arsenal is a critical asset that ought not to be freely given away.[124]

For all these reasons, the prospect of Hizbollah's disarmament remains distant and dependent on broader regional changes. That said, the most effective way to constrain its armed activities and forward the disarmament agenda would be to dry up some of its ostensible justifications, which, as noted, revolve around three outstanding matters: violations of Lebanese sovereignty, including through over-flights; Lebanese detainees in Israeli jails; and Israel's occupation of the Shebaa farms area. If, as Israelis claim, the primary purpose of the over-flights is intelligence collection, this might be addressed through alternative technical means. Efforts are underway to exchange the two Israeli soldiers for Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails, though, as mentioned,

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[116] "There are clear instructions from the army command to shoot at any Israeli warplane that violates the Lebanese airspace". He added that "the United Nations is registering our daily complaints to these violations, and I hope they would soon end". Elias al-Murr, quoted by Naharnet, 13 October 2006.

[117] Crisis Group interview, security official, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006. A U.S. State Department official said that Israeli over-flights are not violations of Resolution 1701, which does not mention the issue, but that "we realise it is deeply embarrassing for the Lebanese government, and we are talking to the Israelis about alternative measures". Crisis Group interview, Washington, DC, 11 October 2006.

[118] Quoted in Reuters, 20 October 2006.

[119] Associated Press, 22 October 2006. Defence Minister Amir Peretz conditioned suspension of over-flights on the return of the abducted Israeli soldiers and an "arrangement regarding supervision of the Lebanon-Syria border". *Ynet*, 26 October 2006.

[120] Crisis Group interview, U.S. official, Washington, October 2006. Israel's main stated concern is possible re-supply from Syria which, at this point, it claims over-flights alone can monitor. Ibid.

[121] Crisis Group interview, 12 September 2006. On 19 August, Israeli forces apparently attempted to kidnap or kill a senior Hizbollah leader, Muhammad Yazbeck, in the Beqaa valley, in violation of the obligation under Resolution 1701 to respect the Blue Line. Report of the Secretary-General, op. cit., p. 4. At the end of September, Israel's infrastructure minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, recommended that Israel assassinate Hassan Nasrallah: "He's bad for the Jews, he's bad for the Arabs, he's bad for the Christians. We should wait for the right opportunity and not leave him alive". Quoted by press agencies, 30 September 2006.

[122] Crisis Group interview, Tyre, 11 October 2006.

[123] Reinoud Leenders, "How the rebel regained his cause: Hizbullah and the sixth Arab-Israeli war", *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, Summer 2006, p. 42, at http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes/.

[124] On this, see further Crisis Group Report, *Israel/Palestine/Lebanon*, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

Hizbollah insists on the release of many more Arab prisoners as well.[125]

The Shebaa farms may well present the most complex challenge. An uninhabited area between the two northern ridges of Mount Hermon, measuring 25 square kilometres, it is used for agriculture and grazing by residents of nearby Lebanese villages. It is part of the Golan Heights, which Israel captured in 1967, and both Israel and the UN, as well as many independent observers, consider it belongs to Syria,[126] while Lebanon, Hizbollah and Syria argue it is Lebanese.[127] When Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000 after an eighteen-year occupation, it did not vacate the Shebaa farms area; Hizbollah seized upon this to argue the occupation had not ended and to continue its fight through periodic military operations.[128] However, the Security Council ratified Israel's withdrawal as complete, clearly signalling it considered Shebaa farms Syrian, not Lebanese,[129] and it has repeatedly condemned Hizbollah's operations there as a violation of Resolution 425 (1978), in which it called on Israel to end its then-occupation of part of southern Lebanon. Neither Lebanon nor Syria has ever provided compelling evidence to support the former's claim to Shebaa.

