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U.S. Foreign Policy in Lebanon: Adapting to Regional Threats Today and Promoting Stability for the Future

Robert Michael Shelala II

University of Denver

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U.S. Foreign Policy in Lebanon:
Adapting to Regional Threats Today and Promoting Stability for the Future

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies

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Master of Arts

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by

Robert M. Shelala II

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Advisor: Professor Joseph Szyliowicz
ABSTRACT

Since the 1800s, the United States has sought to advance its interests in what currently exists as the Lebanese Republic. This assessment will look at the shape that policy has taken since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war in the context of historical relations. After doing so, three questions will be addressed: What have been the policies of Iran and Syria toward Lebanon during this time period, how effective has U.S. policy been since 2006 in undermining Iranian and Syrian influence and what policies should the United States adopt to offset future destabilizing influence from these countries. It is concluded that the current policy suffers from substantial contradictions and shortcomings in addressing the Syrian and Iranian threats, particularly regarding Hezbollah. A new policy in the form of enhanced military and developmental support is advocated, as are steps to encourage rapprochement between Lebanon and its neighbors.
Acknowledgements

A special thanks to Professors Joseph Szylidowicz, Brent Talbot and Susan Sterett of the University of Denver, whose feedback and support as members of my defense committee has been invaluable. Thanks also to Ambassador Christopher Hill, Professor Fowaz Gerges of the London School of Economics and Political Science and Adam Lukszo for their opinions and advice.

“Aeschylus wrote: In sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart and in our despair, against our will comes wisdom through the awful grace of God. What we need […] is not division, what we need […] is not hatred, what we need […] is not violence or lawlessness, but love and wisdom and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer […]. Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world.”

-Robert Kennedy – Indianapolis, 1968
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Chapter One – Overview of the Analysis

Introduction

Since the 1800s, the United States has been involved in the affairs of what is now the Lebanese Republic, and has played an important role in influencing developments in the area. During the 19th century, missionaries contributed to the health and education sectors and promoted Christianity by printing the bible in Arabic.¹ These efforts were intended to attract Ottomans to Christianity by familiarizing the Christians of the region with the values of Protestants in the United States through promoting modernity, education and commercial connections. The missionary experience can be understood as an early Wilsonian endeavor of bringing Christians together, while also bringing non-Christians into the mix as they admired the success of the Christians.²

Americans made a significant contribution to the future Lebanese Republic by launching the Syrian Protestant College in 1866, which would provide educational opportunities, “[…] for all conditions and classes of men without regard to color, nationality, race or religion.”³ This institution eventually became the American


University of Beirut, a university that has trained students in such useful fields as medicine, nursing, dentistry, engineering, agriculture and business.4

By the mid 20th century, the relationship between the United States and Lebanon evolved from one characterized by religious-led development support to that of a superpower seeking to advance its strategic interests of containing communism during the Cold War. The methods of U.S. involvement may have changed with the centuries, but the Wilsonian concept of actively promoting American interests in the country did not. Lebanon remained strategically important to the United States through the containment of communism during the Cold War, and in the post-Cold War efforts to secure Israel and contain Iran.

With U.S.-Lebanon relations now in its third century, the strategic importance of Lebanon has become all the more salient as Hezbollah, a group considered by the United States to be a terrorist organization,5 has gained political and military power in the country and threatens both the stability of Lebanon and the security of Israel. Under both the Bush and Obama Administrations, the United States has provided substantial support to the Lebanese government,6 seeking to bring stability to this often volatile country. Moreover, the growing power and influence of Iran in the Middle East7 makes its support

4 American University of Beirut n.d.


of Hezbollah a serious cause for concern for the United States, given U.S. interests in Lebanese stability and the strong Iranian and Syrian influence in Lebanon through Hezbollah. This thesis seeks to address the following questions: What have been the policies of Iran and Syria toward Lebanon during this time period, how effective has U.S. policy been since 2006 in undermining Iranian and Syrian influence in Lebanon and what policies should the United States adopt to offset future destabilizing influence from these countries.

To answer these questions, it is necessary to accomplish two tasks. First, I will provide an overview of the specifics of U.S. policy toward Lebanon in the wake of the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, and will gauge the effectiveness of this policy in advancing U.S. geostrategic goals of stabilizing Lebanon, protecting Israel and containing Iranian power. Second, I will specify what future threats will be posed in Lebanon by Iran and Syria, and will suggest how U.S. policy can be altered to address these threats while still achieving the aforementioned U.S. interests in Lebanon.

Purpose of the Study

Initial research on U.S. policy toward Lebanon identified that the foreign policy discourse lacks a critical assessment of the policy response to the 2006 war. There is also no thorough assessment of what Iran and Syria’s threats to U.S. interests in Lebanon will be in the coming years, and how the current U.S. policy should be refined to address those challenges. There are many works that offer significant contributions to the history of U.S. and Iranian policy toward Lebanon, yet their age precludes them from drawing events since the 2006 war into their assessments, let alone many of the major developments over the past year. The discourse also is in need of a contribution that
sheds light on how the United States can both offset Iranian and Syrian influence in Lebanon, while at the same time helping develop the Lebanese economy and society.

A second fact that influenced the decision to conduct this study concerns the high stakes for ensuring stability in Lebanon. These stakes are likely to exist into the foreseeable future. It has been reported that Hezbollah has recently increased the number of weapons positioned in Lebanon. Furthermore, it is also believed by the Israeli government that Hezbollah may have SCUD missile capabilities as of late. The presence of these weapons increases the likelihood of another military confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah, especially if tensions escalate between Israel and Iran over the alleged Iranian nuclear program.

Iran’s efforts towards Middle East hegemony also underline the need for the United States to place policy toward Lebanon under the microscope. The Iranian regime’s links to Hezbollah and possible nuclear weapons program presents the United States with a major threat to its interests and a key opportunity to strike a blow to the heart of Iran’s hegemonic quest.

This study is also being pursued in response to the shortcomings that have emerged in the post-2006 U.S. policy. Funding for a military assistance deal negotiated

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10 Goldberg 2010, Goldberg posits that Hezbollah could launch an attack on Israel in response to an Israeli attack on Iran’s nuclear program.

11 Baer 2008, 51-57, Baer discusses in these pages the centrality of Lebanon in Iran’s hegemonic endeavors.
between the United States and Lebanon was suspended for several months in fall 2010. Additionally, the “unprecedentedly warm welcome” given to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during a recent visit to Lebanon indicates the popularity of the Iranian leader amongst citizens and politicians in Lebanon. Also disconcerting are reports of future Iranian assistance programs to Lebanon at a time when Washington’s commitment to Beirut is uncertain. While the United States has sought to restrict the flow of arms to Hezbollah and reinforce the integrity of the Lebanese central government, there have been major deficiencies in reaching these ends. Despite international pressure to disarm, Hezbollah now boasts a larger arsenal than they had during the 2006 conflict. Moreover, the scope of Hezbollah’s militia could potentially increase as ties between Iran and the Lebanese government become stronger.

A final reason for this study is the geostrategic significance of Lebanon to the United States. From the Eisenhower Administration, through the deployment of U.S. troops in Lebanon by the Reagan Administration to the commitments of the George W. 

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15 Goldberg 2010.

16 Kail C. Ellis, "U.S. Policy Toward Lebanon," In Lebanon’s Second Republic: Prospects for the Twenty-First Century, edited by Kail C. Ellis, 91-114 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002). Discusses President Eisenhower’s conviction that Lebanese, “‘independence and integrity […] are […] vital to the [U.S.] national interest and world peace.’” (p. 91-92) Also acknowledges U.S. military involvement in Lebanon during the civil war, and the presence of U.S. troops in the country. (p. 94-97).
Bush and Obama Administrations,\textsuperscript{17} Lebanese stability has played a vital role in advancing the strategic interests of the United States in the Middle East. Given Lebanon’s importance to the United States, policymakers and scholars must constantly reassess U.S. policy toward this strategic asset and evaluate whether or not a given policy is achieving its objectives.

It is hoped that this project will make a contribution to the discourse on U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East, and will prompt debate as to how best the United States can continue to advance its interests. It will shed light on how Lebanon policy is made at the nexus of complex issues such as nuclear proliferation, Israeli security and the economic development of a conflict-prone country. The analysis presented will clarify how each of these must be taken into account in crafting policy and in evaluating a policy’s efficacy. As for the Iranian threat, this thesis will expose how Iran’s danger is not limited to the threat posed by a hypothetical nuclear arsenal, but is more realistically posed by the complex network of proxies that the Iranian regime has fostered the growth of throughout the region.\textsuperscript{18}

**Work Plan and Methodology**

This thesis will explore the impact of Iranian, Syrian and U.S. foreign policies as factors impacting the promotion of U.S. interests in Lebanon. The role of the U.S. in Lebanon will be discussed in detail in the next chapter as the history of U.S. policy from the middle of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century to the present is detailed. The many facets of the Iranian

\textsuperscript{17} Addis September 1, 2010, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{18} Baer 2008, In his fifth chapter, entitled “Lethal and Elusive: Why Iran’s Weapons and Tactics Make it Unconquerable – Even Without Nukes,” Baer sheds light on the importance of unconventional tools of warfare at Iran’s disposal relative to that of nuclear weapons.
and Syrian policies will be discussed in Chapter Three, with the analysis of U.S. policy offered in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will outline the policy recommendations based on the findings of the analysis, with concluding remarks offered in Chapter Six.

Research for this thesis was conducted at both the qualitative and quantitative levels. Qualitative research consisted of an evaluation of primary and secondary sources relating to what U.S. policy goals have been in Lebanon since 2006, how the United States has succeeded or fallen short of its objectives, what the Syrian and Iranian policies have been toward Lebanon, what the new challenges are and how the policy should change to address those challenges. The published sources range from government documents, journal articles, scholarly books and Congressional committee hearings. Specific examples include reports from prominent think tanks such as the International Institute for Strategic Studies and an assortment of books by prominent observers of U.S. policy and Lebanese affairs.

Kail C. Ellis provides a detailed account of the Lebanese civil war that lasted from the mid 1970s through the 1980s. He specifically sheds light on the numerous changes in U.S. policy that took place over that period of time. These shifts include going from allowing the passage of the U.N. Security Council’s (UNSC) resolution summoning the end of Israeli aggression against Lebanon in the 1970s, to the subsequent endorsement of the 1982 Israeli invasion to later concerns for regional peace and the subsequent retreat of the United States from Lebanon in the mid-1980s. Ellis’ historical overview and analysis will be of use in summarizing the history of U.S. policy in Lebanon, particularly the inconsistencies in policy that existed during the civil war as a result of changing perceptions in the U.S. government of what the most important U.S.
interests were. Despite the depth of his analysis, its publication in the early 2000s limits the scope of his assessment to the civil war and post-civil war period, and not of the 2006 and post-2006 era.\textsuperscript{19}

H.E. Chehabi provides valuable insight into the relationship between Iran and Lebanon. While his assessment goes back over 500 years of regional history, his detailing of Iran’s impact on civil war-era culture and militancy in Lebanon’s Shi’ite communities is of interest, and is useful in highlighting the development of the resistance movement during the civil war. The depth of Chehabi’s analysis into the Hezbollah-Iran relationship through the 1980s and into the 1990s is helpful in providing historical overview, but again, the publication of the book in 2006 limits the scope of the study.\textsuperscript{20}

The intelligence expert Robert Baer addresses the hegemonic aspiration of Iran, and how Iran’s policy in Lebanon, specifically with regards to Hezbollah, fits into a broad framework of how the Iranian regime seeks to influence developments throughout the Middle East. While focusing on the Iran-Hezbollah connection, Baer spends less time helping the reader understand the need for an organization such as Hezbollah in Lebanon. The book’s publication in 2008 also means that significant developments over the past several years are absent from the analysis. These developments will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.\textsuperscript{21}

To complement the published sources, an interview was conducted with former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Christopher Hill. The purpose of this interview was to gain

\textsuperscript{19} Ellis 2002.


\textsuperscript{21} Baer 2008.
insight into the decision-making process in the U.S. government during the 2006 war, as well as perspective on how the United States can strengthen its relationship with Lebanon.

Quantitative research focused on data from the U.S. Department of State, with specific attention to economic and military assistance figures for Lebanon. Additionally, the online data resources of the World Bank and the Central Intelligence Agency have been utilized in compiling and analyzing economic data on Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan and Turkey. This data is presented in the sections that address how economic development has been used in the past and can be used in the future as a tool of U.S. policy to promote stability.

The assessment of U.S. policy since 2006 is an analysis based on the theoretical contributions of Northedge and Chittick. Rather than focusing on the creation of policy and how the policy emerged from the bureaucratic process, this analysis will study what William Chittick calls “foreign policy outputs [emphasis in original].”22 By first delineating the interests and goals of the United States in Lebanon, I will then determine whether or not those interests and goals have been advanced based on the policies of the past five years. Chittick discusses the concept of foreign policy outputs analysis, in which he considers outputs to be “[...] the concrete actions, or inactions, of states in relation to their environments.”23 He discusses such concepts as “inputs” and “processes


23 Chittick 1975, 12
[italics in original]” that play a role in the crafting of policy,\textsuperscript{24} but again, the concern of this assessment is strictly on assessing the stated interests of the United States vis-à-vis the results of the policy.

An analysis of outputs, according to Chittick, requires the analyst to select one of several “\textit{Typologies of Foreign Policy Outputs} [italics in original].”\textsuperscript{25} For the purpose of this assessment, Chittick’s second typology will be used, which focuses on “functional types [of policy], such as political, economic, and military.”\textsuperscript{26} The policy recommendations made in Chapter Five will be made within the framework of these three areas, and the assessment made in Chapter Four will break down the policy assessment into similar policy areas.

Another valuable framework for policy analysis has been put forward by F.S. Northedge, who posits that:

\begin{quote}
[...] ‘success’ in foreign policy may be broadly defined as the achievement of declared, publicized or recognized objects of state policy, the maintenance or advancement of prestige or influence abroad, and the abandonment of interests only in return for the gaining of comparable or if possible weightier interests.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

Northedge also stresses the importance of whether a policy is “timely”\textsuperscript{28} and also whether it is “internally consistent or self-contradictory.”\textsuperscript{29} These concepts of the advancement of interests and consistency will be discussed in great detail in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{24} Chittick 1975, 20.

\textsuperscript{25} Chittick 1975, 14.

\textsuperscript{26} Chittick 1975, 15.


\textsuperscript{28} Northedge 1968, 36.
Outline

The second chapter is entitled “American Policy in Lebanon: 1958-2011,” and is divided into five sections. This chapter explores the history of U.S.-Lebanon relations since the Eisenhower Administration, which was a critical point in defining the emerging relationship. It also sheds light on the 2006 war and the response it prompted from the United States, followed by a detailing of the new strategic environment that emerged after the war. Last, the post-2006 war policy response of the United States is explained.

The third chapter, “Threats From Iran and Syria,” ascertains current threats posed by the influence of Iranian and Syrian policies in Lebanon. It outlines the circumstances that led to the emergence of Hezbollah, and the support that Iran and Syria has provided to that organization. Trends toward a closer relationship between the governments in Tehran and Beirut are also discussed. Syria’s role in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process, and the impact that Iran can have on influencing Syria’s position on that conflict are also highlighted; influence that would undoubtedly have an effect on Lebanon. Iran’s potential nuclear program and the threats associated with it as relates to Lebanon are explored as well. Such threats involve the possible effects of an American or Israeli preemptive strike against Iran’s nuclear infrastructure, as well as the possible effects of an Iranian nuclear arsenal on Hezbollah’s power and relations with Israel.

The fourth chapter provides an outputs analysis of U.S. policy in Lebanon from 2006-2011 using the frameworks posited by Chittick and Northedge. The policy objectives outlined toward the end of Chapter Two are revisited, and the success of the United States in advancing those objectives measured. This chapter also offers a broader

29 Northedge 1968, 37.
critique of the post-2006 policy in the form of criticism of a realist approach to Lebanon and a discussion of the policy’s contradictions.

Chapter Five makes normative claims on what shape the new policy toward Lebanon should take given the lessons of the previous chapter. Policy recommendations are divided into three broad fields: military relations, political relations and economic development relations. These recommendations take into account the evolving threats posed by Iran and Syria in Lebanon as delineated in Chapter Three.

The military relations section suggests how the United States can use military training and material support to Lebanon to continue efforts to strengthen the Lebanese central government in relation to Hezbollah. The political relations section looks closely at what can be done at both the bilateral and multilateral levels to engage the Lebanese government and neighboring states diplomatically to promote stability. The economic development relations section highlights measures that can be taken to promote stability through economic growth in Lebanon. A premise of this section is that economic well-being could help foster political stability within the country.30 This section also addresses

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how economic development in Lebanon can penetrate Shiite communities as well to raise the quality of life for those individuals.\textsuperscript{31}

The final chapter summarizes the findings of this research project in the context of the Wilsonian approach to international relations. It also explores the dangers of maintaining the status-quo policy toward Lebanon, and the challenges ahead for the United States.

