

## Chapter 10

# ***The Battle for Lebanon: Lebanon and Syria in the Wake of the War***

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### **Introduction**

Immediately with the announcement of the ceasefire and the end of the fighting between Israel and the Hizbollah organization, both sides – as well as those who had observed from the sidelines – hurried to claim victory. Hizbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah declared that Hizbollah's victory in the war was an historic event, and possibly an historic turning point in the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>1</sup> Syrian president Bashar Asad, who had not involved his country directly in the war yet did not disguise his support of Hizbollah or conceal the fact that he provided the organization with arms and other means of warfare during the fighting, quickly assumed a victory over Israel for himself and for Syria.<sup>2</sup> The Lebanese government, led by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, also declared a victory for Lebanon and all Lebanese, and not just for Hizbollah.<sup>3</sup> On the other side of the divide, victory was announced by Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, and the claim was echoed enthusiastically by Israel's ally, US president George Bush.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that those who rushed to revel in their ostensible victories chose to ignore both the golden rule of politics and the course of Lebanese history over the last thousand years, according to which all the struggles and even wars that have occurred in the region – and more recently, in the state itself – have ended with all those involved losing out. Put otherwise, as the Lebanese saying has it, “wars in Lebanon end without victors and

without vanquished,” meaning that all sides are completely exhausted and admit that the war did not reap any gains for any of them. At best, each side can console itself with the knowledge that at least the other side did not achieve its objective. This situation is of course an inevitable result of the reality of life in Lebanon, a multi-ethnic state characterized by division and conflict on a religious and communal basis and even more so, on a family basis. It is a state in which no ethnic group and certainly no outside force intervening in the country’s affairs has the ability to achieve any real victory.<sup>5</sup> The only party that was capable of recognizing this fact was Hassan Nasrallah himself, who admitted in an interview shortly after the end of the hostilities and after declaring himself the victor that he would not have issued an order to kidnap the Israeli soldiers had he known it would lead to all-out war with Israel.<sup>6</sup>

However, as more time elapses since the end of the war and the dust of battle settles, the outcome of the war is becoming clearer, as is the state of reality in post-war Lebanon. It appears that Hizbollah was hit hard during the war, but the organization was not broken or overcome, at least militarily. Thus, the damage it sustained required the organization to invest great effort in rehabilitating its military infrastructure, and its organizational and civilian infrastructures even more so. This meant it had to maintain quiet along the border with Israel and within Lebanon itself; this did not mean the organization was about to undergo a real change, and certainly not a strategic change in its policy or in any aspects of its long term objectives. For its part, the Lebanese government came out of the war strengthened and sought to impose its sovereignty over the entire country and become an effective force, including vis-à-vis Hizbollah. Nonetheless, no achievement of the Lebanese government and the forces behind it is sufficient to change the reality in Lebanon. At the end of the day, the fundamental problem that Lebanon faces is not Israel, and not even the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hizbollah. The fundamental problem is the ethnic dynamic in the country, or more precisely, the challenge and the threat presented today by the Shiite community – which is both the largest communal group in Lebanon and accounts for nearly 40 percent of the population, if not more – to members of the country’s other communal groups.<sup>7</sup> These groups, the Maronites, Sunnis, and Druze, actually joined forces in order to block the Shiite community and Hizbollah, its public representative. The so-

called Cedar Revolution, which took place in Lebanon in the spring of 2005 and led to the establishment of the current Lebanese government, can be seen as an attempt of the members of these communities to maintain the socioeconomic and political status quo that existed in Lebanon for many years and that, *inter alia*, marginalized the Shiites.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the danger presented by Hizbollah is great, even after the war, particularly because it is the authentic representative of many Shiites who feel that the Lebanese political establishment systematically discriminates against the Shiites or at the very least does not grant them key positions and resources in proportion to their percentage of the population.