Hizbollah has repeatedly vowed to keep its resistance alive, and therefore its weapons at hand, at least until Israel has totally withdrawn from Lebanon. Israeli officials and security experts, in turn, suggested in the past that Israel might give up Shebaa farms – even though they strongly dispute it is Lebanese – in exchange for Hizbollah's total disarmament.[130] Ariel Sharon, while prime minister, reportedly considered a trade-off between full implementation of Resolution 1559 (i.e., Hizbollah's disarmament) and giving up Shebaa farms, "assuming there would be agreement on the scope of the territory",[131] and the UN was involved in back-channel discussions to see whether such a deal could take place. Prime Minster Siniora strongly urged the U.S. and others to encourage such an arrangement, believing it was the most effective means to pressure Hizbollah; to that end, he sought Syrian agreement to demarcate the border area.[132]

During the negotiations over 1701, Secretary Rice reportedly pushed Prime Minister Olmert to accept a more direct reference to the Shebaa farms in the resolution. Facing a difficult domestic situation, and unwilling to create the impression that Israel had given in to Hizbollah attacks, Olmert vehemently disagreed.[133] This does not necessarily mean the issue is off the table; Siniora continues to make the case to Washington; Secretary-General Annan believes this would be an important step and has asked his staff to begin the process of demarcating the area. For now, however, Israel has remained adamant, on grounds both that to compromise would embolden its adversaries and that, even were the Shebaa issue resolved, Hizbollah would turn to some other pretext – perhaps seizing on this precedent to demand further amendments to the UN-sanctioned Blue Line – to justify its armed status.[134]

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[125] Resolution 1701 called for the soldiers' "unconditional" release, while merely "encouraging" efforts aimed at "urgently settling" the issue of Lebanese detainees. In September, Kofi Annan announced that he had appointed a facilitator to address both issues, suggesting recognition that they were inextricably linked.

[126] The status of the Golan Heights remains unresolved, pending an Israeli-Syrian agreement. Israel formally annexed the area in 1981, an action that has not been recognised by the international community. During the July 2006 war, Israel took steps to reassure Syria that its activities close to the Syrian border, including in the Shebaa farms area, were strictly defensive in nature (for example, digging trenches and limiting as much as possible military activity east of Khiyam). Crisis Group interview, Israeli military reserve expert, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.

[127] The area appears to consist of Lebanese properties and grazing grounds inside Syria to which the Lebanese owners, as well as the government and a wide range of political actors, lay claim as historically Lebanese even if they never fell formally within Lebanese territory. For a discussion, see Asher Kaufman, "Size Does Not Matter: The Shebaa Farms in History and Contemporary Politics", *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, Summer 2006, pp. 163-176, at http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes/.

[128] These were known as "memory operations" [*amaliyaat tazkiriyya*], serving as a reminder that restitution of the Shebaa farms remains a Lebanese demand.

[129] UN Security Council Resolution 1310 (27 July 2000).

[130] Asserting that the Shebaa farms area was "critically important" for the Israeli military because of the presence of Israeli observation posts overlooking southern Lebanon and that if Israel were to give it up, "we would see a huge improvement in Hizbollah's capacity", the former head of Israel's National Security Council said that Israel would agree to vacate Shebaa farms only "in exchange for the total dismantlement of Hizbollah". Crisis Group interview, Giora Eiland, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006. Other Israeli military experts argue that adjacent hills offer an adequate alternative for observing activity north of the border. Crisis Group interviews, Mount Hermon/Jebal al-Sheikh, October 2006.

[131] Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 19 September 2006.

[132] Crisis Group interviews, Beirut, 12 April 2006.

[133] Crisis Group interviews, U.S., UN and Israeli officials, Washington, New York, September-October 2006.

[134] Ibid. An Israeli official stated: "If and when there is full implementation of UN resolutions as well as a Syrian willingness to agree to UN demarcation, then we would consider giving up Shebaa farms, but this is not a formal position". Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 19 September

It has a point. Hizbollah claims it is protecting Lebanon and, in particular, the Shiite population from Israel. As long as there is no overall Arab-Israeli peace, it will argue that Lebanon remains vulnerable, and, as long as there is no army capable of defending the country, that only Hizbollah can defend it. Amin Mustapha, an analyst of Hizbollah and the history of the Lebanese resistance, explained: "We know Israel, and getting rid of our most effective means of protection would be a serious strategic mistake. All of this will only be resolved comprehensively with a resolution of the Palestinian question and once Israel realises that it cannot afford to be surrounded by enemies".[135] Just as Hizbollah and others created the Shebaa farms issue to prolong hostilities, some fear that they would seize upon another issue if this were resolved. According to Dan Meridor, a former Israeli justice minister, "because Shebaa farms was an excuse, once it's gone there will be another one".[136]