\textsuperscript{31} Michael P. Todaro and Stephen C. Smith, \textit{Economic Development}, 9th Edition (San Francisco: Pearson, 2006), 22. Todaro and Smith point out that one of the “objectives” of economic development is, “\textit{To raise levels of living} [emphasis in original], including, in addition to higher incomes, the provision of more jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and human values, all of which will serve not only to enhance material well-being but also to generate individual and national self-esteem.” Given this argument, wide-scale economic development as a goal of U.S. policy in Lebanon could be used to help improve the quality of life of all demographics.
Chapter Two – American Policy in Lebanon: 1958-2011

Introduction

The second chapter of this research project addresses three questions that must be answered before one can explore what future policies can be pursued by the United States in Lebanon. For one, what has the U.S. policy been in Lebanon since it became a geostrategic asset in the 1950s generally and since 2006 specifically. Second, what developments led to the breakout of the 2006 war, and what was the strategic environment that the war yielded. Last, how did the United States respond after the war within the context of both historical U.S.-Lebanese relations and the new strategic environment.

U.S. Foreign Policy in Lebanon: A Brief Historical Overview

In order to understand the policy that has been pursued by the United States in Lebanon since 2006, one must have an understanding of how the United States has identified its interests in Lebanon and the region in the past. The reader can also gain a better idea of how the 2006 conflict compares to previous periods of violence in Lebanon in the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s as well as how the U.S. response in 2006 differed relative to previous conflicts.

*Early U.S.-Lebanese Relations*

The identification of Lebanon as a strategic asset to the United States originated during the 1950s. In the post-World War II environment, U.S. strategic interests in the
Middle East centered primarily on ensuring the protection of the newly-formed Israeli state, protecting the rich oil reserves of the region and preventing Soviet expansion into the area.\textsuperscript{32} Lebanon began to factor into the third of these strategic interests, the containment of the Soviet Union, under the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower. As the Cold War unfolded, President Eisenhower sought a means through which the proliferation of communism could be avoided. Such measures were seen as necessary in the wake of Arab nationalism’s emergence under the leadership of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1952. These nationalist sentiments were perceived by the United States as being linked to communism. Thus, the United States responded with the Eisenhower Doctrine, which would serve the interest of limiting the expansion of communism. It is under the Eisenhower Doctrine that the United States made its first commitment of troops to Lebanon in 1958.\textsuperscript{33}

The 1958 deployment stemmed from the belief that Arab nationalism could penetrate Lebanese society. With concerns over the possible results of the 1957 elections in Lebanon, the Central Intelligence Agency provided support to the non-Arab nationalist incumbent President Camille Chamoun. The apparent corruption in this election sparked a civil war in which the United States contributed forces.\textsuperscript{34}

Further light can be shed on this intervention by looking at the statements made by President Eisenhower at the time of these events. In a radio statement on July 15, 1958, the president expressed concern about the coup that had taken place in Iraq the

\textsuperscript{32} Ellis 2002, 91.

\textsuperscript{33} Ellis 2002, 91-92.

\textsuperscript{34} Ellis 2002, 92-93.
previous day, as well as a report of an attempted coup in Jordan. Within this context, Lebanon was ensconced in a conflict, which according to the president, was “[…] actively fomented by Soviet and Cairo broadcasts and abetted and aided by substantial amounts of arms, money, and personnel infiltrated into Lebanon across the Syrian border.”^35

President Eisenhower perceived these developments, as evidenced in his speech, as being the result of efforts by the Soviet Union to penetrate the Middle East. He discusses four factors that appear to have driven his decision to send U.S. forces to Lebanon. The two most salient appear to be to safeguard the “about 2,500 Americans in Lebanon” as well as “[…] to assist the Government of Lebanon to preserve its territorial integrity and political independence.”^36 Further motivations for involvement included the Lebanese President’s request for the United States to intervene in the conflict to ensure Lebanese security, as well as the desire of President Eisenhower to uphold the commitment of the United Nations to ensure that the meddlesome actions of some states did not impact the sovereignty and security of others.^37 It is in this context that Lebanon began to factor significantly in Washington’s Cold War decisions, and U.S. forces were sent to the country.

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^36 Eisenhower August 1, 1958, 612.

^37 Eisenhower August 1, 1958, 612-613.
Relations During the Civil War

The civil war that commenced in Lebanon in 1975 took place in the wake of two regional developments in the late 1960s that impacted the Lebanese state. The first concerns the 1968 Iraqi revolution which brought Ba’athist leadership to that country. This revolution triggered the flight of Iraqi Shiites to a new home in Lebanon.38

The second development was the international legitimacy given to the militarization of Palestinians within Lebanon under the Cairo Agreement of 1969. As a result, Palestinian refugees were provided with a Lebanese staging ground for assaulting Israel.39 Many Palestinians had migrated from Jordan to Lebanon in the early 1970s after they had been thrown out of the former, forming what has been described as a Palestinian “state within a state” in Lebanon.40 This migration has been called “[…] a catalyst to the increasing domestic stresses that contributed to the explosion,” as a conflict between Lebanon’s Maronite Catholics and the Palestinians sparked the civil war.41 The Palestinian migration to Lebanon is also significant in that the PLOs eradication would become a motivation for the Israeli operation in Lebanon in 1982.42 Attempts were made


41 Held 2006, 306. Also mentions that, “[i]t was a Maronite-Palestinian battle in Beirut that precipitated the full-scale fighting in Lebanon in 1975.”

in 1977 to remove PLO militants from Lebanon through the Chtaura Peace Accords. However, the PLO remained active in violence despite that agreement.43

Another factor contributing to the civil war was the significant socio-political conflicts within Lebanon during the mid-1970s. The distribution of political power had become unrepresentative of the Lebanese population as the Shi’ite Muslim share of the population increased. This was significant due to fact that Lebanon’s political structure was based on a distribution of power that could not be reconciled with the new population trends. This resulted in violence and foreign involvement, particularly from Syria and Israel in support of the country’s Christians.44

U.S. policy toward Lebanon during the civil war changed at several points as the prioritization of U.S. interests changed. For example, the U.S. response to the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon suggests American disapproval of Israel’s acts. UNSC Resolution 425, which mandated an Israeli pullout, was allowed to pass without a U.S. veto. This reflects a tacit U.S. condemnation of the invasion.

As time passed and the administration in Washington changed, the U.S. policy toward the war shifted. Kail C. Ellis states that, “Israel invaded Lebanon again on 6 June 1982, allegedly with the blessing of U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig […].”46 Secretary Haig’s supposed support for the Israeli invasion indicates the high premium

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43 Murphy 2007, 39.

44 Murphy 2007, 38-39. With regards to socio-political conflict, Murphy states that, “[t]he constitutional arrangements for power sharing could not accommodate the conflicting aspirations brought about by demographic changes” (38).

45 Ellis 2002, 94.

46 Ellis 2002, 94-95.
placed by the Reagan Administration on the U.S. interest in protecting Israel’s national security. However, later developments in the Reagan Administration under Secretary of State George Shultz indicate that the preservation of the Arab-Israeli peace process began to take priority as a key interest of the United States in addressing the civil war in Lebanon; an interest which was threatened by the Israeli incursion. As a result, diplomatic action taken by the Reagan Administration to ensure that Israel’s PLO pursuit in Lebanon did not result in the fall of Beirut to the Israeli armed forces. This led to the agreement to move the PLO from Lebanon to Tunisia in 1982, as well as proposed Israeli-Lebanese talks for peace.47

Another complicating factor in U.S. policy during the civil war concerned the involvement of Iran in the war, and the emergence of the militant group Hezbollah. In 1979, Iran had come under the leadership of an Islamic government and was no longer an ally of the United States. The new Islamic Republic of Iran did not remain passive while Lebanon was invaded by Israel. The Bekaa Valley became the grounds for Iranian military and cultural influence as the Pasdaran imparted skills to the Shi’ite resistance, and as villages in the Bekaa began to adopt conservative Islamic orientation as a result of Iranian influence. This influence involved the shunning of alcohol, the covering of women and the proliferation of Iranian propaganda via radio.48

Meanwhile, the Lebanese National Resistance antagonized foreign forces occupying Lebanon, including the United States, which dispatched troops in 1982 to

47 Ellis 2002, 95-96.

facilitate the PLO’s departure. 1983 proved to be a particularly devastating year for United States armed forces and diplomats as the U.S. Embassy and troop barracks were attacked in the spring and autumn of that year, respectively.49

The final change in U.S. policy during the civil war occurred in 1984. Although the United States launched retaliatory strikes following the barracks attack against militants and Syria’s weaponry, the United States gradually realized that U.S. interests in the country could not be realized in the context of the civil war. Kail Ellis states, “[a]fter the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Lebanon in 1984, U.S. policy began to focus almost entirely on securing the release of American and European hostages […].”50

Relations After the Civil War

The post-civil war order in Lebanon was largely influenced by a 1989 agreement reached by Lebanese officials in Ta’if, Saudi Arabia: the Document of National Reconciliation. The agreement, which had the support of the United States, facilitated the imposition of substantial Syrian political control over Lebanon.51 For example, the stipulations of the Ta’if Accord allowed for the deployment of the Syrian military within Lebanon. The Accord states that, “[…] the Syrian forces shall thankfully assist the forces of the legitimate Lebanese government to spread the authority of the State of Lebanon with a set period of no more than 2 years […].”52 Syrian military involvement in Lebanon however would not necessarily terminate after those two years. The Accord

49 Chehabi, Iran and Lebanon in the Revolutionary Decade 2006, 220-221.
51 Ellis 2002, 98.
stipulates that the Syrian and Lebanese governments could then jointly determine the positioning of the Syrian military in the Bekaa Valley. Furthermore, the Accord concludes by stating that neither Syria nor Lebanon could ever be allowed to pose a threat to the security of the other.\textsuperscript{53}

This agreement provided a means by which the United States could legitimize Syria’s role in Lebanon. Aside from the specific military aspects of the Accord, it called for the division of political power in Lebanon among the different religious factions within the country. The President was required to be a Christian, while the Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament must be Sunni and Shi’ite, respectively. The arrangement between the United States and Syria also ensured that the U.S.-backed Lebanese leadership would pursue a pro-Syrian agenda.\textsuperscript{54}

The developments that followed the end of the civil war and the efforts to build a post-war order in Lebanon indicate a perception in the United States that Syrian policy would serve as a stabilizing variable in Lebanese affairs. The U.S. support for the Ta’if Accord shows an American acquiescence to Syrian political hegemony within Lebanon in the critically important post-war rebuilding years. The political and security environment in Lebanon was volatile at this time, but U.S. policy focused on allowing leaders in Damascus to ensure that Lebanon remained stable while it returned to its feet after a decade and a half of violence.

\textsuperscript{53} Campaign for Good Governance in Lebanon: Center for Democracy and the Rule of Law n.d.

\textsuperscript{54} Ellis 2002, 98.
In the seventeen years that followed the civil war, developments in Lebanon were highly influenced by two countries: Israel and Syria. Significant Syrian interference, including a troop presence, persisted in Lebanon until a popular uprising against Syrian policy in 2005. Syrian meddling during this time ranged from its military presence, to determining national leaders and crafting policy.\(^{55}\) Israeli involvement took the form of military operations. Israeli military strikes were launched four times in Lebanon between the end of the civil war and the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. These strikes took place in 1993, 1996, 1998 and 1999. The basis for much of these operations was to diminish the power of Hezbollah.\(^{56}\)

With regards to the 1993 Israeli military operation, dubbed Operation Accountability, the United States was reluctant to take the steps necessary to prevent aggression. Kail Ellis states that, “[t]he United States deplored the violence but indicated that it would not intervene in the case of another firestorm.”\(^{57}\) This inaction set a precedent that the United States would not directly intervene to prevent the outbreak of violence in southern Lebanon.

The end of the Cold War had two key impacts on U.S. policy toward the Middle East. First, the United States was no longer in a position where it needed to contain the

\(^{55}\) Paul Salem, "The Future of Lebanon," *Foreign Affairs* (November / December 2006)  Accessed through Penrose Library, Academic OneFile.  http://0-find.galegroup.com.bianca.penlib.du.edu/gtx/retrieve.do?contentSet=IAC-Documents&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&qrySerId=Locale%28en%2C%2C%29%3AFOE%3D%28ke%2CNone%2C21%25the+future+of+lebanon%3AAnd%3AFOE%3D%28jn%3CNone%2C17%9%32For eign+Affairs%22%24&sgHitCountType=None&inPS=true&sort=DateDescend&searchType=AdvancedSe archForm&tabID=T002&prodId=AONE&searchId=R1&currentPosition=1&userGroupName=udenver&docId=A155671361&docType=IAC (accessed April 27, 2011).


\(^{57}\) Ellis 2002, 99.
Soviet Union from expanding into the region. Second, the roles played by Syria and Israel were perceived by the United States as having advanced U.S. interests in Lebanon. The disinclination of the United States to put an end to repeated Israeli military operations in southern Lebanon is a clear example of this. It was believed by United States that the Ta’if Agreement would serve the dual interests of protecting the Israeli state as well as stabilizing Lebanon.

The 2006 War: An Overview of the Conflict and the U.S. Response

The Sources of Conflict

Syria’s political hegemony in Lebanon came to an end in 2005 in the wake of a series of significant events. In 2004, the UNSC passed Resolution 1559, which mandated that Syria’s military be removed from Lebanon. While the United States had looked favorably upon Syria’s role in Lebanon in the 1990s, the 2000s saw less favorable relations between Washington and Damascus. For one, the Syrian government was opposed to the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States. Moreover, it was believed by the United States that Syria had become a safe-haven for “[…] high-level Iraqi Baathists — perhaps even Saddam Hussein’s sons […].” There was also a belief that Syria was “[…] allowing military equipment and jihadi [italics in original] fighters to cross into Iraq.”

Within Lebanon itself, political leaders from the Sunni, Druze and Christian sects came together in what Paul Salem describes as, “[…] an anti-Syrian, pro-Western


coalition.” In February 2005, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, a prominent member of this nationalist movement, was assassinated in Beirut. His death prompted the formation of the March 14 coalition, a popular movement in Lebanon which caused a Syrian withdrawal in just a few short months.

These developments affected Hezbollah and their power in Lebanon. The 2000 removal of the Israeli military from did not represent a complete termination of Israeli infringement upon Lebanese sovereignty. Israel continues to occupy the Shebaa Farms area, and Hezbollah has used this to legitimize themselves since the broader Israeli removal in 2000. This area of land is considered by the Lebanese to be part of Lebanon, but is currently under occupation by Israel as part of the Golan Heights. Moreover, as Syrian involvement in Lebanese affairs became mired in controversy by the mid-2000s, Iran began to displace Syria in assisting Hezbollah in the context of this political environment. During the summer of 2006, Hezbollah took Israeli troops hostage; an act which prompted Israeli airstrikes upon Lebanon and an Israeli invasion. What ensued during the course of the Israeli operation that summer had tremendous effects on the country’s infrastructure: roads were hit, as were parts of Beirut’s international

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60 Salem 2006.

61 Salem 2006.


63 Salem 2006.


66 Sultan 2008, ix.
airport.\textsuperscript{67} Economic assets such as power facilities, industrial locations\textsuperscript{68} and agricultural areas were also hit.\textsuperscript{69}

\textit{The American Response}

The reaction of the United States to the Israeli aggression reflected the perception by the U.S. leadership that Israel’s use of force against Hezbollah served U.S. interests. Several aspects of the U.S. reaction to the war prove this point. First, the United States provided generous support to the Israeli armed forces during the course of the conflict. Specifically, support was provided in the form of $300 million worth of aviation fuel\textsuperscript{70} as well as the transfer of “precision-guided munitions.”\textsuperscript{71}

Second, despite pleas by the Lebanese government for a ceasefire, the United States refused to allow a ceasefire resolution to pass the UNSC until well into the conflict.\textsuperscript{72} Some light has been shed on the rationale for this delay by Ambassador Christopher Hill. Ambassador Hill was overseas with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as events in Lebanon developed in 2006, giving him unique insight to the U.S. response to the conflict. In an interview conducted by the author, the ambassador stated that while Israel’s invasion was never a goal of the United States, Washington did not see it in its interests once the invasion had taken place to call for an immediate ceasefire. It

\begin{table}[h]
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\textsuperscript{67} Sultan 2008, 30. & \\
\textsuperscript{68} Sultan 2008, viii. & \\
\textsuperscript{69} Sultan 2008, 66-67. & \\
\textsuperscript{70} Sultan 2008, 113-114. & \\
\textsuperscript{71} Sultan 2008, 39. & \\
\textsuperscript{72} Sultan 2008, 35, 45. U.S. resistance to a ceasefire discussed on 35, and eventual U.S. support for a resolution discussed on 45. & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
was perceived that a ceasefire “[...] was not going to lead to an improvement in the conditions that led Israel to attack in the first place.” Furthermore, the United States did little if not nothing to criticize Israel for aggravating the volatile political environment in Lebanon. In fact, Israel was rewarded by the United States for the operation through a drastic increase in the U.S. defense assistance package. Cathy Sultan states that in 2007, “[the] U.S. pledges Israel an additional $30.4 billion in military aid over the next ten years [ten years presumably from 2007]. This was in addition to the $3.4 billion it already received in military aid annually.”