In this regard, "the struggle over Lebanon," namely, over the country's future and over control of the country, did not end with the ceasefire between Israel and Hizbollah, but in fact only started. In this battle the main players are supporters of the status quo in Lebanon, backed by the West, who are pitted against Hizbollah supporters, who enjoy Syrian and Iranian support. Hizbollah is conducting the battle through political means, based on the increasing demographic weight of the Shiite community in Lebanon. However, one day this group is likely to employ aggressive measures to promote its standing and its long term objectives in Lebanon.

With regard to Syria, Bashar Asad appears to believe that Hizbollah emerged the victor at the end of the hostilities in Lebanon. He hoped, therefore, to use this victory to enhance his standing both on the domestic and international stages. One may assume that Bashar is looking to resume a leading role in Lebanon, to play a regional and even international role, and ultimately to advance a political process and possibly a dialogue with Israel, but from a position of strength and power. However, in the months since the end of the war, Asad has seen that his hopes are not easily realized. He has remained outside the Lebanese arena, and is rejected by most of the international community and by most of the Arab world, including his former allies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. All he has left is the Iranian embrace, which for Syria may turn out to be a bear hug. The attempted terror attack on the American embassy in Damascus in mid-September 2006 was a reminder for Bashar of his domestic problems and more so of the fragile standing of his regime,<sup>9</sup> a challenge he will struggle to confront by flaunting the ostensible achievements and victories of Hizbollah in Lebanon.

## **From the Cedar Revolution to the Second Lebanon War**

The 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon was a kind of nightmare come true for many Lebanese, a bad scenario they had dreaded and warned of in recent years. It was feared that at the end of the day, the war might return the country to the days of the bloody civil war waged between 1975 and 1989, after which Lebanon arose phoenix-like out of the ruins. In 1989 the Ta'if agreement was signed in Saudi Arabia and both ended the war and launched a long process of rehabilitation and rebuilding of the Lebanese state.<sup>10</sup> Ironically, the war between Israel and Hizbollah broke out just when it appeared that rehabilitation was proceeding well, and that Lebanon was standing more firmly on its own two feet than ever before. This was dramatized by the Cedar Revolution in Beirut in the spring of 2005, which was perceived as the climax of the rehabilitation and rebuilding underway in Lebanon since the end of the civil war, and possibly a dramatic historic turning point in the country's annals.

The Cedar Revolution was a response to the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri on the morning of February 14, 2005 in the heart of Beirut. Hariri's death stunned the Lebanese people. After all, more than any other Lebanese politician Hariri had been identified with the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the second Lebanese republic, the Ta'if republic.<sup>11</sup> Many inside and outside Lebanon had no doubt that behind the Hariri assassination lurked the Syrian regime, led by President Bashar Asad, and the Syrian-allied Lebanese government, led by President Emile Lahoud. There was an outcry for Syria to withdraw from Lebanon, and for Lahoud, along with his supporters and Syrian loyalists holding key positions in the Lebanese government, to resign. Syria was hard pressed to withstand the mounting pressure in Lebanon for it to leave the country, particularly since this pressure was backed by the international community, led by the United States and France. On March 5, 2005, the Syrian president duly announced the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanese soil. Thus, Syrian intervention in Lebanon – involvement that began in the 1970s and peaked in the 1990s, when Damascus essentially ran the country – came to an end, at least for the time being.<sup>12</sup>

The withdrawal and possibly the expulsion of the Syrians from Lebanon did not end the stormy events in the spring of 2005, and they were followed

by a no less dramatic political turnaround. In the parliamentary elections of May-June 2005, about a month after the withdrawal of the Syrian forces, the opposition to the political leadership gained a sweeping victory. The opposition was led by Rafiq al-Hariri's son, Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri, who was joined by Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and several leading figures from the Christian Maronite camp. Following the elections a new Lebanese government was established, led by Fouad Siniora, who is close to the younger Hariri. The new government adopted a pro-Western, anti-Syrian stance.<sup>13</sup>

The turnaround in Lebanon at the beginning of 2005 was the cumulative result of three factors: first, Syria's weakness, i.e., the weakness of its young and inexperienced president Bashar Asad, obvious to everyone inside and outside Syria; second, frustration and anger in Lebanon directed towards Syria, which escalated after the Hariri assassination; and finally and most importantly, shared American-French interest in settling an account with Syria and forcing it to end its involvement in Lebanon. The combination of all these factors turned out to be critical, as each in and of itself was not enough to bring about the dramatic events that took place in the first months of 2005. However, more than anything, this revolution reflected the emergence of a wide public consensus in Lebanon looking to rehabilitate the country and return it to the path it had pursued prior to the outbreak of civil war in 1975.