It is an oversimplification to assume that Hizbollah "needs" occupied territory to justify its armed resistance. As it sees it, its mission is not only to liberate land but also to protect Lebanon and deter Israeli aggression. That said, the party already has hinted at additional territorial issues, leading a Lebanese government official to dub it "a resistance in search of an occupation".[137] Ghajar, for example, an isolated Alawite village of 2,500 people, strategically located on the slopes of the Golan Heights where the Israeli, Syrian and Lebanese borders meet, also is in dispute. As part of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which carved up the post-Ottoman Middle East after World War I, the colonial demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian border dissects Ghajar, the northern two-thirds being assigned to Lebanon, the southern third to Syria.[138] Israel seized the entire village in the 1967 war, and when it annexed the Golan Heights in 1981, it imposed Israeli citizenship on inhabitants on both sides of the border. When its forces withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, they did not vacate Ghajar, avowedly to prevent "a humanitarian disaster of the first order",[139] but apparently also to prevent arms and drug smuggling from Lebanon into Israel via the village.

While the village was kept together, Israeli forces largely stayed out of the northern part, conceding it was Lebanese, as confirmed by the Blue Line demarcation. At the same time, they erected fences at the southern entrances, limiting access for Israeli citizens through gates and checkpoints. The northern side, facing Lebanon, theoretically remained open but until the recent war, Hizbollah – which maintained posts on the northern edges within 50 metres of Israeli positions – restricted Lebanese civilian access. Ghajar residents generally avoided entering Lebanon, fearing Israel would arrest them on their return for entering enemy territory, but smuggling has been widespread.[140] Hizbollah abandoned its posts during the last conflict.

An odd situation has ensued, in which residents considering themselves Syrians hold Israeli citizenship while living on what is – at least in the northern two thirds – officially Lebanese territory.[141] During the most recent round of fighting, IDF soldiers entered the northern portion of Ghajar and remain there. Israeli officials indicate a solution to Ghajar is at hand, under which UNIFIL II and the LAF would assume control of the north.[142] But both the inhabitants and some Israeli officials oppose the town's division; residents fear they would lose access to farmland under Israeli control,[143] while some Israelis caution that were the Lebanese

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2006. More generally, Israeli officials are concerned that any alteration of the Blue Line would establish a precedent for revising the 1923 agreement defining the borders between the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon and the British mandate in Palestine – for example in future negotiations with Syria. Crisis Group interview, Israeli foreign ministry official, Jerusalem, October 2006.

[135] Crisis Group interview, Amin Mustapha, Beirut director of the daily *Al-Watan***,** Beirut, 14 September 2006.

[136] Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 20 September 2006; Crisis Group interview, foreign ministry officials, Jerusalem, 20 September 2006.

[137] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 12 September 2006.

[138] Some claim that the villagers in both parts consider themselves Syrians. Crisis Group telephone interview, Taiseer Maray of the Arab Association for Development in Majd al-Shams on the Golan Heights, 15 October 2006. Others assert that many of those in Ghajar's northern part consider themselves Lebanese. Crisis Group telephone interview, Lebanese man with relatives in the northern part, 31 October 2006. That said, they appear to prefer to remain under Israeli jurisdiction pending an Israeli-Syrian settlement. Crisis Group interviews, inhabitants of Ghajar, October 2006. Religious ties to Syria's Alawites also allegedly play a role in defining the town's allegiance. Crisis Group interview, Qassem Khatib, Israeli journalist, Jerusalem, October 2006.

[139] Cited in "Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978)", UN Security Council, 16 June 2000.

[140] Crisis Group telephone interview, Taiseer Maray, 15 October 2006.

[141] Crisis Group email communication, Golan Heights expert, 19 September 2006.

[142] Crisis Group interview, Israeli foreign ministry official, Jerusalem, October 2006.