The aforementioned post-World War II strategic interests of ensuring both the security of Israel and the flow of oil from the Arab World are interests that have transcended time and that continue to be pertinent today. While the threat posed by the Soviet Union has dissipated in the wake of the union’s collapse, today the United States seeks to prevent the regional hegemony of another state: Iran. Although Iran was an ally of the United States under the reign of the Shah, the country has grown antagonistic of the United States and its regional policy in the wake of the 1979 revolution. The destabilizing efforts by Iran committed in Lebanon through support for the Shia resistance are delineated above. A more substantial analysis of Iran’s effects on Lebanese stability is discussed in Chapter Three. It is important to note however that a key strategic interest of the United States in the Middle East which has assumed great significance in the post-Cold War era is that of containing Iran. Their drive for

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73 Christopher Hill, Interview by Robert Shelala II (December 15, 2010).
74 Sultan 2008, 136.
influence in the region has led to, “U.S., Israeli and Saudi Arabian competition with Iran – and to a lesser extent Syria – over the shaping of the Middle East’s security order in the wake of Iraq in 2003.”

**The Post-War Strategic Environment for the United States**

The 2006 conflict and its aftermath reinforced an already dangerous strategic environment for the United States that had been in place since the civil war. Hezbollah’s performance during the war and Israel’s eventual disengagement from Lebanon without disarming Hezbollah have triggered serious repercussions that have been felt throughout the Middle East. These repercussions threaten the stability of Lebanon, the security of Israel and the interest of containing Iranian regional power.

*Israel’s Departure from Lebanon*

Perhaps the most immediate consequence of the 2006 war as pertains to U.S. interests were the mission shortcomings on the part of the Israeli government. On July 17, 2006, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert spoke before the Israeli Knesset, laying out the Israeli rationale for going to war in Lebanon. Speaking with regards to terrorist organizations, the prime minister stated:

> It is a regional – as well as global – interest to take control and terminate their [terrorist organizations’] activity. […] We can all see how the majority of the international community supports our battle against the terror organizations and

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our efforts to remove this threat from the Middle East. [...] We intend to do this. We will continue to operate in full force until we achieve this.

Prime Minister Olmert elaborated on his government’s motives, stating what goals both the international community and Israel were in concord on achieving:

The return of the hostages, Ehud (Udi) Goldwasser and Eldad Regev; [...] A complete ceasefire; [...] Deployment of the Lebanese Army in all of Southern Lebanon; [...] Expulsion of Hizballah from the area, and fulfillment of United Nations Resolution 1559.  

History would show that despite these ambitious goals, the Israeli government experienced significant mission shortcomings in the 2006 conflict. By the end of the war, Israel was unable to secure the release of the hostages it had sought to free earlier that July. In fact, the two Israeli hostages did not survive, and it was not until two years after the conflict that their bodies were repatriated in a deal which cost Israel five Lebanese captives. Furthermore, its goals of eliminating Hezbollah never came to fruition. Thus, Israel failed to achieve two of its key objectives.

This was not the first instance that the Israeli government had fallen short of its military objectives in Lebanon. Despite several military campaigns in Lebanon since the late 1970s with the intent of improving its security, Hezbollah still exists. Once again, following the 2006 conflict, Israel found itself with an extremist group just north of its borders, wielding substantial power. As stated by Paul Salem:

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78 Prime Minister's Office 2006. Translation. Ellipses represent line breaks in original.

Israel, despite unleashing massive airpower on Hezbollah strongholds, failed to
knock out the organization or even to stop its missile attacks, while the setbacks
suffered by Israel’s ground invasion had the effect of puncturing the aura of
invincibility long projected by the Israel Defense Forces.\(^{80}\)

If the United States considers Israeli security to be a strategic interest in the Middle East,
then one must question the efficacy of repeated Israeli military operations in southern
Lebanon in advancing that interest. Not only has the Hezbollah threat persisted in the
wake of the previous military confrontations and the 2006 conflict, but it has also gained
a heightened level of political legitimacy both in Lebanon and throughout the region in
the wake of the conflict.

*The Empowerment of Hezbollah*

Robert Baer details how Hezbollah’s political clout increased after 2006. He
describes the popularity of Hezbollah’s Hassan Nasrallah in North Africa and the Levant
from Egypt to the West Bank and back to Lebanon. The reason, Baer argues, for this
iconic image of Nasrallah is the achievement in 2006. As Baer states, “[…] Nasrallah
beat the Israelis on the field of battle, David slaying the Israeli Goliath.”\(^{81}\)

Hezbollah’s public relations victory in Lebanon was also impacted by how the
organization engaged the Shia following the 2006 war. Much of the south of Beirut and
areas further south in Lebanon were badly damaged by the Israeli strikes, but Hezbollah
offered to cover the costs for rebuilding war-destroyed houses, as well as providing some
$12,000 cash per household. Moreover, the community reconstruction efforts made by
Hezbollah are suggested to have been more substantial and aggressive than the efforts

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\(^{80}\) Salem 2006.  
\(^{81}\) Baer 2008, 158-160. Quote on 160.
undertaken by the Lebanese government itself. As Robert Fisk states, “[i]ts [Hezbollah’s] massive new reconstruction effort – free of charge to all those Lebanese whose homes were destroyed or damaged – […] has won the loyalty of even the most disaffected members of the Shia community in Lebanon.”82

Despite the fact that Hezbollah was much to blame for the outbreak of the war with Israel, these efforts had a significant strategic implication for the United States. It shed light on the inability of the Lebanese government to respond to the perceived needs of the south of the country in both the security and economic sectors, whereas Hezbollah was able not only to defend the area against Israel, but to start to rebuild it after the conflict. Thus, Hezbollah, with its likely Iranian financing,83 was displacing the central government, and enhancing its own public image.

A Victory for Iranian Hegemony

A final characteristic of the strategic environment that emerged after the 2006 war regards the impact the war had on Iran’s ability to seek regional hegemony in the Middle East. In his work The Devil We Know, Robert Baer outlines the hegemonic ambitions of the Iranian regime, and the centrality of Lebanon to that endeavor. Baer’s theory is that Iran will build a network of organizations such as Hezbollah in seeking to advance Iranian interests. These hegemonic aspirations on the part of Iran, and Lebanon’s specific role in those plans, will be discussed in great length in the next chapter. It is


83 Fisk 2006. Fisk acknowledges the fact that, “Hizbollah has trumped both the UN army and the Lebanese government by pouring hundreds of millions of dollars – most of it almost certainly from Iran – into the wreckage of southern Lebanon and Beirut’s destroyed southern suburbs.”
worth noting at this point however that Iran views its relationship with Hezbollah as the first step in building that network of relationships. As Baer states:

[t]he Lebanon war is Iran’s blueprint for its new empire, fought for and held by proxies: the first Middle Eastern empire since the Ottomans, a superpower, as the Iranians intend to demonstrate to the world.  

The Iranians realized successes with the Israeli pull-out from Lebanon in 2000, but also more recently in Hezbollah’s military victory in 2006. These successes clearly impact the strategic environment for the United States in that Iran now has a tested means through which to influence affairs in its client states despite tremendous pressure from both the United States and Israel. As the next chapter will discuss, the stakes for Iran implementing this hegemonic network extend far beyond Lebanon, and can have implications on critical U.S. interests elsewhere in the region.

In summation, the post-2006 strategic environment for the United States can be categorized by the strategic weakening of Israel due to this last in a string of military failures in Lebanon. Furthermore, there was a weakening of the Lebanese central government relative to Hezbollah and the strengthening of the Iranian regime and its Lebanese proxy.

**What Policies Were Pursued?**

With a better understanding of the strategic environment that emerged in the months following Israel’s pull-out from Lebanon in 2006, one can begin to understand what the specific interests of the United States were and what policies the U.S.

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84 Baer 2008, 54-55.

85 Baer 2008, 54-55.

government pursued to advance these interests. The specifics of these interests and policies can be found in the statements made by senior State Department officials in their testimony before Congressional committees. Specifically, we turn to the testimonies of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs C. David Welch in November 2007 as well as the testimony of Mr. Welch’s successor, Jeffrey Feltman, in July 2008. Both of these men were speaking before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Four themes become apparent in looking at their statements, as well as other accounts of the post-2006 era. First, they emphasize the promotion of democracy in Lebanon. Second, they mention reinforcing Lebanese sovereignty by building a strong Lebanese government and economy to counter Hezbollah while also ensuring the protection of Lebanese sovereignty by securing the border with Syria against the proliferation of weapons into Lebanon. Third, they stress seeking justice in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. A fourth theme that while not substantially addressed by Welch or Feltman is significant nonetheless is maintaining the commitment to ensure Israeli national security. The pursuit of these four interests has largely framed the U.S. policy toward Lebanon since 2006.

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Promoting Democratization

The interest of promoting democracy in Lebanon stems from the threat posed by the new strategic realities of a weakened Lebanese government and the empowered roles of Syria and Iran due to Hezbollah’s victory. In terms of democratization, the United States has called for implementation of the provisions of UNSC Resolutions 1559 and 1701. Resolution 1559 specifically offers:

[…] support for a free and fair electoral process in Lebanon’s upcoming presidential election conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence.\(^8\)

In his statement, Welch implies that foreign interference from Syria could perhaps be curbed if free presidential elections were to take place in Lebanon.\(^8\) Aside from simply stating the importance of promoting democracy through elections and Lebanon’s obligations under Resolution 1559, the Bush Administration also, “[…] approved a ban against travel to the United States of any persons who are responsible for policies and actions that threaten Lebanon’s sovereignty and democracy.”\(^9\) Moreover, the Treasury Department under the Bush Administration later froze the property of the same types of agitators delineated in the travel ban.\(^9\)

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One can deduce that these policies were a response to the new strategic environment created by Hezbollah’s infringement upon Lebanon’s democracy. A war had been launched in 2006 that was not executed by the Lebanese government, but rather by a militant organization striving to gain the return of Lebanese held captive in Israel, and also to showcase their power.\textsuperscript{92} This clearly undermined the democratic process in Lebanon. Furthermore, Lebanon suffered in the months following the 2006 war from the withdrawal of Shia public servants from cabinet positions. Welch also recalls that in the months prior to the war, assassinations hampered the functioning of the Lebanese government.\textsuperscript{93} In a zero-sum game between the Lebanese government and Hezbollah, these measures could be seen as a means of increasing the power of the Lebanese government, and thus decreasing the power of Hezbollah.

\textit{Building a Strong Lebanese Central Government and Diminishing the Power of Hezbollah}

A second related interest to that of promoting democracy involves building a strong Lebanese central government. Welch cited the, “[…] significant economic, military and diplomatic assistance […]” that was offered under the Bush Administration.\textsuperscript{94} According to the Department of State’s FY2011 Budget Justification, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) received $186,400,000 from the United States in FY2009. By FY2010, the enacted amount increased to $210,914,000,

\textsuperscript{92} Norton 2007, 134-135.

\textsuperscript{93} U.S. Congress. House. Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007, 9.

\textsuperscript{94} U.S. Congress. House. Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007, 10.
and the FY2011 amount increased further to $212,000,000.\textsuperscript{95} This is one of the largest allocations given to a U.S.-backed international peacekeeping activity.\textsuperscript{96} Economic assistance is also evident in a huge surge in U.S. support through the Economic Support Fund (ESF). Recent State Department budget documents indicate that ESF allocations for Lebanon have increased from an actual allocation of $34,794,000 in FY2004\textsuperscript{97} to a requested $109,000,000 for FY2011.\textsuperscript{98}

Not only have the allocation levels been increasing, but the nature of the support has also changed to become more in tune with the strategic objectives of the assistance. For example, in the FY2006 Function 150 Report, the ESF allocation for Lebanon was intended “ […] to promote economic growth and trade reform; continue good governance programs; protect the environment; and support the four American Educational Institutions in Lebanon.”\textsuperscript{99} By the FY2008 report, the nature of the support had changed completely. Rather than prioritizing economic programs and American institutions, the support was geared toward:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{96} Secretary of State 2010, 670-671.
\end{itemize}
[...] support[ing] Lebanon’s democratic traditions by establishing credible, transparent governing institutions, fostering human rights, supporting civil society organizations, and improving educational and economic opportunities among the Lebanese people. Certain funds will be targeted to securing Lebanon’s water resources, reducing the ability of Hizbollah to make water an issue that divides the populace and erodes support for the current Government.\textsuperscript{100}

This rhetoric suggests that these funds are intended to advance the aforementioned interests of promoting the power of the central government, while at the same time diminishing the power of Hezbollah. Furthermore, the support appears to be geared toward reinforcing Lebanese democracy, which would in theory reduce the influence of foreign powers such as Syria and Iran. Also, by improving water access, fostering the growth of civil society and advancing the state of education and the economy, the United States would be working to confront the very social problems that Hezbollah could capitalize on to recruit supporters.

Another area of support mentioned by Welch involves military assistance. One channel of support has been Foreign Military Financing (FMF). The initial allocation for FY2006 requested by the Bush Administration was a mere $1,000,000.\textsuperscript{101} In the wake of the war however, these allocations saw a surge similar to that seen in the ESF. By FY2008, the FMF request for Lebanon was $220,000,000; support which, according the State Department, would be used to help ensure Lebanese compliance with UNSC Resolution 1701 through providing the means to fulfill their material and training


requirements. Subsequent FMF levels have been well above that of the initial FY2006 level of $1,000,000. The FY2011 request for FMF is $100,000,000 in support for Lebanon.

Other forms of security assistance offered to the Lebanese government have taken the form of International Military Education and Training (IMET). In FY2005, the actual amount of funds committed to Lebanon was some $809,000. Initial FY2006 requests were a mere $700,000, yet by FY2008, $1,477,000 had been spent on Lebanon for IMET. The FY2011 request for IMET assistance to Lebanon is reported as being $2,500,000.

The basis for this substantial material and training support to the Lebanese government was justified by the Bush Administration as having been in the interest of reinforcing the power of the Lebanese government relative to Hezbollah. Feltman made

this interest clear in his statement before the House subcommittee, in which he cited his concern over, “[…] Hezbollah’s challenge to Lebanon’s state institutions [specifically the military and telecommunications].”

The U.S. policy of reinforcing Lebanese sovereignty does not stop with providing material and training assistance to the Lebanese government. In addition to these programs, the United States has taken measures to ensure that materials such as weapons do not cross Lebanon’s borders, particularly from Syria. UNSC Resolution 1701, passed after the war, prohibits the transfer of weapons “[…] to any entity or individual in Lebanon […]”. Welch reiterates the support of the United States toward this end, recalling efforts made to garner international support to help guard the Lebanese border from weapons smuggling. Feltman also stressed the importance of border security a year later in 2008, stating that the issue of weapons coming across the border still persisted and merited action. In fact, some of the military assistance provided by the United States has been destined to promote border security and prevent arms trafficking across the border from Syria. Support has been provided to Lebanon’s Internal Security

109 U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2008, 10.


111 U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007, 12.

112 U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2008, 11.
Forces (ISF) for use in securing the border. This support has included training, gear, and some 360 vehicles as of a 2009 report.  

Without weapons flowing from Syria into Lebanon, the United States may be able to advance its goal of ultimately disarming Hezbollah by preventing weapons from reaching the organization. UNSC Resolution 1701 requires that the government of Lebanon be the only armed entity within the republic. Welch again emphasizes this key provision, stating a critical position of the United States. He points out that while Hezbollah’s participation within Lebanon’s political system would be viewed as acceptable by the United States, its existence as an armed militant organization is completely intolerable.

The significance of this statement will be revisited when policy recommendations are discussed in Chapter Four. At this point though, it is necessary to realize that from the policy perspective of the United States, Hezbollah’s existence as an armed militant organization is seen as a major obstacle to Lebanese stability. This U.S. position has been translated into policy through the disarmament provisions of UNSC Resolution 1701, Feltman’s strong anti-armed-Hezbollah rhetoric, the assistance to support Lebanese border security and the economic and military assistance programs. This assistance would theoretically strengthen the Lebanese military and improve the economic conditions in the country, making militancy less appealing to Lebanese citizens.

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115 U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007, 12.
It is important to mention that the decision taken by the international community to marginalize Hezbollah’s power following the summer of 2006 was not the only alternative open at the time. Cathy Sultan states that:

[in the aftermath of the war, a number of possible approaches [for dealing with Hezbollah] were proposed, ranging from straight disarmament to the integration of Hezbollah forces into the national defense structure as a sort of civil defense league or national guard.]

As has been made clear by the subsequent U.S. policy position following the war, and by the UNSC Resolution passed with American support, a decision was made to choose straight disarmament of Hezbollah over other alternatives.