The joy in Lebanon was short lived. Even before the eruption of the confrontation between Israel and Hizbollah in the summer 2006, the supporters of the Cedar Revolution realized that the reality in Lebanon remained as complex as before.

First, the elections to the Lebanese parliament in May-June 2005 yielded gains for the Hizbollah organization, as well as for other forces with an anti-Western outlook that were looking for opposite results to those sought by Sa'ad al-Din al-Hariri, Jumblatt, and their Cedar Revolution allies. These forces had public presence, standing, and political weight on the Lebanese street in general or, in the case of Hizbollah, on the Shiite street. Hizbollah's strengthened standing within the Shiite community in Lebanon has allowed it in recent years to advance the "Islamic Lebanon" option, i.e., turning Lebanon into an Islamic republic, even through democratic elections. This would be achieved by virtue of the demographic reality

in today's Lebanon, given that the Shiites account for almost half of the country's population.<sup>14</sup>

Second, the political forces behind the Cedar Revolution were far from a homogenous group and could certainly not be perceived as an actual "reformist camp." These forces essentially coalesced to preserve the basic principles of the Lebanese political system, even if in a new framework or under new auspices – Washington instead of Damascus. These are representatives of respected families, members of all communities that had overseen political, social, and financial aspects of life in Lebanon since the country was established, and even before. They had come to the end of their tether with the Syrians but were still interested in preserving their status and, most important, their privileges.

## **Lebanon after the War**

The structural weakness of Lebanon, even after the Cedar Revolution, came to the fore in July 2006 when the clash between Hizbollah and Israel erupted in the wake of the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by the organization's fighters. The destruction and ruin that the fighting brought on Lebanon, and particularly, the communal, social, and political tensions that emerged during and after the war, revived doubts as to Lebanon's ability to become a stable and strong country with a democratic open system and a successful and prosperous economy. The results of the war inflicted heavy damage on the Lebanese economy, estimated at tens of billions of dollars, and according to Lebanese prime minister Fouad Siniora, the war set back the country's economy almost fifteen years.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, Lebanon noted some gains from the war. First, Lebanese were encouraged by the cohesion displayed by many elements of society – Maronites, Sunnis, Druze, and even Shiites – and their desire to maintain coexistence at all costs, regardless of their differences of opinion and the tensions that came to the fore. Thus, the atmosphere in Lebanon during and after the war was not one of impending civil war, and there was no sense of a drive to dissolve the Lebanese state. On the contrary, there was a will to preserve and strengthen it. Second, one cannot ignore the fact that the Lebanese government came out of the war with an improved status thanks to the intelligent management of Prime Minister Siniora, who

was unquestionably one of the war's few winners. His tearful appearance at the meeting of Arab foreign ministers, during which he vehemently rejected accusations – particularly from Syria – that Lebanon had turned its back on the Arab world<sup>16</sup> brought him support and recognition from many inside and outside Lebanon. His reinforcement constituted a bolstering of the Cedar Revolution coalition, notwithstanding its structural and intrinsic weakness. Third, Syria did not succeed, either during or after the war, in resuming its leadership position in the domestic Lebanese arena. The settlement that brought the hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah to an end was formulated without its input and earned wide international support, which has deterred Syria from attempting to puncture it. Fourth, the international community reaffirmed its commitment and even its willingness to help the Lebanese government enforce its sovereignty over the country. This international support, which appeared to decline in recent years, comprised an important addition to the determination shown by the Lebanese government to face up to its challenges, both inside and outside the country.