[143] Many residents oppose handing the north over to Lebanese control. "We don't want our village to be divided. Our lands are all on the Israeli side [occupied Golan Heights], and we want to remain united under Israeli control". Crisis Group interview, carpenter, Ghajar, October 2006. Another resident stated: "Israel is threatening to expel us and take our land". Crisis Group interview, Ghajar, October 2006.

government to assume control over the north of the town, it could be in a position to detain Israeli citizens – an Israeli red line.[144] UN officials suggested that the issue was "very close" to resolution, pending "technical arrangements which would satisfy Israeli security concerns and ensure Lebanese sovereignty".[145]

Likewise, Hizbollah has periodically raised the issue of the so-called "seven villages", which belonged to pre-1948 Palestine. [146] The party claims they are Lebanese, though how strongly it is willing to push this is unclear. Ghalib Abou Zeinab, a member of the political bureau, stressed that the return of the villages to Lebanon did not belong to Hizbollah's "strategic objectives" (which include Shebaa and Ghajar).[147] Publicly, Nasrallah has not made much of the seven villages, though in 2000 Hizbollah announced it would only recognise a full Israeli withdrawal once they were turned over to Lebanon.[148] In December 1999, Prime Minister Salim al-Huss declared that the villages belonged to Lebanon and should be returned.[149] However, the Lebanese government has not raised this matter recently, on the grounds that the 1949 boundaries place the villages in Israel.[150] Israel refuses to discuss the villages pending "peace talks on ending all Lebanese claims", and maintains in any event that the villages are within mandatory Palestine as demarcated in 1923 by the colonial powers.[151]

That said, UN efforts to achieve progress on Shebaa will be difficult, at least for now. Among concerned parties, only the Lebanese government appears genuinely interested in a solution. While declaring Shebaa Lebanese, Syria has refused to delineate the border. Officially, this is because it remains under Israeli occupation: "How are we to demarcate this border? Ask for Israeli permission to survey the area? This can only be done once Israel withdraws".[152] When pressed, officials are more candid: "Why should we facilitate an effort to return Shebaa to Lebanon? We know that it is designed to weaken us, and we will get nothing in return. Meanwhile, we will have lost one of our cards. Shebaa will not be resolved until the Golan is".[153]

The Lebanese government has proposed its own solution, that Shebaa farms be placed under temporary UN jurisdiction pending final resolution of the Israeli/Syrian/Lebanese conflict; in its first report on the implementation of Resolution 1701, the UN echoed this.[154] Hizbollah is of two minds. It consistently has demanded the withdrawal of Israeli troops, and it undoubtedly would take credit for this. At the same time, it knows well that such a development would intensify pressure on it to disarm and for that reason will look upon it with suspicion. Israel, as seen, has become more reluctant after the war, fearing a move would be viewed as a sign of weakness.

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[144] It is unlikely that these villagers would retain Israeli citizenship once their part of the village reverted to Lebanon. According to a Golan Heights expert, Israel forced the villagers to accept Israeli citizenship by initially allowing residents to leave the village only if they first obtained a permit from an Israeli-appointed elder (*mukhtar*), who was not from Ghajar and whom local residents considered an Israeli collaborator. Crisis Group email communication, 19 September 2006.

[145] Crisis Group email communication, UNIFIL spokesman, 18 October 2006.

[146] The seven villages – Teir Bikha, Ibl (or Marj) al-Qamah, Hounin, Malkiya, Nabi Youshaa, Qaddas and Salha – were determined to be Palestinian in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. See Warren Singh-Bartlett, "Seven Villages Await Their Independence", *Daily Star* (Beirut), 20 November 2000. A confessional motivation may be at play, as the villages had a Shiite population – which is one the arguments the French had (unsuccessfully) invoked to argue that the villages should fall under their mandate rather than the British. UN officials list other potential flashpoints or sources of territorial dispute: at Rmeish (a case of a Lebanese farmer seeking access to part of his property that lies in Israel), the tomb of Sheikh Abbad /Rabbi Ashi (sacred to both Israelis and Lebanese) and the Fatima gate (an area where Lebanese often throw stones at Israelis). Crisis Group interview, Naqoura, 14 September 2006.

[147] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 26 October 2006.

[148] Nasrallah mentioned the villages at a 2005 electoral meeting. For both the 2000 and 2005 statements, see *Al-Safir*, 4 July 2005.

[149] *Al-Hayat*, 21 December 1999.

[150] Crisis Group interview, March 14 member of parliament, Beirut, 27 October 2006.

[151] Crisis Group interview, Israeli foreign ministry official, Jerusalem, October 2006.