The United States also took more drastic measures to offset Hezbollah’s power in Lebanon following the war. Cathy Sultan details a program supported by the Bush Administration, Saad Hariri, and the Saudi Arabian Government. The Bush Administration pursued a policy of arranging Saudi support for Fatah al-Islam, an extremist group whose leadership had links to al-Qaeda. It was believed that support for this Sunni group could balance out the power of Shiite Hezbollah in Lebanon. This was part of a broader strategy to balance Hezbollah’s power, and by extension Syrian and Iranian power, in the country.

Other more ambitious U.S. policy goals intended to stabilize Lebanon included plans to establish a joint U.S. and international military presence within the country.

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116 Sultan 2008, 47.
While these plans never materialized, Cathy Sultan describes talks over the possibility of creating a U.S./NATO air force base in Lebanon, near the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp.118

Another Lebanese sovereignty issue that has been incorporated into U.S. policy since 2006 has been the issue of the Shebaa Farms. This issue is also brought up in the post-war UNSC Resolution 1701, in which the UNSC seeks the “[…] delineation of the international borders of Lebanon [names Shebaa Farms][.]”119 Feltman points out how the Bush Administration made solving this border problem a priority, believing that solving it could help foster more peaceful Lebanese, Syrian and Israeli relations.120

Feltman is not alone in his belief that solving the Shebaa Farms border issue could have a significant impact on Lebanese security. Paul Salem posits that convincing Hezbollah to give up their weapons will be more tenable if, among other things, the United Nations took authority over the Shebaa Farms.121

Investigating the Assassination of Rafik Hariri

A third policy issue of importance to the United States has been efforts to bring justice to those behind the 2005 assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Welch highlights the fact that, in addition to helping garner international support for the investigative tribunal, the United States provided some $5,000,000 to help

120 U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2008, 11.
121 Salem 2006.
launch it.\textsuperscript{122} It is no surprise that the United States would be interested in creating an international body that would look into who was behind the assassination. It is clear that the results of the investigation could detract from Hezbollah’s power.

David Schenker of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy suggests that if responsibility is placed on Hezbollah for the attack, it would have a deleterious impact on the organization’s power, even if legal action is not taken against the organization or its members.\textsuperscript{123} Presumably, such damage could come in the form of decreased legitimacy for Hezbollah, both in Lebanon and internationally. This result could play to the advantage of the Lebanese government in the power struggle between it and Hezbollah.

\textit{Ensuring Israeli National Security}

As has been stated, one of the strategic implications of the 2006 war was Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon without having met some of its most important security objectives, as well as the political and strategic victories of Hezbollah, Syria and Iran. At the same time that the United States was working to strengthen the Lebanese government, it was also taking steps to safeguard Israeli security against Hezbollah. One aspect of this policy was an increase in U.S. military assistance. A ten-year, $30.4 billion package was offered to Israel to complement then yearly levels of over $3 billion.\textsuperscript{124}

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\textsuperscript{122} U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007, 11.
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\textsuperscript{124} Sultan 2008, 136.
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Several reports also suggest that U.S. interests in Israeli national security may be behind the decisions taken by policymakers to avoid providing more substantial military support to the Lebanese government. A report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies indicates that:

[t]he U.S. has had reservations about augmenting the LAF’s [Lebanese Armed Forces] capabilities in light of Israeli interests, Hizbullah, Lebanon’s place in the ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict and the overall perceived instability and weakness of Lebanon from political and security standpoints.¹²⁵

Moreover, members of the U.S. Congress have shown concern over the past year regarding the possible use of force by Lebanon’s military against Israel.¹²⁶ These fears came to fruition in August 2010 when Lebanese forces opened fire on and killed an Israeli military officer at the border.¹²⁷

**Conclusion**

These four goals have set the broad framework for U.S. policy toward Lebanon since the 2006 conflict. With these policies delineated, one can now begin to assess the impact that Iranian and Syrian policy has had on the interests of the United States.

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¹²⁵ Nerguizian 2009, 28.


¹²⁷ Al Jazeera English 2010.
Chapter Three – Threats From Iran and Syria

Introduction

For much of Lebanese history, the foreign policies of Syria and Iran have weighed heavily on political, social and economic developments within Lebanon. In the case of Syria, the relationship between the government in Damascus and Beirut has changed from one of a sovereign, to an occupier and then a hegemon. In the case of Iran, post-1979 political developments in that country have prompted a close relationship between the Shia Islamic Republic, and the Lebanese Shia population, which remains ensconced in conflict with the Israeli state. This chapter will highlight the threats posed to American interests in Lebanon by Syria and Iran.

Given the conceptualization of this project as delineated in the first chapter, Iranian and Syrian foreign policy can be viewed as independent variables impacting stability within Lebanon. By assessing the impact that these variables currently have and may have in the future on U.S. interests, we can gain a better perspective on how the United States should craft a new policy.

Iran, Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon

To adequately grasp the role of Hezbollah in Lebanon and how Syria and Iran are able to shape developments through this group, it is important to understand the context of why the organization’s appeal has emerged and grown over time, and how Iran and
Syria have been able to capitalize on that appeal. This appeal can best be understood in terms of two areas: community outreach and Lebanese national security.

*The Appeal of Hezbollah: Community Outreach*

In a country where the government is weak, people may turn to within their own community in looking for power to be exercised. This phenomenon, as occurred in Lebanon, is discussed by Mehran Kamrava, who states that:

> [i]n Lebanon, to cite an extreme example, the atrophy of the state in the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted in a dramatic heightening of such primordial forces as sectarianism and clannishness to the extent that the average Lebanese citizen was plagued by a ‘confessional mind.’

In terms of community outreach, Mohamad Bazi of the Council on Foreign Relations explains that dating back to the 1960s, the Lebanese government has fallen short of meeting the needs of Shia within the country. Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr highlights these governmental shortcomings, stating that:

> [a]s for public services and institutions, the state provided few schools or hospitals in the Shi’ite areas, while the contents of the history textbooks seemed rather alien because they did not even partially represent Shi’ite aspirations and national narratives.

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As a response to this need for a Shia educational system, efforts have been made to establish Shia schools within these neglected communities, and it is indicated by Shaery-Eisenlohr that at least some of these schools are “Hizbullah-run.”\(^{131}\)

Hezbollah in particular has been able to capitalize on the government neglect of the Shia population in that, “[i]t created a dependency and social service network that guaranteed its dominance.”\(^{132}\) The concept of Shia organizations in Lebanon predates the establishment of Hezbollah. For example, Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, a Shiite religious leader, worked as a leader and fundraiser for organizations such as the Imam Khu’i Orphanage and Bahman Hospital, both of which eventually came under the umbrella of his Benevolent Charity Society.\(^{133}\) Specific services offered by Hezbollah consist, “[…] of social services to its constituents that include construction companies, schools, hospitals, dispensaries, and micro-finance initiatives […].”\(^{134}\) It is believed that as much as an annual $100 million of the financing for these services come from the Islamic Republic.\(^{135}\)

It is reported that in the wake of the 2006 war, some $1 billion in Iranian capital had been invested by Hezbollah in development and reconstruction initiatives.\(^{136}\) In the realm of national security regarding Israel, and in terms of providing for Shia in Lebanon,

\(^{131}\) Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008, 52.

\(^{132}\) Bazzi 2010.

\(^{133}\) Norton 2007, 108.

\(^{134}\) Norton 2007, 109-110.

\(^{135}\) Norton 2007, 110.

\(^{136}\) Evans 2010.
Hezbollah has made itself a useful component of Lebanon’s political, economic and security apparatus.

_The Appeal of Hezbollah: Lebanese National Security_

Hezbollah’s presence in Lebanese politics and society can also be understood in terms of addressing Lebanese national security. The organization’s very genesis came shortly after Israeli troops entered Lebanon in the early 1980s. As Israeli forces moved into Lebanon in 1982 for the second time in four years, several Lebanese entities took up arms against the Israeli military, including Hezbollah. Hezbollah was not only responsible for significant attacks against the Israelis such as the 1982 Tyre suicide car-bombing, but it took ownership in a majority of these strikes against Israeli forces.

During the Israeli invasion in the 1980s, Lebanon’s Shia became the backbone of the armed opposition. According to Mohamad Bazi, “[t]he Shiites turned out to be more formidable enemies of Israel than the PLO.” Paul Salem suggests that Hezbollah perceives itself as an entity that is necessary due to Lebanon’s military incapacities. He states, “Hezbollah has pointed to the weaknesses of the Lebanese army and state in the past to justify its own existence.”

The suspected growth in Hezbollah’s rocket and missile capabilities as mentioned earlier are proof of the premium that Hezbollah puts on its role as a security organization. Also worth noting are the steps taken by Hezbollah to focus its militarism in the south on

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137 Salem 2006.
139 Bazzi 2010.
140 Salem 2006.
Israel. While Hezbollah engaged in the targeting of non-Israelis during the 1980s with the killing of an American serviceman during the TWA flight 847 hijacking in 1985, there is evidence to show that today Hezbollah is principally concerned with focusing its security prerogatives on the Israeli occupation. For one, the organization has accepted the part of UNSC Resolution 1701 which stipulates a UNIFIL presence in south Lebanon, and has even accepted the fact that its members “may be detained and disarmed” if caught with weapons. Moreover, Hezbollah made clear in August 2006 that its arsenal was strictly for the means of confronting Israel and not for internal use within Lebanon. These developments may suggest a more focused security perspective of the organization. However, the group’s outside links are a cause for concern, and can have a major impact on Hezbollah’s future operations.

*Hezbollah’s International Links*

Hezbollah’s connections with Iran and Syria can best be understood in terms of political/economic and military material connections. Political connections between Iran and Hezbollah can be seen in the highest levels of leadership within the organization. Both Ayatollah Ali Khameini, the Iranian Supreme Leader, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps are believed to have connections to the preeminent decision making apparatus within Hezbollah, known as the Majlis al-Shura. These political connections

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141 Norton 2007, 77.
142 Norton 2007, 141.
can be viewed in the framework for Iranian hegemony outlined by Robert Baer. He notes that the successes yielded by Iran’s support for Hezbollah, namely the 2000 withdrawal of Israeli forces out of Lebanon, has proven to the Iranian leadership that developing connections to Shia in the Arab World can provide Iran with the means to advance its foreign policy goal of regional hegemony.\textsuperscript{145}

Iran’s attempts at hegemony in Lebanon have become all the more salient since the summer 2010. As the United States has started to debate the discontinuation of its assistance program to Lebanon, Iran is seeking to take advantage of the situation and the possible deterioration of U.S. support. Following a U.S. moratorium on military assistance in August 2010, the Iranian government suggested that it would provide assistance in light of the U.S. reneging on its commitment to Lebanese security. Iran was also reported in October 2010 to be close to finalizing a loan worth $450 million to Lebanon in support of development initiatives, such as, “[…] electricity and water projects […].”\textsuperscript{146}

Another form of Iranian and Syrian influence in Lebanon is that of military assistance to both Hezbollah and the Lebanese government. Various reports suggest that material assistance to Hezbollah from these countries has been stepped-up in the years following the 2006 war. Hezbollah is reported to hold “[…] as many as 45,000 rockets – at least three times as many as it had in the summer of 2006 […].”\textsuperscript{147} There are also

\textsuperscript{145} Baer 2008, 51-57.

\textsuperscript{146} Evans 2010.

\textsuperscript{147} Goldberg 2010.
reports of alleged SCUD missile transfers between Syria and Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{148} A 2010 report by the United Nations sheds light on these allegations, indicating that while the Lebanese government is unaware of any violations of illegal weapons transfers, the Israeli government has claimed that Hezbollah controls some “55,000 missiles and rockets.”\textsuperscript{149} Furthermore, the report states that the Israeli government has indicated to the United Nations that it believes that illegal weapons transfers between Syria and Lebanon are taking place. However, the United Nations has been unable to confirm the reports.\textsuperscript{150} Additional assistance from Iran directly to Hezbollah has come from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, where they “[...] serve alongside senior Hizbullah officials, as well as give vital technical support.”\textsuperscript{151}

One increasingly important aspect of the current discourse on Hezbollah is the debate on whether the organization’s institutional loyalty lies in the Lebanese state or in Iran. Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson take up this question, shedding light on a conclusion reached by RAND analysts, which is that trends may show that Hezbollah is seeking autonomy from Iran. Simon and Stevenson suggest that the organization will eventually be placed in a position where it must disarm. They argue that the Lebanese people have reacted negatively to past Hezbollah acts to undermine Lebanese sovereignty, namely the violence in May 2008 over a standoff between Hezbollah and the

\textsuperscript{148} The International Institute for Strategic Studies June, 2010.


\textsuperscript{150} United Nations Secretary-General 1 November 2010, 10.

\textsuperscript{151} The International Institute for Strategic Studies June, 2010.
Lebanese government and reports of serious financial corruption within the group that had a negative impact on their Shia constituents. The authors posit that in the wake of these public relations problems amongst the Lebanese populace, Hezbollah may make a move away from militancy.  

*Lebanese Nationalism and Hezbollah*

To better understand the question of Hezbollah’s autonomy in its relationship with Iran and Syria, one must look at trends in Shiite nationalism within Lebanon. As argued by Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, a major part of Lebanese political life is a sense of religious nationalism. She argues:

> [i]n the context of Lebanese political traditions, visions of the Lebanese nation have often taken the shape of a nationalism highlighting religious belonging. In fact, belonging to a religious community is the only legitimate way of being part of the Lebanese nation.  

Each religious sect within Lebanon therefore seeks power vis-à-vis the other sects in framing the country’s society in a non-exclusive manner.  

From “the 1960s” onward, there has been a Shiite nationalist movement in Lebanon that seeks to, “[…] break with the dominant national narrative of Maronite Lebanon, with which most of them [Shia in Lebanon] do not identify […].” For example, following the civil war, the rebuilding of Beirut at the hands of Rafik Hariri was conducted, according to Shaery-Eisenlohr, in the Sunni image of creating a vibrant

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152 Simon Summer 2010.


commercial center in the city; an image that the country’s Shia could not relate to and were thus ostracized from.\textsuperscript{156}

In this context, Iran’s support to Shia is a function of the need to advance sectarian nationalist goals.\textsuperscript{157} Historically, there is evidence that nationalism in Lebanon has at times trumped Shia ties to Iran. One case that helps illustrate this point is the issue of Iranian education in Lebanon, particularly in terms of the instruction of Farsi.

In the early 1960s, Farsi lessons received a hostile reception amongst the Shia community in Lebanon, because the language was associated with a regime in Tehran that stood aligned with Israel and against Pan-Arabism. Shaery-Eisenlohr mentions how students rose up to these efforts to teach Farsi by not attending classes, and even resorting to violence against an instructor. Shaery-Eisenlohr’s assessment also suggests that as recent as the early 2000s, the promotion of the Iranian language is still not embraced even within Shia schools. She mentions specifically schools where pupil’s families are linked to Hezbollah or the resistance in some way. At these schools, the instruction of Farsi is not popular, and the families perceive Farsi to be unimportant relative to, “[…] English and French, which the parents consider highly relevant for their children’s future.”\textsuperscript{158} It would appear that despite the religious connection to Iran, Arab and Lebanese nationalist ties transcend Shia unity. This suggests that Lebanese Shia autonomy from Iran may not be a far-fetched political possibility.

\textsuperscript{156} Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008, 22.

\textsuperscript{157} Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008, 10.

\textsuperscript{158} Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008, 58-62, quote on 60.
Evidence also exists to suggest that Hezbollah has a substantial degree of political autonomy from Iran and Syria dating back to the 2006 war. It is suggested by Cathy Sultan that the ultimate decision to execute the kidnapping that prompted the war was made by Hezbollah, and that Iran and Syria essentially had to go along for the ride after the fact. She cites sources from the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Israeli government to back this claim.\(^{159}\) Once the war commenced, it also appears that the Hezbollah mission was more grounded in Lebanese rather than Iranian policy. In an interview she conducted with a member of Hezbollah involved in the 2006 war, it becomes apparent that there is a perception within Hezbollah that the war was primarily oriented toward defending Lebanon. Iranian interests did not even surface as an issue in the account of the interview. While this interview was conducted with one individual among many in Hezbollah, the rhetoric used suggests that these opinions were representative of not only the interviewee, but of a broader sampling of those who fought in the war.\(^{160}\)

A June 2010 report from the International Institute for Strategic Studies also suggests that Hezbollah might be less inclined in the future to act in accord with Iranian interests, particularly with regards to any confrontation with Israel. The report argues that the political progress made by Hezbollah and the coalition that has been built with certain Lebanese Christians could lead the Hezbollah leadership to exercise reluctance

\(^{159}\) Sultan 2008, 107.

\(^{160}\) Sultan 2008, 49-54.
before engaging Israel with violence yet again, even if pressured to do so by Iran or Syria.161

While Iranian influence in Lebanon from the 1980s to 2010 may have been focused on capitalizing on the shortcomings of the Lebanese government, Iran now finds itself able to benefit from not only the shortcomings of the government in Beirut, but also the government in Washington. While it may be debatable how loyal Hezbollah is to either Lebanon or Iran, the fact of the matter is that the need for an organization like Hezbollah and for foreign investment exists now just as it did two and a half decades ago.