### **Hizbollah and the Lebanese Shiites: The Balance Sheet**

At the end of the day, a primary factor in the Lebanese equation was and remains the Hizbollah organization. True, Hizbollah was not overcome and its military strength was not broken, as many in Israel had hoped at the beginning of the war, but there is no doubt that the organization sustained serious damage and will take a long time to rehabilitate itself.

In Israel, Nasrallah is largely perceived through a narrow prism as the leader of a terrorist militia with several thousand fighters and with over 15,000 rockets. Those who look at Nasrallah through that narrow prism would probably conclude that as Nasrallah continued firing rockets into Israel until the last day of the fighting, he can be seen as the victor in the confrontation.

However, Nasrallah is not only the leader of an armed militia. He himself does not see his organization as such, and in fact, since being appointed leader of the organization in 1992 he has dedicated his efforts towards turning his organization into something else entirely. As of July 11, 2006, Nasrallah was the leader of a political and social party with deep roots in

the Lebanese Shiite community. The party had fourteen representatives in the parliament, over 4,000 representatives in local councils in the country's Shiite villages and towns, an education system with dozens of schools with around 100,000 students, a health system with dozens of hospitals and clinics caring for half a million people a year, a banking system, marketing chains, and even pension funds and insurance companies.<sup>17</sup> Nasrallah devoted much of his energies in the last decade to building up this party, or empire, as it were. He viewed the creation of such an empire as his life's work, which would take him far, possibly even to a contest over the control of Lebanon.

These Hizbollah achievements in recent years, which apparently accumulated with increasing scope and intensity since Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000, gave the organization and its leader the confidence they needed to embark on a battle for Lebanon. This was a struggle designed to change the reality in Lebanon and enable the organization to assume control of the country via democratic elections or cross-ethnic consent based primarily on changing the political order in Lebanon in favor of the Shiite community. After all, members of the Shiite community, most of whom support Hizbollah, comprise close to half the Lebanese population, although they make up only one quarter of the parliament – the result of the communal political system in Lebanon. It is no surprise that in recent years, Hassan Nasrallah has frequently called for democratic elections to be held in Lebanon, which he hoped would give him and his organization political power in Lebanon. Alternatively, he asked for a change in the status quo between the ethnic groups in the country, including through dialogue and agreement.<sup>18</sup>

Israel damaged Nasrallah's efforts badly, and only those who have witnessed the destruction and ruin in Lebanon can comprehend just how severely the war affected the Shiites in general and Hizbollah and its leader in particular. One out of every two Shiites living in Lebanon became a refugee during the war, and most of the Shiite community returned to their homes in villages in southern Lebanon or the Shiite quarters of south Beirut to find they had lost their homes and their possessions.<sup>19</sup>

In essence, these Shiites have no choice but to gather around Hassan Nasrallah's flag. There is no one else in Lebanon who cares about them, not the UN or the international community, and not even the Lebanese



government whose leaders are focused on the interests of the Sunni, Maronite, and Druze communities, which barely suffered in the war. This is the nature and character of the Lebanese system in which each community cares for itself and is apathetic and uncaring towards the other sectors. As such, the members of the Shiite community continue to support Nasrallah. However, the damage inflicted on the Shiites clearly reduced Nasrallah's room for maneuver, as evidenced by his admission at the beginning of September, which undoubtedly was aimed at his supporters, that he did not correctly anticipate Israel's response to the kidnapping.<sup>20</sup>

Hassan Nasrallah, therefore, needs time and mostly a period of quiet to rehabilitate his life's project and repair his organization's civilian infrastructure. The fact that he is still entrenched in a bunker or in a hideout apartment and is in fear of his life severely hampers him and makes it difficult for him to resume his operations and restore his organization's status in Lebanon. At the end of the day, his public appearances were like oxygen for him. Now that oxygen pipeline has been cut off because of Israel's threat that it will harm him if he leaves his hiding place. As a result, Nasrallah himself declared repeatedly that he was seeking quiet and would strictly honor the ceasefire.<sup>21</sup>

But Nasrallah, or more precisely the Shiites in Lebanon, are not going anywhere. Hizbollah will continue to occupy the region to the north of the Israeli border, and even if it maintains a low profile in the near future it will aim to rebuild its strength, rehabilitate its force, and return to its position of July 11, 2006. Moreover, within a few years the Shiite community will become the clear majority in Lebanon and then the Shiites will demand their due – a fairer division of power, and possibly even control.