[152] Crisis Group interviews, Syrian officials, Damascus, April 2006. Since 1967, Syria has had no land border with the Shebaa Farms, which lie west of Mount Hermon/Jebel al-Sheikh.

[153] Ibid.

[154] In Resolution 1701 (paragraph 10), the Security Council asked the secretary-general to develop proposals "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". In a formal declaration, Kofi Annan indicated that he had encouraged the Lebanese and Syrian governments to permanently resolve the issue by formally delineating the border (because any UN determination on the status of Shebaa farms "is without prejudice to any border delineation agreement" between Syria and Lebanon). In the meantime, he said, he had taken careful note of a Lebanese government proposal, in its seven-point plan, to place the area under UN jurisdiction until its status is resolved. "Report of the Secretary-General", op. cit., pp. 11-12. For now, the Secretary-General has asked the UN cartographer to map the precise location of the Shebaa Farms. Crisis Group interviews, New York, October 2006; *Haaretz*, 30 October 2006.

The notion that resolving the Shebaa farms issue would, somehow, prompt Hizbollah's transformation into a strictly political actor is misguided. That, as discussed, will depend on many other Lebanese and non-Lebanese factors. Many Lebanese observers nonetheless remain convinced that movement on Shebaa would be critical because, they argue, it is by far the most prominent of Hizbollah's claims.[155] By placing it under temporary UN jurisdiction, while making clear that final resolution must await a comprehensive peace settlement, one could begin to address Hizbollah's asserted justification for its heavily-armed status and, in so doing, defuse Shebaa's potential as a violent flashpoint.

IV. CONCLUSION: HOW TO BUILD ON RESOLUTION 1701

The war's aftermath produced a surprising – albeit superficial – consensus on key aspects of defusing the crisis: an enhanced UN role, an expanded UNIFIL mandate, the LAF's deployment in southern Lebanon and the need to strengthen the Lebanese state. But it would be wrong to read too much into the apparent unanimity or to expect too much from 1701. As seen, all parties have their own interpretation of the resolution, and potential flashpoints are numerous.

The consensus reflected in 1701 is fragile, covering diverging interpretations of its core demands and how they should be implemented. It came about essentially due to the need for a relatively quick solution, after a destructive war and a fierce diplomatic battle conducted in a context of high regional tensions. And it was agreed to because each party found enough in it to meet its basic requirements. For Israel, Resolution 1701 – though far short of the objectives stated at the onset of the war – at least offered the possibility of achieving politically some of the goals it could not accomplish militarily. Thickening of armed presence in the south would, it was hoped, constrain Hizbollah's freedom of action and significantly limit its ability to restock.

For the U.S., it also was a tool that could help strengthen government and army control over Lebanese territory, in the process weakening the Hizbollah-Syria-Iran axis while boosting its own allies. In the words of a U.S. official: "We expected more at the beginning of the war, based on what the Israelis had led us to believe; but we have in place the means to gradually achieve key objectives: rebuilding the army, moving it to the south, beefing up international forces".[156] The March 14 forces likewise saw the resolution as an instrument to tilt the political balance in their favour.

Hizbollah viewed 1701 as a double-edged sword. The presence of an international force and the deployment of the LAF in the south had been neither planned nor desired. But by then, they represented a means to preserve the impressive symbolic gains registered during the war without incurring further devastating attacks against its Shiite constituency. Moreover, the party was convinced that it was immunised from aggressive military action by these forces in three ways: it had long enjoyed very close relations with

[155] Crisis Group interviews, Lebanese officials and observers, Beirut, April-September 2006.

[156] Crisis Group interview, U.S. official, Washington, August 2006.

the LAF – indeed, far closer than with the government;[157] past experience of multinational forces in Lebanon suggested a generally passive posture, and UNIFIL essentially would take its orders from the LAF;[158] and the central government to which the army is answerable would be paralysed by internal discord. In addition, Hizbollah could always invoke non-fulfilment of specific provisions of 1701 to defend against any move to disarm it: Israeli violations of the Blue Line and the state's inability to exercise full sovereignty (understood by the party as defence of national territory), as well as continued occupation of Shebaa and detention of Lebanese prisoners.[159] As a Hizbollah political bureau member put it, "it is a resolution that, all its drawbacks aside, is to Lebanon's advantage – so long as it is implemented as it was meant to be".[160]

Divided as to their interpretation of how much 1701 would constrain Hizbollah, the parties are equally at odds concerning what is meant by reinforcement of state sovereignty. The resolution evokes Lebanon's "territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence",[161] but whereas some saw this as directed against Hizbollah – an autonomous armed militia with the capacity to plunge the country into war – others chose to read it as aimed at Israel, whose military attacks over the past decades have peppered Lebanese history.