It would appear that there are significant differences in perceptions between Tehran and Hezbollah on the latter’s strategic role in the broader picture of Middle Eastern politics. To Tehran, Hezbollah is a means through which the Iranian government can exercise hegemony in the region. To Hezbollah, it appears there is a strategic culture that has deeper roots in a unique type of Lebanese nationalism than toward loyalty to Tehran. However, regardless of what Hezbollah perceives its own role to be, the inflows of weaponry since 2006 (presumably from Iran and Syria), the capital flows from Iran to Lebanon and the political connections between Iran and Lebanon, may make it difficult in the future for Hezbollah to ignore Tehran.

Threats to U.S. interests as posed by Iranian and Syrian meddling in Lebanon are threefold. First, the enhancements in Hezbollah’s weapons capabilities are highly disturbing, and run counter to the U.S. interests of degenerating Hezbollah’s military power, ensuring compliance with UNSC Resolutions and protecting Israel. Second, the events of the past year suggest Iran is prepared to provide Lebanon with extensive

161 The International Institute for Strategic Studies June, 2010.
developmental and military assistance. Last, the hegemony-through-proxy model illustrated by Baer suggests that the empowerment of Hezbollah that has taken place since 2006 could spark similar Iranian-proxy relationships throughout the Middle East with the end goal of advancing Iranian regional hegemony.

Ambassador Hill explained the importance of Lebanon to the Iranian government: “For them [Iran] a key element of it is to strengthen Shia or to politicize Shia and strengthen them wherever possible. And I think Lebanon is a key element in that strategy with Hezbollah.”162 As links between Iran and both Hezbollah and the Lebanese government grow in an effort to advance this strategy, it will become increasingly difficult for Hezbollah to exercise autonomy as it has in the past. A recent report citing an Israeli allegation that Hezbollah is providing training support to Hamas along with Iran163 suggests, if true, that Hezbollah may still be viewed in Tehran as an Iranian proxy, with costly implications for the United States.

**Major Obstacles to the Arab-Israeli Peace Process**

Syria factors significantly into many of the interests and goals of the United States in Lebanon. These interests include securing the Syrian-Lebanese border to both reinforce Lebanese sovereignty and to prevent illegal weapons transfers, preventing Syrian support for Hezbollah, making progress on the Arab-Israeli conflict and building more substantial relations between the governments in Beirut and Damascus. The advancement of these interests is difficult because the Iranian government continues to

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162 Hill 2010.

exercise power over the government in Syria. This section will specify several aspects of the Syrian-Iranian relationship which could pose a threat to advancing U.S. interests not only in Lebanon, but in the broader region.

Syria currently finds itself in a unique position due to its complex relationship with Iran. The Iranian state is largely isolated, in a position of “strategic loneliness.”164 Perhaps the closest substantial relationship that Iran has is with Syria. However, as Ray Takeyh points out, “[…] the ties between the two states are at best an alliance of convenience based on shared fears and apprehensions.”165 Such common ground between Iran and Syria, Takeyh argues, includes the threat posed by Israel. For both countries, Hezbollah plays an essential role as an antagonizing force against Israel.166 At the same time however, there are points of contention between the two states, particularly with regards to how each perceives Hezbollah’s specific role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and over what the future shape of Iraqi politics will be.167 Given the complexities of this relationship, it is entirely possible that Iran can leverage both its common ground with Syria as well as its rising political power to influence Syria’s position on critical U.S. interests.

One means through which Iran can impact Syrian policy is by influencing the situation in Iraq so as to bring about negative political repercussions in Syria. The role of Iran in the post-Saddam, post-American occupation Iraq cannot be overstated. A recent

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164 Takeyh 2006, 146.
165 Takeyh 2006, 71.
166 Takeyh 2006, 71.
167 Takeyh 2006, 71.
intelligence report by STRATFOR indicates that in the event that U.S. troops withdraw from Iraq by 2012, as they are slated to do, the Iranian government will find it in its interest to continue tamper in Iraqi affairs. This would ensure that Iraq does not pose the same threat to Iranian national security as it did under the leadership of former President Saddam Hussein. Iran can influence Gulf developments in many ways, including through its ability to, “[…] covertly support pro-Iranian forces in the region, destabilizing existing regimes.”

Robert Baer points to examples of past instances of such influence, particularly Iranian involvement in Iraq’s key political parties. It has even been suggested that Iranian entities have penetrated the coveted Iraqi oil industry by having “looted” oil in south Iraq. In short, Iran is fully capable of exercising power within Iraq.

While such developments have been taking place in Iraq and do not have a direct impact on Lebanon, it is not difficult to see how enhanced Iranian influence in Iraq could be used as a tool to pressure Syria to adopt a position in Lebanese relations and the peace process that is counter to the interests of the United States. One powerful tool by which Syria is affected is through the Kurdish issue. The Kurds account for some 8% of the population of Syria and Iran could use the Kurds as a political weapon, particularly in Iraq. If Iran were to support Kurdish armed movements, the consequences could be

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twofold for Syria. One, given the proximity of the Kurdish areas in Iraq to Syria, it could cause a migration of refugees fleeing the fighting from Iraq to Syria (see Figure 5 in Appendix B). Second, any armed movement in Iraq could conceivably cross Iraq’s borders and affect Syria’s Kurds. Both scenarios would create turmoil for the government in Damascus.

Aside from the Kurdish issue, Iran can also influence Syria through Syrian trade ties with Iraq. Accounting for just over 30% of Syria’s exports, Iraq is the largest importer of Syrian exports. Iran’s political connections in Baghdad have already been mentioned, and if these pro-Iranian elements were to enjoy enough power, they could perhaps seek to employ economic pressure on Syria by imposing trade restrictions against Syrian exports to Iraq. The proposed free trade agreement with Syria, if approved, will certainly help in providing Syria with other lucrative export markets, and in the long-term, could potentially make Syria’s exporters less dependent on a country where Iran wields economic and political power.

More direct economic links between Iran and Syria are also starting to take hold. The two countries are anticipated to enter contract on a natural gas pipeline that will deliver five million cubic meters a day from Iran to Syria. A second pipeline linking

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172 Baer 2008, 115.


Iran, Iraq and Syria and capable of accommodating 20 million cubic meters a day should be operational in 2015.\textsuperscript{176} These developments show that aside from the issues surrounding the Iran-Iraq-Syria nexus, Syria’s economic dependence on Iran could also enhance Iran’s power in Lebanon by making it more difficult for Syria to insulate Lebanon from Iranian influence.

The point of highlighting this Iran-Iraq-Syria nexus is to shed light on the difficulties Syria faces in deviating from the Iranian course with regards to the Arab-Israeli conflict and Hezbollah. These difficulties will likely continue in the future. The stakes are simply too high for Syria politically and economically to turn a cold shoulder to Iran. The implication of this reality for Lebanon is that it can become exceedingly difficult for Syria to reach a compromise with Israel so long as Iran seeks to maintain the status-quo. Furthermore, to compound the power that Iran holds over Syria via Iraq, there is the fact that while Syria and Iran both play roles in supporting Hezbollah, the influence of Iran over Hezbollah has been far greater than Syria’s since the Lebanese civil war.\textsuperscript{177} While Syria may not agree with the non-secular Iranian vision of the resistance,\textsuperscript{178} the successes of the resistance while Iran was largely at the helm has made it difficult for Syria to change Hezbollah’s course.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{176} Lina Ibrahim and Nayla Razzouk, "Syria to Auction Offshore Exploration Rights This Month," \textit{Bloomberg} (March 13, 2011), \url{http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-13/syria-to-auction-offshore-exploration-rights-this-month-1-.html} (accessed April 26, 2011). While this report suggests 20 million cubic meters/day, the Nasseri report indicates that the pipeline via Iraq will be able to support 40 million cubic meters/day.

\textsuperscript{177} Baer 2008, 186-189.

\textsuperscript{178} Takeyh 2006, 71.

\textsuperscript{179} Baer 2008, 186-189.
The Threat of the Iranian Nuclear Program

While the possession of nuclear weapons by Iran does not pose a direct threat to Lebanon or to U.S. interests in that country, an Iranian nuclear arsenal, or even continued progress toward obtaining such an arsenal, poses numerous threats to Lebanese stability. The Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons is by no means a recent phenomenon, and early efforts towards developing the technology necessary for a nuclear weapon date back to the time of the Shah. The 1990s saw a resurrection of this effort with assistance from Russia, and by the early 2000s, Iran’s uranium enrichment capabilities became apparent to the United States.\textsuperscript{180}

Preventative Strikes Leading to War

As the international community determines how to respond to Iran’s nuclear weapons program, one option that is often discussed is the possibility of an Israeli airstrike against Iran’s nuclear infrastructure. Israel has a precedent of conducting such actions, having launched strikes against nuclear facilities in Iraq and Syria. It is also worth noting that national security was a major factor in Benjamin Netanyahu’s election as Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{181} According to Brent Talbot, the Iranian regime may respond to an Israeli attack through the following: “[w]ith influence over both Hamas and Hizballah, Iran would likely use its proxies to launch retribution attacks.”\textsuperscript{182} Talbot is not alone in concluding that Hezbollah can be mobilized in the wake of an Israeli attack against Iran.

\textsuperscript{180} Takeyh 2006, 136-138.


\textsuperscript{182} Talbot 1st Quarter 2010, 102.
Jeffrey Goldberg of The Atlantic discusses the possibility of Hezbollah using its weapons against Israel following an Israeli attack on Iran,\(^{183}\) thus turning Lebanon into a key center of gravity in an Israeli-Iranian conflict.

Furthermore, if either Israel or the United States strikes Iran’s nuclear program, “[…] an attack could backfire […] and trigger a costly retaliation against the United States and U.S. allies in the Middle East.”\(^{184}\) This concern is widespread within the academic community and followers of Middle East affairs that U.S. interests in a state like Lebanon could become jeopardized should action be taken against Iran’s nuclear program.

The risks of an Iranian retaliation are serious, and would pose major risks to U.S. interests in Lebanon as Lebanese sovereignty will be threatened in a war with Israel. Furthermore, Israel’s democracy will fail to flourish, and Lebanon’s Shia will continue to militarize and distrust Israel. Lastly, the U.S. interest of Israeli national security will undoubtedly be threatened as Hezbollah strikes Israel. There are two precedents that make the dangers of such a scenario playing out all the more likely. One is Israel’s willingness to launch airstrikes against potentially threatening weapons programs in the region. A second involves the willingness of Hezbollah to fight Israel, as it did in the summer of 2006. This historical record suggests that should Israel decide that a strike against Iran is essential for its own national security, it is highly likely that Lebanon will find itself yet again ensconced in war.

\(^{183}\) Goldberg 2010.

Nuclear Threats Post-Weaponization

As Iran continues work on its nuclear program, it becomes more likely that the Islamic Republic will eventually achieve nuclear weapons capabilities. The longer this program lasts, the more likely they will be to make a bomb due to political inertia. Ray Takeyh points out:

[a]s India and Pakistan demonstrated, once a nuclear program matures, it attracts political patrons invoking national prestige, military officers attracted to the weapons of awesome power, and a scientific establishment seeking to perpetuate a program that generates profits and jobs.\footnote{Takeyh 2006, 140.}

While it is up for debate whether or not Iran would dare to use a nuclear weapon once they have the capability, what is certain is that an Iranian nuclear weapon would safeguard Iran’s involvement in Lebanon by offering an added level of security against U.S. or Israeli retaliation. It could be more assertive and provide more material and financial support for Hezbollah, increasing Iranian political hegemony over Lebanon and a further proliferation of anti-Israeli sentiment throughout the region. As Takeyh posits, “[a] presumptive nuclear capability would grant Iran a greater ability to assert its interests and press it claims.”\footnote{Takeyh 2006, 143.}

Takeyh is not alone in reaching this conclusion. Edelman et al also state that U.S. priorities in the Middle East would be jeopardized by an Iranian nuclear armament as Iran grows more audacious.\footnote{Edelman and Montgomery January/February 2011, 67.} Given the established framework of Iranian involvement in Lebanon and the invested Iranian stake in the Hezbollah model as discussed earlier in this chapter, it is clear that Iran’s post-nuclear pursuits would undoubtedly play out in
Lebanon. This effect of politically empowering Iran at the expense of the United States will be heightened as Israel and Iran find themselves in the midst of a nuclear arms race. Iran will increase its number of nuclear weapons to effectively compete with Israel, and as Iran gains more weapons, it will grow bolder in its international endeavors. 188

Another unfortunate consequence that may come about from the nuclear weaponization of Iran involves the impact it will have on the ability of the United States to advance its interests in the region. Edleman et al posit that other states in the region will perceive the nuclear weaponization of Iran as the result of an inability of the United States to exercise power in the region. They state, “[i]f the United States cannot prevent a conventionally armed Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, its partners in the Middle East will almost certainly question its willingness to stand up to a nuclear-armed Iran.” 189

This reality could greatly hinder the ability of the United States to advance its interests in Lebanon, particularly regarding multilateral engagements with Israel and Syria, as well as interactions with the Lebanese government itself. As will be elaborated on in Chapter Five, the U.S. engagement of Syria and Israel will be key in brokering stability in Lebanon.

With regards to Israel, the United States will need to convince Jerusalem that withdrawing from the Shebaa Farms and refraining from future military involvement in southern Lebanon is essential to Israeli security. The United States will also need to engage the Syrian government to not only clarify national boundaries as discussed by the State Department testimonies before Congress mentioned in Chapter Three, but also by

189 Edelman and Montgomery January/February 2011, 76.
ensuring that the anti-weapons trafficking provisions of UNSC Resolution 1701 are enforced in the future. If the United States cannot succeed in preventing nuclear proliferation to what it perceives as a threatening state, governments in Jerusalem and Damascus may be less inclined to work with the United States in advancing prerogatives in Lebanon; they may very well start to call the U.S. commitment to regional security into question.

Conclusion

The influence of Iran in Lebanon has become substantially stronger than that of Syria. In fact, Iran seems to have the power not only to impact developments in Beirut, but also in Damascus.

While Shiite Lebanese Nationalism may be a historically significant phenomenon in Lebanese society, the growing links between Iran and Lebanon and the increasing power of Iran in the Iran-Syria-Lebanon nexus may make it difficult for Hezbollah to exercise autonomy in terms of seeking a less militarized role in Lebanese society. American interests of promoting a strong Lebanese government, reinforcing Lebanese sovereignty and advancing the Arab-Israeli Peace Process are jeopardized by this new reality. However, the difference in perceptions between Tehran and the Hezbollah leadership on the organization’s role in Lebanon could provide a prime opportunity for the United States to influence the situation by helping Lebanon and its government grow less dependent on an Iranian regime that does not have Lebanese national interests in mind. These policies will be discussed in Chapter Five.
Chapter Four – Outputs Analysis of U.S. Policy Since 2006

Introduction

The previous two chapters have illuminated the strategic priorities of the United States following the 2006 war, the concrete policies that came out of those priorities and the impact that Syrian and Iranian policies have had on reinforcing threats to U.S. interests. This chapter will present an outputs analysis of the U.S. policy since 2006 by determining the extent of American success in advancing the four objectives delineated in Chapter Two. These objectives are the promotion of democracy, the reinforcement of Lebanese sovereignty, the seeking of justice in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and advancing Israeli national security.

Measuring the Success of the Post-2006 Policies

Promotion of Democracy

It is in the policy goal of promoting Lebanese democracy that the United States has had perhaps the most success since 2006. Free presidential elections as supported by the United States and the international community did in fact come to fruition. In the spring of 2008, Michel Suleiman was elected by the Lebanese Parliament to be the country’s president. Suleiman’s election came after 19 tries to hold a presidential
election in Lebanon in the midst of deep political factionalization between the coalition backed by Hezbollah, and the country’s more moderate coalition.\textsuperscript{190}

Further parliamentary elections in 2009 not only were indicative of a trend toward democratization, but also reflected some materialization of the belief held by U.S. policymakers that by democratizing Lebanon, foreign meddling could perhaps be minimized. The spring 2009 elections resulted in a 71 seat victory for the March 14 coalition, while the Hezbollah coalition received only 57 seats.\textsuperscript{191} There was also a decrease in the number of Hezbollah coalition seats from the 59 it held as of May 2008 prior to the internationally-brokered Doha Agreement.\textsuperscript{192} The progress made indicates the success of the U.S. policy by achieving consistent democratic elections in Lebanon, and also in gradually scaling back the power and appeal of Hezbollah, and thus of Syria and Iran, in the country’s political system.