Precisely because the Shiites will become the largest community in Lebanon within a few years, the power struggle between Hizbollah and the Amal movement for control of the sector is of the utmost importance. Surveys conducted in Lebanon shortly after the end of the war indicate extensive support of up to 65-70 percent among Shiites for Hizbollah under Nasrallah's leadership. However, these surveys also show that the hard core of the organization's supporters comprises no more than 25-30 percent of the community.<sup>22</sup> This means that most of the members of the Shiite community are not necessarily in Nasrallah's pocket, and they might well transfer their allegiance from Hizbollah to Amal if the latter offers

them the same hope for the future that Hizbollah currently embodies. The Amal movement is a secular movement that believes in the integration of the Shiites in Lebanese life, while Hizbollah represents a radical outlook imported to Lebanon from Iran. Though the economic aid that Iran provided Hizbollah allowed the organization to become a leading force within the Lebanese Shiite community, this does not mean that an internal Shiite conflict between Amal and Hizbollah for the soul of the Shiite community has been averted.

This will probably constitute the principal challenge facing Lebanon and Lebanese society. In other words, the way in which Lebanon – the country, society, and the various communities – approaches the Shiite community, whether it supports the community and integrates it more fully in the Lebanese system, will determine the direction the community takes. The question remains if the Shiites will continue to adhere to coexistence with the other ethnic groups, or whether they pursue an aggressive and even violent struggle in order to achieve a decisive, controlling position.

### **Syria under Bashar's Leadership: Between War and Peace**

Another question that has emerged in the wake of the war is where Syria is heading. Indeed, while during the war many in the Arab world did not hesitate to express their reservations over the Hizbollah organization, Bashar Asad was quick to align himself with the organization's interests, considerations, and policies, and even its political and strategic inclination, which is identical to that of Iran.

Immediately after the war Bashar Asad announced that he viewed the result of the hostilities as an important and even an historic victory for the organization. Moreover, he did not conceal his view that Syria should consider adopting Hizbollah's strategy of terror and guerilla warfare against Israel, which eventually forced it to withdraw unilaterally from southern Lebanon in May 2000. On a number of occasions Bashar even remarked that he was under increasing pressure from the Syrian public to desist from the "sit back and do nothing" policy that Syria adopted with regard to Israel on the Golan Heights front over the last decades, and to heat up the front.<sup>23</sup> Bashar apparently believes that just as Hizbollah's rocket array deterred Israel for several years from taking action against Hizbollah and

then inflicted serious damage when the war erupted – and in effect led to Israel's failure in the war – a Syrian rocket array would also deter Israel from attacking Syria should Damascus decide to act against Israel on the Golan Heights front. In a series of speeches and interviews Bashar Asad thus held a gun of sorts to Israel's head and attempted to put it in a position of no choice – to renew the peace process with Syria and sign a peace treaty that includes an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights up to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, or alternatively to risk opening a new front on the Golan Heights, along the lines of the Israel-Hizbollah dynamic in Lebanon.

It is noteworthy that Nasrallah, who in the past has often demonstrated far greater political intelligence than Bashar, preferred to remain in hiding and even instructed his men to honor the ceasefire with Israel in southern Lebanon. In contrast, Bashar, who unlike Nasrallah did not experience the full weight of Israel's might, was quick to deliver victory addresses and even threatened Israel with an attack if it did not accept Syria's new proposal to enter a peace process based on its terms, if not outright dictates.