In reality none – save, perhaps, Prime Minister Siniora – had in mind a genuinely sovereign state, transcending both local, clientelist networks and regional interference. Hizbollah in principle favours a strong and fair central state but will not relinquish its military capability, certainly not now. The March 14 forces ultimately would be threatened by the establishment of such a state, which would terminate the patronage and community-based system to which they owe their power. Israel's definition of a sovereign Lebanon is one able to eliminate armed groups within its borders, not to defend itself against a foreign entity; U.S. officials interviewed by Crisis Group likewise imply that the LAF must be trained and equipped to meet Hizbollah's, not Israel's, challenge.[162]

Such rival agendas and conflicting interpretations run the risk of tearing apart the process that resolution 1701 set in motion. Polarisation on the Lebanese scene coupled with hints that UNIFIL and the LAF may adopt a more aggressive posture are pushing Hizbollah toward a more confrontational posture of its own, which could threaten the country's delicate balance. This is manifested in greater questioning of 1701, accusations that the March 14 forces are U.S. stooges[163] and energetic efforts to maximise its presence in the government so as to further paralyse it.[164] Hizbollah may also be tempted to flex its muscles to demonstrate it has not been weakened by 1701, which could lead to more provocative acts at the border or more belligerent rhetoric on issues such as the over-flights or Shebaa. Should UNIFIL try to assert a more independent and assertive role, Hizbollah might react. Significantly, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Fadlallah warned that the international force was there to protect Israel and therefore deserving of suspicion:

> The widening of the scope of Israeli violations in the south and other areas of Lebanon and their repetition within the sight and hearing range of UNIFIL forces that don't interfere to stop these violations...affirm that these forces have come here to protect Israel not Lebanon. Therefore, it is the Lebanese people's right to put a question mark over its role and to be cautious toward it.[165]

[157] During the recent war, the LAF leadership had direct and high-level contacts with Hizbollah; in contrast, the government had to go through intermediaries, notably the oil minister, Muhammad Fneish and parliament speaker Nabih Berri. Crisis Group interviews with LAF senior official and with an advisor to Prime Minister Siniora, Beirut, August 2006.

[158] "Any attempt to broaden UNIFIL's mandate is unacceptable. It must remain subordinate to the LAF". Crisis Group interview, Mahmod Qumati, Hizbollah political bureau member, Beirut, 11 October 2006.

[159] Hizbollah's position consistently has been that its weapons are not an end in itself, but rather motivated by circumstance. "We are not saying that these weapons will remain forever. It is not logical for them to remain forever. There is bound to be an end to them". Nasrallah speech, op. cit.

[160] Crisis Group interview, Mahmoud Qumati, Beirut, 11 October 2006.

[161] Resolution 1701 stresses the "importance of the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory … for it to exercise its full sovereignty…" (paragraph 3), and reiterates the Security Council's "strong support … for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognised borders, as contemplated by the Israeli-Lebanese General Armistice Agreement of 23 March 1949" (paragraph 5).

[162] Crisis Group interviews, U.S. officials, Washington, September-October 2006.

[163] Hizbollah's refrain has become: "yes, we are allied to Syria and Iran, and proud of it, whereas you are allied to the U.S. and cannot even admit it". Crisis Group interview, Hussein al-Hajj, Hizbollah member of parliament, Beirut, 17 August 2006.

[164] Hizbollah is not seeking predominant power, but rather power sufficient to "protect the decision-making process", in other words sufficient to paralyze it. Crisis Group interview, Mahmoud Qumati, Hizbollah political bureau member, Beirut, 11 October 2006.

[165] Reuters, 16 October 2006.

Israel, still reeling from the poor outcome of the war and eager not to see its deterrent power further challenged, might react forcefully to any Hizbollah provocation, indication of its rearmament or signal of weak UNIFIL or LAF implementation of their mandate.