More recent events however have shown that Lebanon’s political system may be slipping back from the progress that had been made toward democratization and stable leadership. This political deterioration has come mostly as a result of concerns over the results of the United Nations inquiry into the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri – concern voiced particularly by Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{193} When Prime Minister Saad


Hariri refused to denounce the investigation, as Hezbollah had sought for him to do, the organization withdrew from his government. Hezbollah then supported the man who will become the next Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, despite concerns of his unpopularity vis-à-vis Saad Hariri.¹⁹⁴

This current crisis has put two U.S. interests at odds: the interest of promoting further democratization in Lebanon and the interest of reaching justice in the Hariri assassination. The events of the past few months serve as evidence that both Lebanese democracy and justice in the murder are two goals that are not only at odds, but now that Hezbollah has an ally as prime minister, may never materialize.

*Reinforcing Sovereignty*

The United States has achieved limited success toward the goal of promoting Lebanese sovereignty in the years following the 2006 conflict. However, upon looking more closely at the sovereignty issue, one can easily see that this goal is still far from reality.

Perhaps the most noteworthy success of the U.S. objective of promoting Lebanese sovereignty can be seen in what Assistant Secretary of State Feltman describes as:


¹⁹⁴ Anthony Shadid, "Next Premier of Lebanon Tries to Set His Own Course," *The New York Times* (January 26, 2011), [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/27/world/middleeast/27lebanon.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/27/world/middleeast/27lebanon.html) (accessed April 27, 2011). Shadid states that, “[…] Mr. Mikati’s very legitimacy is deeply questioned in a system that rigidly divides the spoils among its various sects: primarily Maronite Catholics (who serve as president), Sunni Muslims (as prime minister) and Shiite Muslims (as Parliament speaker). […] Mr. Mikati is a Sunni Muslim, but his support, in the street at least, pales before Mr. Hariri’s, whose movement mobilized supporters in aggressive protests on Tuesday in what amounted to a show of force.” Second ellipse represents line break.
[...] the courage that the Lebanese Army demonstrated [...] when Sunni terrorists from Nahr al-Barid refugee camp threatened Lebanon’s security, and the Lebanese Army took steps.195

Feltman credits the U.S. military assistance program for providing much of the material that the LAF required to keep the peace in the camp.196 What Feltman fails to acknowledge is that the terrorists that the LAF were fighting against in 2007 in the refugee camp were from Fatah al-Islam. This is the same Sunni organization that the Bush Administration worked with Saad Hariri and the Saudi Arabian government to export to Lebanon in the interest of balancing Hezbollah. According to one account of what transpired, Hariri’s covert funding of Fatah al-Islam fighters became apparent to Hezbollah, prompting Hariri to dispatch the ISF after the fighters. When the fighters took refuge inside the refugee camp, they were confronted by the LAF, which was dispatched by President Siniora to respond to the dilemma. It was whilst outside the camp that the LAF was attacked by the Fatah al-Islam fighters, leading to the conflict.197

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of this incident was that it became evident that two tactics pursued by the United States to achieve the strategic objective of promoting sovereignty were at odds. Supporting Fatah al-Islam and supporting the Lebanese military were clearly at odds in this incident, and the result was a military confrontation on Lebanese soil.

195 U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2008, 12.

196 U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 2008, 12.

197 Sultan 2008, 89-95.
A more substantial shortcoming of U.S. policy has been the lack of success in securing Lebanon’s borders, and preventing foreign weapons from entering the country. Despite the verbiage of the post-war UNSC Resolution, the rhetoric from the State Department and the military support offered to the Lebanese government in the interest of securing the border, the issue of illegal weapons in Lebanon has become precipitously worse. While some success has been made in preventing weapons transfers, such as the fall 2009 Israeli detainment of an alleged weapons shipment en-route from Iran to Lebanon,\textsuperscript{198} weapons shipments to Hezbollah continue.

In spring 2010, the Israeli government claimed that SCUD missiles had been transferred between Syria and Hezbollah. An analysis from the International Institute for Strategic Studies suggests that the SCUDS are likely the SCUD-B variant. This missile has a range of 300 kilometers, and if based in northern Lebanon, could bring even more of the country into confrontation with Israel in the event of another war.\textsuperscript{199}

In addition to the SCUDs, Hezbollah’s rearmament in the wake of the 2006 war has been significant. Jeffrey Goldberg of The Atlantic reports that the organization has, “[…] by most intelligence estimates, as many as 45,000 rockets – at least three times as many as it had in the summer of 2006 […].”\textsuperscript{200} This astonishing level of rearmament reflects a failure in the U.S. policy to ensure that weapons do not flow from hostile states such as Syria and Iran into Lebanon.

\textsuperscript{198} BBC News, "Photos 'Show Iranian Arms-Ship Link'," BBC News (November 11, 2009), \url{http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8355568.stm} (accessed April 26, 2011)

\textsuperscript{199} The International Institute for Strategic Studies June, 2010.

\textsuperscript{200} Goldberg 2010.
Seeking Justice in the Hariri Assassination

While the pursuit of justice in the wake of an event such as the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri is laudable, the fact of the matter is that this investigation, which has been supported by the United States, has had disastrous repercussions on the Lebanese democracy and stability. At the time of this writing, the United Nations tribunal investigating the assassination had yet to issue indictments.\(^\text{201}\)

However, the anticipation of the investigation’s conclusions has already led the government under Saad Hariri to end. Six years after the assassination, the tribunal has yet to deliver justice, and it is unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future. Moreover, there is concern as expressed recently by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that, “‘[t]he absence of a functioning government in Lebanon for several months has created a power and security vacuum of which extremist and armed groups could take advantage [...]’”\(^\text{202}\) Secretary Ban is almost certainly referring to the political chaos that has ensued in the wake of Saad Hariri’s government losing power over the tribunal.

It can therefore be concluded that while the United States may have had good intentions while backing this investigation, the fallout it has created has worked against other longer-term U.S. interests in Lebanon. As of January 2011 when a statement on the matter was released by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the United States still actively support the investigation. Secretary Clinton went so far as to say, “‘[t]hose who oppose


the Tribunal seek to create a false choice between justice and stability in Lebanon; we reject this.” While this statement is an impressive showing of the U.S. commitment to justice, it reflects ignorance on the part of the Obama Administration to the fact that the pursuit of justice has undoubtedly caused a blow to Lebanese democracy.

*Ensuring Israeli National Security*

The reports suggesting a quantitative and qualitative enhancement of Hezbollah’s weapons capabilities reflects a failure on the part of U.S. policy to ensure the protection of Israel, as these weapons will conceivably be used against Israel in the event of an escalation of tensions between Iran and Israel. The previous chapter illuminated two clear trends with regards to the Israel-Lebanon security environment. First, while Hezbollah has moderated its behavior in some regards by becoming politically active and not antagonizing UNIFIL, it still perceives Israel as an enemy that it must arm itself against. The failure of the United States to make progress on reaching at least minimal progress in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process is partly to blame. As will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter, the occupation of Lebanon by Israel and future concerns about Israeli infringement on Lebanese sovereignty have not been conducive to Hezbollah’s abandoning of militancy.

Second, while Shia in Lebanon and Hezbollah in particular may perceive themselves as being autonomous of Iran, the deepening of Hezbollah-Iranian and Lebanese-Iranian relations may detract from the organization’s autonomy and reinforce

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204 Goldberg 2010. Discusses how these weapons could be used against Israel in the event that Israel was to launch a preventative strike against Iranian nuclear infrastructure.
their status, as Baer sees is, as an Iranian proxy. The recent reluctance on the part of the United States to provide continued support to the Lebanese government over the past year has facilitated Iran’s continued role as a major financer of security and development initiatives in Lebanon.

A Critique of Broader U.S. Policy Shortcomings

An account of the specific measures taken by both the Bush and Obama Administrations following the summer of 2006 indicates two trends in post-2006 U.S. policy. First, the policy appears to be grounded in a realist approach to international relations, at the expense of other more useful frameworks for dealing with Lebanese stability. Second, there have been noteworthy inconsistencies in pursuing the aforementioned policy goals, which have made the advancement of U.S. interests in the region difficult.

A Critique of the Realist Approach

The realist paradigm in international relations assumes that states are central actors in the international system, stresses the importance of state power, and argues that power in itself is a zero-sum phenomenon. The U.S. approach to Lebanon since 2006 has, for the most part, operated within this limited paradigm of foreign policy. The central emphasis on maximizing the power of the Lebanese government vis-à-vis Hezbollah, Syria and Iran is an example of this. The current U.S. policy is grounded, with some exceptions, in the belief that by arming Lebanon’s military and by providing resources to the government, the appeal of Hezbollah will dissipate, and so too will

Syrian and Iranian influence in the country. The fact of the matter however is that this approach has done little to advance the U.S. interests of stabilizing Lebanon and marginalizing Hezbollah, Iran and Syria’s power, as is evidenced by Hezbollah’s advances in military and political power.

To truly succeed in stabilizing Lebanon, the United States must abandon a purely realist approach to Lebanon, and adopt a more constructivist approach to the issue of Lebanese stability. Policymakers must ask themselves why Hezbollah insists on remaining armed, why Iran and Syria are able to exploit the political turmoil for their own political gain and why many Lebanese are so supportive of Hezbollah and its financiers. Chapter Five will shed further light on a more constructivist policy approach that can fare better than the current one in promoting Lebanese stability.

**Inconsistencies in U.S. Policy**

A second general shortcoming of the current U.S. policy involves its inconsistencies over the past five years. One inconsistency involves U.S. assistance packages to Lebanon. While the cornerstone behind the current policy has been that a stronger Lebanese government will diminish foreign interference and Hezbollah-provoked instability, the American commitment to this support has recently been called into question. This inconsistency can be seen in the decreasing levels of U.S. military assistance to Lebanon. Military support appropriations decreased from FY2009 to FY2010 from roughly $227,000,000 to $145,500,000. The FY2011 request is even lower, at $132,500,000.\(^{206}\)

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\(^{206}\) Addis January 19, 2011, 3.
One possible explanation for this is one that has been offered to explain why procured military material has taken so long to reach Lebanon. This explanation claims that there is a lack of cohesion in the U.S. foreign policymaking community on how best to deal with Lebanon policy. A report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies suggests that the Department of Defense and the Department of State may not be in agreement on how to approach Lebanon. The issue of Israel’s national security factors significantly into the policymaking calculus, leading to some hesitation in providing substantial military support to the Lebanese government.²⁰⁷

Concerns in the U.S. foreign policymaking community over Israeli security cannot be overestimated in how it impacts Lebanon policy. Several events since the summer of 2010 have prompted some in the U.S. government to question the prudence of providing assistance to the Lebanese government. In early August 2010, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman expressed concern over Lebanese military-Hezbollah relations, resulting in a halt of U.S. assistance. An event the following day which involved the killing of an Israeli military officer by Lebanese forces further exacerbated the tension between U.S. policymakers and the Lebanese government.²⁰⁸ Another unsettling event for the United States occurred in early 2011, when Hezbollah’s increase in political power in the Lebanese government prompted a similar response from U.S. policymakers. A media report citing Obama Administration

²⁰⁷ Nerguizian 2009, 61.
²⁰⁸ Al Jazeera English 2010.
sources claimed that the United States, “[…] will probably cut or realign […] aid if Hezbollah takes over key ministries under a new prime minister, Najib Mikati […].”

These recent threats made by the U.S. government indicate an American half-heartedness to back Lebanese democracy. Despite the clear position the United States has claimed in supporting democratic institutions, the U.S. government has been reluctant to support an increasing Shia voice in the Lebanese government. Despite the aforementioned statement made by Assistant Secretary Welch in his testimony before the House subcommittee that the United States would not frown upon Hezbollah’s role as a political party in Lebanon, the U.S. government is doing just that. In the first months of 2011, the United States finds itself without a consensus in Washington on how to approach Lebanon. This has resulted in an inconsistent policy at a time when the Middle East is rapidly changing and there is pressure for democratic reform.

The failure of the post-2006 policy to advance U.S. interests, to take non-realist factors into consideration and to be consistent requires a remapping of policy objectives in Lebanon for the United States. The next chapter will highlight recommendations made in response to these shortcomings.

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209 Lee 2011.
Chapter Five – A New U.S. Policy Toward Lebanon

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, the shortcomings of the current U.S. policy have been illustrated, as have the challenges posed by Iran and Syria to U.S. interests. This chapter will delineate how the United States should respond to the challenge for a new policy in Lebanon.

Containment has been a key theme in U.S. policy toward the Middle East for over half a century. While policy during the Cold War was driven largely by the interest of containing the Soviet Union (see Chapter Two), the policies of the past several years have reflected an interest in containing Iran. This must continue to be a core tenet of a future policy toward Lebanon. However, important objectives such as the advancement of Lebanese citizens (particularly the Shia) through economic and political development and more harmonious relations between Lebanon and its neighbors must also be at the center of this new policy.

The policy advocated in this chapter requires the United States to address Lebanon through three tenets: minimizing Iranian influence in Lebanon, promoting economic and political development in the country, and fostering more peaceful relations between Lebanon and its neighbors. These three tenets will serve as the umbrella for a new foreign policy, one which will be better suited for safeguarding U.S. interests and dealing with the new Iranian and Syrian challenges. The next three sections will detail
each tenet within the framework of military relations, political relations and economic development relations.

Military Relations

There is a perception by some in Washington that the Lebanese government is hostile to U.S. interests and thus not a suitable candidate for further U.S. assistance. This perception is not only based on a misunderstanding of the complexities of the strategic environment, but is one that will further jeopardize U.S. interests. Since the summer of 2010, these concerns have lead to a temporary moratorium on assistance. The saliency of this issue continues to the present. In March 2011, the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, Steve Chabot, called for a termination of military assistance to Lebanon in the event that Hezbollah emerges as a member of Lebanon’s government.210

It might be believed by some in Washington that by taking such an approach, the United States will be weakening the influence of Hezbollah, and thus Iran, in Lebanon. They assume that by pulling the plug on Lebanon’s government, they will be delegitimizing and reducing the power of Hezbollah.211 They might also assume that if the United States sends a strong signal of disapproval to the Lebanese government, perhaps the Lebanese people will in turn look upon Hezbollah with disapproval for having ostracized them militarily from the United States.


211 Bluhm 2011. Article states that, “[i]n the end, Chabot said that the long-term interest guiding his desire to eliminate U.S. aid to Lebanon for the time being was the welfare of the people of Lebanon, stating the populace would be better served if Hezbollah, Syria and Iran saw their influence here [in Lebanon] wane.”
Any such belief is a misperception of the reality in Lebanon. As stated in Chapter Three, Hezbollah has been able to capitalize in the past on ensuring the protection of Lebanon when the country’s security is called into question. Moreover, as of late the Iranian government itself has shown the willingness to directly provide military assistance to Lebanon in the absence of U.S. support. Hezbollah and Iran have triumphed in the past by providing for Lebanon when it was needed most, whether it be through funding social programs or offering military aid. Today, the desire of some policymakers in Washington to terminate assistance to the Lebanese military will yield yet another opportunity for Hezbollah and Iran. Furthermore, such a policy would prove counterproductive to the U.S. interests of containing Iran and promoting development in Lebanon’s governmental institutions.

It is recommended that in the interest of advancing the U.S. goals of containing Iran and strengthening the Lebanese government, the United States continue with providing high-levels of military assistance to the LAF and ISF. A third U.S. policy goal can also be achieved in continuing to provide support to these forces: the promotion of harmonious relations with Lebanon’s neighbors. The previous chapter made mention of allegations by the Israeli government concerning illegal weapons transfers into Lebanon, including the possibility of SCUD missile transfers.

Given the history of Israeli military operations against Lebanon, it would be prudent if the United States sought to take measures to prevent another conflict between Israel and Lebanon. The provisions of UNSC Resolution 1701 seek for, “[…] the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL […] to deploy their forces together throughout the South […]” while pointing out, “[…] the importance of the extension of the control of the
If the LAF and ISF have the material, financing and training to operate in southern Lebanon, it could mitigate Israel’s concerns about another military campaign being necessary to neutralize threats in the south of Lebanon. Ambassador Hill discusses the importance of “confidence-building measures” in promoting peace between Israel and Lebanon. By stabilizing south Lebanon, the Lebanese military could increase Israeli confidence in the Lebanese state in providing for the security of the south, decreasing the probability of another military conflict.

One crucial military capability in particular that the United States must continue to develop is a strong communications infrastructure for the Lebanese military. A 2011 report by the Congressional Research Service states that:

The LAF has only recently acquired limited secure communications capability and is attempting to gradually expand this capability to all sectors and levels of the LAF. The LAF currently relies on obsolete systems for radio communications between its headquarters and units in the field. The tactical units of the LAF do not have communications systems compatible with other agencies of the government and the lack of reliable capability and interoperability with other governmental agencies drives most commanders and staff officers to use land line or cell phones as their primary means of communication.

While updating the LAF’s communications systems has been a priority of U.S. military assistance, particularly through expedited support under the National Defense Authorization Act Section 1206, it is essential that the further development of military communication infrastructure be supported by the United States.

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213 Hill 2010.