Bashar's threats, which began soon after the war and which seemed like a function of his perception of the war, should be taken seriously. At the same time, Syria is not only part of the problem on Israel's northern border, but is also part of the solution. Even in his most fiery speeches Bashar repeatedly noted that Syria, in contrast to Hizbollah and Iran, was interested in renewing the political process in the region and that Syria's ultimate objective was not the destruction of Israel but a peace treaty with it. As Bashar has taken pains to point out, it would be preferable for the Golan Heights to be given back in peace, as the adversaries engaged in war pay a heavy price that would be best to avoid, if possible.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, in the attack on the American embassy in Damascus in mid-September 2006 carried out by supporters of al-Qaeda, Bashar once again witnessed the fragility of his regime. At the end of the day, these Muslims extremists view Bashar and his regime as an enemy that must be fought.<sup>25</sup> Most of the Syrian population belongs to the Sunni community, home to these extremists, who in the name of religion seek to fight against the secular Alawi regime (as well as against Shiites). Bashar's problem, therefore, is not only the US and Israel but also the domestic reality inside Syria. At the same, there is nothing new in Asad's peace rhetoric: since he rose to power

he has taken almost every opportunity to declare that peace is the preferred option, as long as Syria's conditions were met. In this regard, it appears that the war did not change Bashar's basic approach to the Israeli-Arab conflict, an approach inspired by the heritage of his late father, Hafez Asad, who pursued the peace process with Israel in the early nineties.

Either way, Bashar's predicament, but especially his peace protestations, convinced no one in Jerusalem on the need to open peace negotiations with him, partly because these declarations were accompanied by deeds diametrically opposed to the rhetoric itself – providing advanced weapons to Hizbollah during the war in Lebanon and enhancing its strategic pact with Iran. Even the US, the object of some of Bashar's conciliatory rhetoric, remained skeptical regarding the Syrian president, whom it considers an adventurous and unreliable leader who bound his fate with Hizbollah and Iran.<sup>26</sup> It seems that Bashar's former allies in the Arab world, mainly Egypt and Saudi Arabia, believe that Syria's alliance with Iran, which will likely last as long as the Islamic regime in Tehran survives, has long moved from a pact of interests based on narrow political considerations to an intimate strategic pact that carries its own weight. The Saudi foreign minister, Saud al-Faisal, alluded to this when he criticized the "countries that operate in opposition to pan-Arabic interests," and that are leading "to the loss of the Arab identity in the Arab arena."<sup>27</sup>

Is peace with Syria an Israeli interest? Few would suggest otherwise. Peace with Syria could bring quiet to the northern front, and most of all, block Iran's entry to this region whereby it finances and equips the Palestinian terror organizations and Hizbollah. This has special importance given Iran's nuclear pursuits. However, from here to achieving a peace treaty between Israel and Syria there is a long road to travel. It is hard to imagine that Bashar, who currently believes that he is in a position of strength, will be willing to start negotiations with Israel without being guaranteed in advance that he will repossess the Golan Heights. Bashar, like his father, does not consider confidence building moves that would help the Israeli leadership muster public support for a peace process with Syria. As such, it would be possible to talk to Bashar about closing the Damascus offices of the terror organizations only after a positive settlement on the return of the Golan is reached. The Israeli government is also not interested in discussing and settling the Golan issue now. Peace talks with

Syria are liable to arouse domestic criticism and shorten any government's term of office. Thus, due to short term internal political interests, the Israeli government chose to defer discussing a long term strategic interest for Israel. Finally, President Bush, a crucial partner in any future Israeli-Syrian dialogue, still views Syria as part of the "axis of evil," a state that should be resisted, not negotiated with. All this amounts to a long road on the way to Israeli-Syrian peace.

## Conclusion

The "open war," as defined by Hizbollah general secretary Nasrallah,<sup>28</sup> which was waged for over a month between Israel and Hizbollah accentuated a major part of the dilemmas that Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and even Hizbollah have confronted in recent years. Among them, it highlighted the dilemma faced by Israel over how to respond to the threat posed by Hizbollah. At the same time, Hizbollah has been saddled with the dilemma of what its policy and mode of operation should be within the internal Lebanese arena and vis-à-vis Israel.