At bottom, and as was the case with the earlier Resolution 1559, the problem lies not so much in the desire to tackle the issue of Hizbollah but in the manner in which this has been done: by singling it out and internationalising one specific question (Hizbollah's armaments) without regionalising its solution, which would require addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict and, of growing importance, the U.S.-Iranian dispute as well. Stated differently, the resolution does not offer a *quid pro quo* to those parties that stand to lose the most (Iran, Syria, Hizbollah) and have the capacity to undermine it.[166] It also ignores Lebanon's domestic dysfunctionalities and long-overdue political reforms, while side-stepping the Shiite community's historic feeling of insecurity and lack of faith in the state's ability to protect it from Israeli aggression.

In short, 1701 all at once elevates Hizbollah's armed status to the rank of core international concern; entrusts its resolution to a process (Lebanon's internal dialogue) that is structurally incapable of dealing with it; and defers the key political step (progress toward a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace) that is a precondition for settling it.

All this does not necessarily condemn 1701 to failure. Rather, it signifies that overreach by domestic or foreign actors in seeking to implement it could trigger renewed confrontation between Israel and Hizbollah or, more likely, a domestic showdown within Lebanon with possibly deadly consequences. Instead, the goal at this point should be modest, which does not mean inconsequential: minimizing risks of violence by limiting through pressures and inducements Israel's and Hizbollah's military moves; bolstering the state's effective sovereignty and reach throughout Lebanese territory; and beginning to address some outstanding Israeli-Lebanese issues. For the sake of stability, paradoxically, the question of Hizbollah's status will have to await another day – when the Quartet and the wider international community are prepared to engage in serious Arab-Israeli peacemaking, and Lebanon is prepared to seriously tackle its internal political order. More achievable, short-term objectives should instead be pursued:

Containing Hizbollah. The sheer presence of several thousand more national and international forces has limited Hizbollah's freedom of manoeuvre and ability to re-supply, even in the absence of proactive weapons searches; that, combined with heightened border monitoring and the Shiite community's exhaustion, is likely to hold back and constrict the Islamist movement for the foreseeable future. But there should be no aggressive effort to uncover arms caches, and UNIFIL should adopt a generally conservative posture, responding only to LAF appeals; anything else would risk disrupting the fragile balance at the border and within Lebanon's political system. Of course, flagrant violations – such as the transfer of weapons to Hizbollah – will need to be energetically addressed by the LAF and, at its request, UNIFIL.

Containing Israel. Given Hizbollah's reduced nuisance capacity, Israel too needs to be persuaded and pressured to avoid steps that, by highlighting the Lebanese state's weakness, would simultaneously validate the Islamists' argument and expose 1701's double standard. The UN, but also Western countries, must monitor and vocally condemn continued over-flights or any other possible violation of Lebanese sovereignty, for example attacks against suspected weapons caches, stressing that continued implementation of 1701 depends on adherence to its provisions by all parties. A public perception that the international community is more interested in securing Israel than in securing Lebanon could jeopardize the UN mission. In the case of over-flights in particular, the UN and UNIFIL should demand that Israel justify its actions and should independently assess the validity of the stated rationale. Israel also must desist from attempts to eliminate Hizbollah leaders, most notably Hassan Nasrallah.

Bolstering the state's sovereignty. This is key to neutralising Hizbollah's argument that it alone can defend Lebanon. Central to this is strengthening the LAF, gradually transforming it from an internal security body to a national defence organisation able to credibly protect the country's territorial integrity, as explicitly stated both in the Taef Accords and its

[166] A U.S. official indicated that resistance to engagement with Syria remained strong. Crisis Group interview, Washington, October 2006. The Iraq Study Group, also known as the Baker-Hamilton Commission after its co-chairmen, former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, was charged by the U.S. Congress in March 2006 to review and reassess policies. It is widely expected to recommend some sort of engagement with Syria (and Iran) at a minimum on the issue of Iraq. Whether the administration will want to use it as a means of altering a non-engagement policy that has been deeply entrenched remains to be seen.

own mandate.[167] More broadly, it requires developing a full-fledged national defence doctrine. It also must include providing the state with the resources needed to rebuild the country and to ensure this is done independently of the communitarian and clientelist networks that so far have predominated.