Hezbollah itself had the capabilities to develop a communications system that, it is believed, assisted the organization in winning the 2006 conflict. According to a 2008 *al Jazeera English* article quoting the Lebanese Information Minister, “[…] it [the Hezbollah communications system] is illegal and constitutes a threat to the government’s sovereignty […].”216 In the interests of ensuring political institutional development in Lebanon as well as ensuring that the military is capable of protecting Lebanon in Hezbollah’s absence, it is essential that the United States continue to work with the LAF through military assistance programs to develop their communications infrastructure.

While one may express skepticism about the expectation of the Lebanese military being able to become Lebanon’s only line of defense and to secure the south, recent developments within the military suggest that they may be well-suited for the task. A study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies suggests that the legitimacy of the organization amongst the Lebanese population is high relative to other national entities. The report states, “[t]he LAF has shown that it is one of the few Lebanese institutions in the post-Syria era trusted by a substantial cross-section of Lebanese society.”217 Also significant is the sizable Shia presence within the LAF, accounting for nearly “[…] 30 percent of the officers corps […].”218 Hezbollah thus is not the only means through which Shia in Lebanon can contribute to the national security of the country.


217 Nerguizian 2009, 2.

218 Nerguizian 2009, 2.
Political Relations

Another misperception that appears to exist in Washington is that military assistance in itself could serve as a means to ensure that weapons are not illegally transferred into Lebanon. The 2011 CRS report aforementioned states that:

[t]he Obama Administration and some members of the 111th Congress have supported the continuation of this [military assistance] program. They hope that continued support will help secure Lebanon’s borders against smuggling and, in particular, against the flow of weapons to Hezbollah and other non-state actors. \(^{219}\)

However, it would appear that military support is not sufficient to actually stop such flows. This fact is proved by the report that Hezbollah has far more weapons than it did prior to the spike in U.S. military support. Additionally, according to the U.N. Secretary General’s 2010 report on UNSC Resolution 1701, the Lebanese government “[…] did not report any breach of the arms embargo imposed by resolution 1701 (2006).”\(^{220}\) This suggests that the Lebanese government may either be turning a blind eye to these weapons transfers, or may actually be helping to facilitate them. Therefore, the solution to the problem involves not addressing the issue of weapons transfers, but rather the issue of why Hezbollah seeks weapons.

It is essential that policymakers in Washington begin to look at the broader picture in the context that has allowed for Hezbollah’s existence as a militia. Paul Salem sheds light on one such factor, positing that the lack of power on the part of Lebanon’s government, including the military, has been a driving-force for the organization.\(^{221}\) A second significant factor is the organization’s role as a very successful force in the

\(^{219}\) Addis January 19, 2011, 1.

\(^{220}\) United Nations Secretary-General 1 November 2010, 10.

\(^{221}\) Salem 2006.
opposition against Israel. This role is much the product of support from Syria and Iran. As Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson conclude, “[…] absent a larger Israel-Syria peace accord, outright disarmament of Hezbollah – i.e., the destruction or custodial transfer of weapons – is infeasible.” It is not only a peace agreement between Syria and Israel that would be necessary for disarmament. Paul Salem posits that the occupation of the Shebaa Farms has also emerged as an impetus for Hezbollah to remain a militia.

Given this reality, two broad political goals must be advanced by the United States. First, the Lebanese government must facilitate the advancement of Shia in Lebanon. Second, an Arab-Israeli peace agreement must be pursued, which will make Hezbollah’s militia unnecessary.

*Bringing Lebanese Shia into the Political Process*

There is significant evidence to support the argument that Hezbollah can be demilitarized and brought into the political process in Lebanon as a peaceful player. A 2008 book by the RAND Corporation entitled *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa’ida* presents research findings on 648 terrorist organizations over forty years, and concludes, “[…] that a transition to the political process is the most common way in which terrorist groups ended (43 percent).” Furthermore, Hezbollah is

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222 Simon Summer 2010.

223 Salem 2006.

classified in the study as an organization geared toward “regime change.”\textsuperscript{225} One of the conclusions reached in the study was that in the case of organizations with, “[…] minimal goals, such as policy change, governments may be able to reach a negotiated settlement with the group.”\textsuperscript{226}

While changing a government is not nearly as simple as changing policies, it is quite possible that a change in the composition of Lebanon’s government can be sufficient in the eyes of Hezbollah to achieve their goals. Perhaps as Hezbollah plays a larger role in the governance of Lebanon, and is able to impact changes in policy and play a component in the regime, their militant existence will become superfluous. In the context of politics, it is important to note that Hassan Nasrallah as well as others within Hezbollah have made clear that they do not support turning Lebanon into an Islamic country, and do not seek to change the Lebanese “multicultural society.”\textsuperscript{227} Therefore, despite RAND’s categorization of Hezbollah as an organization looking to change the government of Lebanon, they appear to be more concerned with enhancing power within the current government.

If the Lebanese government enhances its ability to provide security and social services to Shia, there is no reason to believe that Hezbollah cannot de-militarize. Therefore, the United States should seek to reinforce Lebanese sovereignty, develop their military and enhance the quality of life of Lebanese Shia to help facilitate this transition from a militarized movement.

\textsuperscript{225} Jones 2008, 160, 142. Data for Hezbollah presented on 160, decoding information available on 142.

\textsuperscript{226} Jones 2008, 42.

\textsuperscript{227} Norton 2007, 158.
If Hezbollah is to be demilitarized in the long-term, the United States must work with the Lebanese government to address the reasons discussed in Chapter Three that fuel Hezbollah’s existence. As was mentioned, one of the two major reasons for its existence is the national security of Lebanon. Beginning in the 1980s, through the 1990s and in 2006, Hezbollah has been the region’s only entity capable of waging a war against Israel. If Hezbollah is to disarm and continue to move toward existing purely as a political entity, the need for a strong non-governmental defense against Israel must be eliminated. While arming the Lebanese government to promote Israeli confidence as discussed earlier is one step toward this goal, a more substantial step must involve ending the occupation.

If the Israeli threat to the Arab World is neutralized through a peace agreement, Hezbollah will be forced to find a new principal objective to work towards and to build appeal on – an objective that will likely take the form of the advancement of Shia in the political realm. Without disarming and without an enemy, Hezbollah would risk ostracizing itself from the Lebanese population and consequently from Lebanese politics. It appears that Hezbollah is principally concerned with its goal of championing the resistance movement against Israel.228 After all, resistance is the concept that the organization was established on in the 1980s. However, as Simon and Stevenson posit, a shift may be underway to focus more on the political realm.229


229 Simon Summer 2010.
Lacking a nationalist connection to Iran and without a vision for an Islamic Lebanon, resistance to Israel remains the only significant theme other than a common religion linking Hezbollah to Iran. Once the Israeli occupation has totally ended, and once it is clear that Israel and Lebanon are on a track toward rapprochement, Hezbollah will have to decisively shift its primary goal from militancy to political involvement if it is going to survive.

*The Implementation of an Arab-Israeli Peace Agreement*

The argument that a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli process is necessary for the disarmament of Hezbollah is not one made solely by this author; Numerous experts on Lebanon have shed light on this reality. Paul Salem argues that:

[i]f Resolution 1701 is successfully implemented - - if the army can secure the south, there are no future Israeli attacks, Shebaa Farms is handed over to UN control, and all captives are returned -- the task of persuading Hezbollah to disarm will be easier, since its raison d’etre as a militia will be compromised.  

Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson also make similar claims. While stopping short of advocating for an Arab-Israeli resolution as a means to disarm Hezbollah, they acknowledge the importance and impact of an agreement. They write:

[o]ne lesson here [the allegations of Syrian SCUD missiles being transferred to Hezbollah] is that absent a larger Israel-Syria peace accord, outright disarmament of Hezbollah – i.e., the destruction or custodial transfer of weapons – is infeasible.

Cathy Sultan also references Hezbollah’s commitment to Lebanese security in this regard, stating, “Hezbollah, certain the territory [the Shebaa Farms] belonged to Lebanon,

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230 Salem 2006.

231 Simon Summer 2010.
maintained that as long as Israel continued to occupy this tiny piece of land, it would not relinquish its arms.”

It is recommended that the U.S. government accept the theory that disarming Hezbollah is incumbent upon fostering peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors, most importantly Syria and Lebanon. This theory should become the underlying assumption behind the U.S. approach to Lebanon and its security regarding Hezbollah. This policy framework could also yield dividends in terms of providing guidance in addressing other threats such as Hamas.

One important first step the United States can take in the direction of chipping away at the Arab-Israeli conflict would be to work toward the implementation of the Seven Point Plan presented in 2006. Among the provisions of the plan is that the international community work:

[…] to place the Shebaa Farms area and the Kfarshouba Hills under UN jurisdiction until border delineation and Lebanese sovereignty over them are fully settled. While in UN custody, the area will be accessible to Lebanese property owners there. Further, Israel surrenders all remaining landmine maps in South Lebanon to the UN.

The idea of ending the occupation of the Shebaa Farms to help facilitate Hezbollah’s giving up its weapons is also proposed by Simon and Stevenson. Other provisions of the plan include the United Nations taking steps to foster more peaceful relations between

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232 Sultan 2008, 86.

233 The Seven Point Plan was brought to the attention of the author through an off-the-record conversation with a diplomat at the United Nations who will remain anonymous.


235 Simon Summer 2010.
Lebanon and Israel. These provisions will also be consistent with the aforementioned defense assistance plan of providing the Lebanese military the means to stabilize the south of the country.\textsuperscript{236}

In addition to providing the United Nations with landmine maps, the United States should also work with the Israeli government to provide maps indicating the locations where cluster bombs were dropped in southern Lebanon. As of 2008, the agricultural areas in the south were plagued by the presence of unexploded cluster bombs. According to Cathy Sultan, “The United Nations estimates that thirty percent of South Lebanon’s cultivatable land was affected by cluster bombs. […] An estimated ninety percent of the local population depends on agriculture.”\textsuperscript{237} As of 2008, the United Nations had not been provided with the locations of these bombs, despite the request of Human Rights Watch.\textsuperscript{238}

A brief aside on U.S. policy toward Israel is necessary. The Israeli-Palestinian peace talks attempted by President Obama were met with half-heartedness by the Netanyahu Administration in Jerusalem. Prime Minister Netanyahu’s government was reluctant to compromise on an issue viewed by the Palestinians, the United States and the international community as critical to progress on peace talks: the discontinuation of building settlements.\textsuperscript{239}

\textsuperscript{236} BBC News 2006.

\textsuperscript{237} Sultan 2008, 66-67. Sultan further elaborates on the difficulties of farmers operating within this environment: “For the farmers whose lands are affected, this spells disaster. Despite the dangers, those who insist on returning to their fields will find the work tedious, picking through green weeds and rocky terrain for tennis ball-sized bomblets that can explode with the slightest touch” (67).

\textsuperscript{238} Sultan 2008, 69.
Given the failure of these talks at the hands of the Israeli government, the Obama Administration is left in a position of leverage to re-launch talks in a direction seen as appropriate by the United States. Without threatening Israel yet without remaining passive to the situation, the United States is in a position to hinge U.S. military assistance to Israel on an Israeli commitment to the Seven Point Plan. This can be done in such a way that the potential reduction in aid levels would not jeopardize Israeli national security, but would show that the United States is serious about resolving the Israeli dispute with Lebanon immediately. This plan must be packaged to Israel in such a way that it is abundantly clear that resolving the Shebaa Farms issue is a necessary first-step in the disarmament of Hezbollah, and thus in the national security interests of Israel. This would involve addressing the geostrategic value that the Israeli government has placed on the Shebaa Farms broadly and southern Lebanon in general, outside of the realm of the Hezbollah threat.

One key Israeli interest in the south of Lebanon pertains to water security, and the Israeli government’s efforts to provide water for its population. Water security is a tremendous issue in Israel; it is believed that an inability to secure access to usable water was an impetus behind the Israeli settler disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005. Israel is struggling to secure access to water, and southern Lebanon has proven to be a prime source of it for the Israelis. The Litani River in Lebanon is perceived by Israel to

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240 Sultan 2008, 78.
be an important future source of water, especially given its low salt levels.\textsuperscript{241} The Shebaa Farms and Hashbani River are other potential sources of water for Israel, and the Israelis have been able to exploit these resources. According to Cathy Sultan, the Director-General of the Litani River Authority has suggested that the Israeli penetration of these water resources has cost Lebanon “over $2 billion.”\textsuperscript{242} Sultan argues that while the Litani River cannot serve as a source of water for both countries simultaneously, the water in the Shebaa Farms area potentially can if a deal between Israel and Lebanon was to be reached.\textsuperscript{243} She also acknowledges the fact that, “[…] Israel’s withdrawal from the Shebaa Farms would strengthen the Siniora government because it could then legitimately call on Hezbollah to disarm.”\textsuperscript{244}

Negotiations over the return of the Shebaa Farms could and should include a discussion on the sharing of the water resources in the area. Israel can benefit from working toward the disarmament of Hezbollah and securing access to Lebanese water through a legally-binding international agreement. This can serve as an important first step toward a broader Arab-Israeli agreement. But by resolving a major Israeli/Lebanese/Syrian dispute over an easily solvable issue in the near-term, the United States can gradually obviate the need for a Shia militia within Lebanon while also chipping away at the anti-Israeli links between Syria and Hezbollah on the one hand, and Iran on the other.

\textsuperscript{241} Sultan 2008, 73-84.

\textsuperscript{242} Sultan 2008, 84-85. Quote on 85.

\textsuperscript{243} Sultan 2008, 88.

\textsuperscript{244} Sultan 2008, 87.
The recent discovery of natural gas in the Mediterranean off the coast of Israel underscores the need for progress to be made for a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon. The field found in 2009 in Israeli waters was the world’s biggest at the time. Oil has also been found in the area. The absence of a formal maritime border between Israel and Lebanon complicates the situation. According to a Christian Science Monitor report, “[i]n the absence of a mutual agreement on the border and division of resources, Israel could follow the ‘right of capture’ rule, which allows a nation to extract oil or gas from its side of the border, even if the reserves stretch into another country’s territory.”245 The situation is further strained by Lebanon’s debt and the possibility of natural resource revenues. It is also complicated by Hezbollah’s defiance to turn to violence against Israel if Lebanese oil and gas resources are exploited by Jerusalem.246

A formal maritime border must be an important component of any initial agreement between Israel and Lebanon. Without it, Hezbollah can argue that its arms are needed to protect Lebanon’s energy interests, and it will become increasingly difficult to get the organization to disarm. Again, the Israeli government must be convinced by the United States that it is in their long-term security interests to formalize the border and to respect it when it comes to resource extraction.

**Economic Development Relations**

The United States can greatly enhance the prospects for Lebanese stability and the protection of U.S. interests through improving its economic development assistance to

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246 Blanford 2010.
Lebanon. A strong assistance program can have multiple positive effects on U.S. security interests. Development can help advance democratization as well as create an environment that is less conducive to the kinds of radicalization sought by Hezbollah. Several works have studied the impact of economic development on democratization. One prominent piece is by Martin Lipset, in which he argues:

> Increased wealth is not only related causally to the development of democracy by changing the social conditions of the workers, but it also affects the political role of the middle class through changing the shape of the stratification structure so that it shifts from an elongated pyramid, with a large lower-class base, to a diamond with a growing middle-class. A large middle class plays a mitigating role in moderating conflict since it is able to reward moderate and democratic parties and penalize extremist groups.\(^{247}\)

A more contemporary work that sheds light on the nexus of economics, democracy and terrorism is offered by Eva Bellin, who explores the relationship between development on the one hand, and the proliferation of democracy and prevention of radicalization on the other. She states:

> Although the cause of Islamic radicalism cannot be reduced to simple economics, it seems plausible to argue that the pervasive unemployment, stagnating living standards, and general hopelessness found in much of the MENA [Middle East and North Africa] region help to fuel its spread. Attacking these problems through economic growth would likely diminish the mass appeal of radical Islamists, unplug key motivations for violence and terror, and foster the political moderation that is essential to viable democracy.\(^{248}\)

Keeping in mind this important role of development in achieving U.S. strategic interests, there are several policy recommendations that can be made.

> Last, a strong U.S. development program could also help to improve the perception of the United States amongst the Lebanese general populace. Ambassador

\(^{247}\) Lipset March, 1959, 83.

\(^{248}\) Bellin 2005, 144.
Hill posits that the perception of the United States in Lebanon could improve by creating
the view that “we [the United States] care about Lebanon” beyond its role in the Arab-
Israeli Peace Process.249

Broader Financial Support for Development from the United States

First, by working with the Lebanese government to facilitate the development of
the economy, particularly in Shia parts of the country, the Lebanese government can
increase its power relative to Hezbollah. If financial capital from the United States
helped support the development of Lebanon, particularly the south, the need for
Hezbollah’s services and aid from Iran will become unnecessary. In this time of onerous
federal budget deficits, the funding for this support does not necessarily have to come
from the purse of the U.S. government. The U.S. Department of State has an opportunity
to build on the support of the numerous Lebanese political organizations that exist within
the United States to pool resources that could be used toward development initiatives.