Addressing Hizbollah's complaints. This could both reduce (though not eliminate) Hizbollah's justification for maintaining its arsenal and, if done wisely, boost the state's credibility. It includes a successful prisoner exchange and (at least) the beginning of a process designed to resolve the question of the Shebaa farms by transferring them temporarily to a UN mandate. It also must include Israeli cooperation with UN efforts to remove unexploded munitions and landmines in Lebanon.

Beirut/Jerusalem/Amman/Brussels, 1 November 2006

[167] The Taef Accord describes the process under its chapter "Strengthening the armed forces: 1. The fundamental task of the armed forces is to defend the homeland, and if necessary, protect public order when the danger exceeds the capability of the internal security forces to deal with such a danger on their own. 2. The armed forces shall be used to support the internal security forces in preserving security under conditions determined by the cabinet. 3. The armed forces shall be unified, prepared, and trained in order that they may be able to shoulder their national responsibilities in confronting Israeli aggression. 4. When the internal security forces become ready to assume their security tasks, the armed forces shall return to their barracks. 5. The armed forces intelligence shall be reorganized to serve military objectives exclusively." The LAF's mission is stated clearly on its website: "Facing the Israeli occupation and its perpetual aggression in South Lebanon and West Bekaa and supporting the steadfastness of Lebanese citizens to ensure the complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces to internationally recognized borders; Defending the country and its citizens against all aggression; Confronting all threats against the country's vital interests; Coordinating with Arab armies in accordance with ratified treaties and agreements." Only afterwards does it refer to its role in "maintaining internal security and stability". http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/English/Mission.asp

APPENDIX A

MAP OF LEBANON

Courtesy of The General Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin

APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with nearly 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made available simultaneously on the website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is co-chaired by the former European Commissioner for External Relations Christopher Patten and former U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering. Its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

Crisis Group's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC (where it is based as a legal entity), New York, London and Moscow. The organisation currently operates thirteen field offices (in Amman, Bishkek, Bogotá, Cairo, Dakar, Dushanbe, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kabul, Nairobi, Pristina, Seoul and Tbilisi), with analysts working in over 50 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents. In Africa, this includes Angola, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Rwanda, the Sahel region, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia; in the Middle East, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in Latin America, Colombia, the Andean region and Haiti.

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November 2006

APPENDIX C

CRISIS GROUP REPORTS AND BRIEFINGS ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA SINCE 2003

The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative: Imperilled at Birth, Middle East Briefing Nº14, 7 June 2004

ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Islamic Social Welfare Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Legitimate Target?, Middle East Report N°13, 2 April 2003

A Middle East Roadmap to Where?, Middle East Report N°14, 2 May 2003

The Israeli-Palestinian Roadmap: What A Settlement Freeze Means And Why It Matters, Middle East Report N°16, 25 July 2003

Hizbollah: Rebel without a Cause?, Middle East Briefing Nº7, 30 July 2003

Dealing With Hamas, Middle East Report N°21, 26 January 2004 (also available in Arabic)

Palestinian Refugees and the Politics of Peacemaking, Middle East Report N°22, 5 February 2004

Syria under Bashar (I): Foreign Policy Challenges, Middle East Report N°23, 11 February 2004 (also available in Arabic)

Syria under Bashar (II): Domestic Policy Challenges, Middle East Report N°24, 11 February 2004 (also available in Arabic)

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Disengagement and After: Where Next for Sharon and the Likud?, Middle East Report N°36, 1 March 2005 (also available in Arabic and in Hebrew)

Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria, Middle East Report N°39, 12 April 2005 (also available in Arabic)

Mr Abbas Goes to Washington: Can He Still Succeed?, Middle East Briefing N°17, 24 May 2005 (also available in Arabic)

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The Jerusalem Powder Keg, Middle East Report N°44, 2 August 2005 (also available in Arabic)

Lebanon: Managing the Gathering Storm, Middle East Report N°48, 5 December 2005 (also available in Arabic)

Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration, Middle East Report N°49, 18 January 2006 (also available in Arabic and in Hebrew)

Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet: Pulling Back From the Brink, Middle East Report N°54, 13 June 2006 (also available in Arabic)

Israel/Palestine/Lebanon: Climbing Out of the Abyss, Middle East Report N°57, 25 July 2006 (also available in Arabic)

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