As Kail Ellis points out, there are at least half a dozen politically-oriented entities
in the United States which broadly seek to advance Lebanese independence.250 One
organization not mentioned by Ellis but significant nonetheless is the Aspen Institute, the
participation of which could be greatly beneficial to a State Department-led development
initiative, particularly given the work of its U.S.-Lebanon Dialogue Program. According
to the dialogue’s website:

[t]he U.S.-Lebanon Dialogue Program encourages productive U.S.-Lebanon
relations, promotes discussion on Lebanon in Washington, and supports initiatives

249 Hill 2010.

250 Ellis 2002, 102-103.
that strengthen Lebanese independence and sovereignty. [...] [T]he Program also supports initiatives that advance Lebanese political reform, economic development, and social progress.\textsuperscript{251}

The institute is involved in a regional development financing program similar to the one advocated in this thesis. The Aspen Institute’s Middle East Investment Initiative is \textquote{[…] a public-private partnership of the Aspen Institute, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the Palestinian Investment Fund.\textsuperscript{252}} This partnership provides financing in the form of \textquote{[…] a $228 million loan guarantee program for small and medium-sized businesses in the Palestinian Territories.\textsuperscript{253}} The goal of this development program is to promote employment opportunities in the territories and to help facilitate home ownership.\textsuperscript{254}

In addition to the development initiatives already underway by the United States in Lebanon, the State Department can work closely with these organizations in developing a fund that can aid new initiatives. The State Department is no stranger to spearheading such funds in the Middle East. One initiative that promoted democratization in the region was the Middle East Democracy Fund, which used grants to help support democratic initiatives through USAID.\textsuperscript{255}


\textsuperscript{253} The Aspen Institute 2009, "Middle East Investment Initiative."

\textsuperscript{254} The Aspen Institute 2009, "Middle East Investment Initiative."

The strength of the organizational capabilities of the Department of State, the presence of organizations such as the Aspen Institute, the robust Lebanese civil society in the United States and the large U.S. donor base creates an environment conducive to launching such a development initiative. The State Department can work closely with the Lebanese government to identify specific communities and initiatives that could create jobs and enhance the quality of life for those in poorer areas in Lebanon. As the aforementioned divide between Lebanese nationalism and Iran’s agenda of using Hezbollah to advance its own interests becomes greater and tenser, capital flows from the United States in support of development initiatives could ensure that Iran does not capitalize on a lack of Western assistance to Lebanon.

To strengthen the developmental and security potential of this program, it is recommended that two conditions be placed on this assistance. First, it should be required that the Lebanese government make a larger commitment toward privatizing major industries. Lebanon has been plagued by an economic and legal environment in which doing business, particularly securing investment, has been difficult. The Lebanese government however has already taken major steps to combat the difficulties associated with starting new businesses in the country. Data from Figure 1 (figures located in appendix A) indicates that from 2007 to 2010, the government cut the number of days needed to launch a business from 46 to only nine. This time period ranks well relative to nearby Israel, Syria and Jordan, where time periods for 2010 were 34, 13 and 13 days, respectively. As Figure 2 shows, the number of steps necessary to launch a business in 2010 was lower in Lebanon than in Syria, Jordan or Turkey. Lebanon is tied

256 Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook [Lebanon]*.
with Israel in this category, and has seen a slight decline in the number of steps since 2007.

While launching a business has become easier in Lebanon, it is more difficult to sustain business operations in the country. In Figure 3, data from the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index shows that government policies in Lebanon make it more difficult to do business there relative to Israel, Jordan and Turkey (far more difficult in the cases of Israel and Turkey). U.S. assistance through the proposed support fund should be incumbent upon the Lebanese government taking steps to improve its position on the Ease of Doing Business Index by altering policies that may hinder the ability of firms to conduct business.

A second condition of this assistance should be requirements for the Lebanese government to take larger steps toward privatizing critical industries. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has shed light on the importance of privatization in Lebanon in a 2010 report. The IMF states that privatization, particularly in the telecommunications and commercial aviation industries, could have several beneficial effects on the broader economy. With regards to the former, they posit that, “[t]elecom privatization could enhance the economy’s growth potential while helping to reduce the public debt.”257 In terms of aviation, the report states that privatizing the Lebanese airline MEA could be to the financial benefit of the central bank.258


258 International Monetary Fund n.d., 17.
Privatization can serve not only to increase efficiencies in the delivery of essential services, but it could also save the Lebanese government money in the process. By reducing the government’s financial obligations to telecommunications and aviation, the government will be in a better position to invest capital and other resources in development initiatives. One strategy that could perhaps be pushed by the United States in promoting privatization in Lebanon could be the use of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). The aforementioned IMF report discusses how these partnerships could be used as a middle-ground initiative between the private sector providing services and the government administration of services. Such a strategy could yield positive effects such as, “[…] the potential for higher quality services at lower costs.”

Lebanon’s government is working toward PPP programs according to the IMF, but the United States can strive to make sure that such programs are eventually executed.

By promoting the growth of the private sector, fostering job growth, expanding access to important services and developing critical areas of the Lebanese economy, the United States can help ensure that a social environment emerges in Lebanon that is not conducive to the kinds of inequality that Hezbollah has taken advantage of in the past. There is also reason to believe that the political uncertainty that currently exists in Lebanon could be an impetus to a restructuring of the Lebanese economy. Eva Bellin posits, “[…] that a dual context of crisis and hope constitutes the best condition for reform readiness.”

Given this, the time would seem ripe for a firm U.S. commitment

259 International Monetary Fund n.d., 16.
260 International Monetary Fund n.d., 15.
to helping the Lebanese government in restructuring and developing the Lebanese economy.

Trade and Security

The positive effects of economic development on advancing democratization and promoting a more peaceful Lebanese society can also be realized by building trade relations between Lebanon and the rest of the world, particularly with its immediate neighbors. These agreements, namely any one including Syria or Israel, should include provisions that would help ensure that international law be upheld by all parties, so as to link economic prosperity with security. In the realm of trade, the United States currently has opportunities to engage the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the small regional bloc that has come together to form a local free trade area.

The impact that trade can have on international relations and security is explored by Dale Copeland. Copeland’s theory is that economic interdependence through trade is not sufficient to prevent states from fighting. The essential component to interdependence yielding peaceful ends is the anticipation in the countries trading that trade volume will remain strong.262 By promoting free trade relations between Lebanon, Syria and possibly Israel in the long-term, the United States can foster an economic interdependence that makes the incidence of war or conflict between them unlikely.

261 Bellin 2005, 146.

With regards to WTO membership, the Lebanese government has been working for 12 years to become a member of the body. While a “Working Party” was created twelve years ago, the WTO website suggests that there have been no developments regarding Lebanon’s membership process since the party met in the fall of 2009. The State Department currently looks favorably upon Lebanese membership to the WTO, but steps should be taken so that this goal is followed through with in the near-term and not abandoned as members of Congress have already threatened to abandon support to Lebanon.

The impact that promoting trade liberalization in the Middle East can have on the relations of the region is highlighted by trade expert Mike Pullen in a June 2009 Al Jazeera article. Pullen proposes that the model of “economic development and regional integration” that prevailed in Europe following World War II could also be the key to more harmonious relations in the Middle East. By pursuing the development support initiatives mentioned earlier in this chapter, namely privatization, the United States can ensure that Lebanon is coming closer to meeting the requirements of becoming a member of the WTO. According to Chapter Five of the Handbook on Accession to the WTO, privatization of industry is a process that factors quite significantly into the membership


selection process. Therefore, the conditions to the previously mentioned development financing program would go hand-in-hand in helping to also achieve Lebanese membership to the WTO.

Aside from the WTO negotiations, Lebanon will soon be party to a free trade agreement with Turkey, Syria and Jordan. While it is unclear how much progress has been made on the agreements with Jordan and Syria, Lebanon entered its agreement with Turkey in November 2010. The progress being made toward a free trade agreement between Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan provides a prime opportunity for the United States to advance its interests of developing the Lebanese economy, fostering normalized Lebanese-Syrian relations and encouraging the proliferation of free trade. There is also an opportunity for the United States to engage Lebanon, Turkey, Syria and Jordan to assure that trade taking place under this agreement is in conformance with UNSC Resolution 1701.

The United States can engage the governments of those involved in the agreement(s) to have UNSC Resolution 1701 compliance measures incorporated into the agreement. For example, if weapons shipments were found to be taking place between Syria and Lebanon, the matter could immediately be taken up by the WTO, and protectionist measures can be taken by the Lebanese government against Syria. The


267 BBC News 2010, “Turkey Agrees to Plans for Arab 'Free Trade Zone'.”

current trade relationship between Syria and Lebanon is substantial. Lebanon is Syria’s second-largest export market – a destination for over 12% of Syria’s exports. By giving the Lebanese government the power to impose import restrictions, tariffs or quotas against Syrian imports in the event that violations of Resolution 1701 are discovered, the Syrian government may be deterred from allowing illegal weapons transactions to Hezbollah.

The United States should work to engage the Lebanese government and the governments of European states with close relations to Lebanon to push for trade liberalization and Lebanese inclusion in trade schemes. A long-term trade liberalization goal of the United States can be to eventually establish a trade agreement between Lebanon and Israel.

Conclusion

The political, military and economic policies prescribed in this chapter have been offered in response to a thorough analysis of the shortcomings of the current U.S. policy and the threats that the United States will continue to face in Lebanon in the future. While the current policy is plagued by contradictions, special care has been given to make recommendations that are not only compatible with one another, but also complement each other. Consistent themes of multilateralism, economic liberalism, and consolidating Lebanese state military power are present throughout.

Implementing these recommendations would not involve a significant deviation from the course of the current U.S. policy. Rhetorically, the United States has expressed its support for promoting democracy in Lebanon, increasing Lebanese military power,
developing the economy and facilitating a peace agreement. These recommendations are offered as the most effective ways of achieving those ends.
Chapter Six – Conclusions and Final Thoughts

Wilsonianism has been at play in U.S. relations with Lebanon since the era of the missionaries. In the 19th century, these relations were about the proliferation of religious ideals. Today, relations are focused on the spreading of democratic principles. Containment, first of the Soviet Union and now of Iran, has also loomed large in this policy. However, the record since 2006 shows that the current U.S. policy suffers from shortcomings and contradictions. While limited progress has been made in promoting democratization, all other policy goals have experienced shortcomings. This reality merits a reevaluation of the policy.

The Costs of Maintaining the Status-Quo

The worldview that democracies are the ideal system of government has been embraced in the Wilsonian paradigm of foreign policy making in the United States. Its evidence can be seen in fostering the birth of democratic governments after World War II, maintaining close relations with the Western European democratic states during the Cold War,270 and in promoting democratization in the Middle East under the neoconservative tenets of the George W. Bush Administration.271

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270 Mead 2002, 164-165.

Promoting democratization is certainly not a troublesome policy if it is exercised consistently. The central problem that this thesis has identified is that the current policy toward supporting Lebanese democracy has been inconsistent. While the United States has offered support to reinforce Lebanon’s democratic institutions in the past, there is currently the possibility that this support could be terminated, as has been threatened, if Hezbollah continues to play a role in the government. By making such demands, policymakers in the United States are placing a condition on the Lebanese democracy – an expectation that it will conform to an American vision of what that democracy should look like. Furthermore, a significant portion of the Lebanese population would be ostracized politically if Hezbollah were to be kept out of government, thus detracting from the government’s democratic character.

A second risk of maintaining the status-quo relates to Iran’s power. Many of the threats that exist to the United States and its interests in the Middle East emanate from Iran. Concerns exist of how this government could use its potential future nuclear arsenal toward a number of ends, including jeopardizing oil flows and maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz and inflicting violence on Israel through Hamas or Hezbollah. However, the American response to these threats has yielded a self-fulfilling prophecy that has resulted in the United States being unable to make progress on the relationship with Iran and in advancing “interests in common” with Iran. So long as tensions

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273 Takeyh 2006, 102. Takeyh states: “[s]uch popular disdain for the Islamic Republic has hampered prospects for rapprochement and has restricted the diplomatic moves of any U.S. administration seeking to engage Iran. The irony is that in the intervening quarter-century, the two powers would often have interests in common, but the emotional barrier to dealing with the other would preclude meaningful cooperation.”
remain between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, it will almost assuredly have implications in Lebanon as Iran continues to project its power in Lebanon and against Israel through Hezbollah.

If relations between the United States and Iran are to remain tense, then the United States must ensure that Lebanese militancy is eliminated as a policy option for the Iranian leadership. A more prudent policy goal of the United States would be to seek a rapprochement with the Islamic state.\textsuperscript{274} It is well acknowledged though by this author that many of the policies of the Iranian government may make rapprochement politically infeasible at the moment. Therefore, eliminating Hezbollah’s militia is the only sure way to ensure that these tensions do not have implications on U.S. interests in Lebanon and Israel. The current policy toward Lebanon has proven incapable of containing Iran thus far. Thus, the recommendations of Chapter Five should be explored by policymakers.

**The Challenges for the United States**

The coming months will certainly be challenging for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East as policymakers react to regional trends toward governmental change. In this context, the United States is being forced to adapt to the reality of having to support democratization in the Middle East, even if that does not necessarily translate into a pro-American or pro-Western regime. U.S. policymakers must realize that democracy will not always yield a regime that shares the same perspective and interests as Washington. Specifically, members of the administration and the Congress must accept that Hezbollah’s involvement in the Lebanese government is a part of that country’s

\textsuperscript{274} Takeyh 2006, 102, 217-226. In his concluding chapter, Takeyh advocates a U.S.-Iranian relationship based on “selective engagement.” (226) On page 102, Takeyh mentions rapprochement specifically in discussing the factors that have prevented it thus far.
democracy, and that taking measures against the country as a result of that would be counterproductive to U.S. interests.

The recent developments in Syria may very well complicate U.S. efforts to facilitate some of the peace-building measures advocated in this paper in the immediate short-term. However, that does not mean that the United States is incapable at the moment of capitalizing on the situation to protect its interests in Lebanon. Simon and Stevenson highlight one current trend:

[w]hatever Assad’s current disposition, Syria remains regionally weaker, and that fact may well have changed the Hezbollah leadership’s calculations about Hezbollah’s political legitimacy versus the retention of arms and posture of anti-Israeli resistance. [...] Given it’s now-established political legitimacy in Lebanon and Syria’s attenuated influence there, Hezbollah has sufficient political freedom to embark on a slow path to disarmament.275

It would be a wasted opportunity if the United States continues to try to impede Hezbollah’s politicization and the likelihood of Hezbollah progressing toward disarming.276

Lebanon is unique in that it is one of the few governments in the Middle East to be built on democratic principles. The United States has made efforts, particularly since 2006, to sustain that democracy. However, unless the quality of life is increased in Lebanon – particularly for the Shia – unless all the people of Lebanon have a fair voice in the country’s government and unless the security situation concerning foreign involvement and the relationship with Israel improves, popular unrest could yet again

275 Simon Summer 2010.

276 Simon Summer 2010. Simon and Stevenson advocate in this piece that the United States take advantage of the moment by engaging Hezbollah with the goal of getting them to give up their weapons. While my argument is not necessarily to engage Hezbollah directly, I believe that the United States should not actively seek to impede their participation in the Lebanese political process.
become a reality. Such unrest is not new to Lebanon, and has been seen in the streets of many Arab capitals in recent months. Hezbollah would almost certainly capitalize off such disenchantment, as they have in the past, and maximize their power-base. With an inconsistent and contradictory Lebanon policy and an immobile peace process, the United States is ill-equipped at the present to prevent such an outcome. The United States cannot risk pursuing inconsistent and inadequate policies in Lebanon any longer.
Bibliography


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Appendices

Appendix A - Figures

Data from all graphs obtained from the online database of the World Bank. All graphs were created by the author. The numerical data for Figures 1-3 can be found in Figure 4.

From: The World Bank, Data | The World Bank, http://data.worldbank.org/ (accessed April 23, 2011). According to The World Bank: “Time required to start a business is the number of calendar days needed to complete the procedures to legally operate a business. If a procedure can be speeded up at additional cost, the fastest procedure, independent of cost, is chosen.”
According to The World Bank:

“Start-up procedures are those required to start a business, including interactions to obtain necessary permits and licenses and to complete all inscriptions, verifications, and notifications to start operations. Data are for businesses with specific characteristics of ownership, size, and type of production.”
From: The World Bank, n.d. According to The World Bank: “Ease of doing business index ranks economies from 1 to 183, with first place being the best. A high ranking means that the regulatory environment is conducive to business operation. The index ranks the simple average of the country’s percentile rankings on 10 topics covered in the World Bank’s Doing Business. The ranking on each topic is the simple average of the percentile rankings on its component indicators.”

Figure 4 - Data from The World Bank Used in Figures 1-3
"Time required to start a business (days)"

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"Ease of doing business index (1=Most business-friendly regulations)"

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Appendix B - Maps

Figure 5 - Kurdish Areas in Iraq and Their Proximity to Syria

Figure 6 - Map of Lebanon