It appears that the war did not bring any real change to the status of Lebanon and the region. It weakened Hizbollah but did not shatter its power or defeat it. It strengthened the Lebanese government but not in a manner that allowed it to take on Hizbollah full force. It enhanced the provocative approach that Bashar adopted towards Israel and even towards the United States in recent years, but did not bring him to completely forsake the political policy of conciliation adopted by his father over fifteen years ago. The regional reality along Israel's northern border will, therefore, continue to be based on a triad of forces comprising first of all the Hizbollah organization – weaker than before, but still an element of considerable weight in Lebanon, by virtue of its being the authentic representative of the Shiite community. There are also two important corollaries, a coalition of Lebanese forces backed by international support that is striving to contain the Hizbollah organization and the Syrians, and Syria, led by Bashar Asad, which is caught between the "axis of evil," to which it is currently assigned, and potential affiliation with a moderate axis in the Arab world. All the while, in the background, are Iran, Israel, and the United States that in any

case are preoccupied with other challenges, from the Palestinian issue, to Iraq, and the Iranian nuclear threat.

## Notes

1. For the declaration of victory by Hassan Nasrallah, see al-Manar TV, August 20, 2006.
2. For Bashar Asad's speech, Sana (Syrian Arab News Agency), August 15, 2006, *Tishrin* (Damascus), August 16, 2006. See also an interview given by Bashar Asad to the Abu Dhabi TV channel, August 23, 2006, and *al-Thawra* (Damascus), August 24, 2006.
3. See Lebanese News Agency, August 29, 2006.
4. *Haaretz*, August 28, 2006; Reuters, August 22, 2006.
5. For background literature about Lebanon, see Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (New York: Caravan Books, 1977); *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988).
6. Interview of Hassan Nasrallah with the Lebanese TV channel NTV, August 27, 2006.
7. For more on the Shiite community and Hizbollah organization, see Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizballah* (Syracuse University Press, 2004); Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah, the Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Eyal Zisser, "The Return of the Hizballah," *MEQ* 9, no. 4 (2002): 3-12. See also Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah, Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002); Vada Sharara, *Dulet Al-Hezbollah, Libnan - Mujtama Islami* (Beirut, 1996); see also Na'im Qasim, *Hizbollah: Alminhaj, Altajruba, Almustakbal* (Beirut: Daar Al-Hadi, 2002 [Arabic]); Eitan Azani, "The Hezbollah Movement – From Revolution and Pan-Islamism to Pragmatism and Lebanonism," PhD thesis (Hebrew University, 2005 [Hebrew]).
8. For more on the Cedar Revolution, see Eyal Zisser: "Lebanon – following the Cedar Revolution – Between Continuity and Change," *Orient* (forthcoming).
9. Reuters, September 12, 2006; *al-Hayat* (London), September 13, 2006.
10. For more on the Ta'if agreement, see William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions* (Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1997), pp. 235-322.
11. See also on Rafiq al-Hariri, his official web site [www.rhariri.com](http://www.rhariri.com). See also Middle East Intelligence (Washington), [http://www.meib.org/articles/0107\\_1d1.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0107_1d1.htm). On the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, see *al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut), February 15, 16, 21, 2005.
12. For Bashar Asad's speech, see *Tishrin* (Damascus), March 6, 2005.
13. For the results of the Lebanese parliamentary elections see *al-Safir* (Beirut), May 29, 30, 2005; Lebanese News Agency, June 5, 2005, *al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut), June 6, 2005, *al-Nahar* (Beirut), June 6, 2005, Radio Beirut, June 6, 2005.

14. For more about Hizbollah's support of Syria, see al-Manar television, March 8, 2005; *al-Intiqad* (Beirut) March 9, 2005.
15. See Lebanese News Agency, August 29, 2006; AP, August 31, 2006.
16. For Siniora's comments, see SILB, August 6, 2006.
17. See Qasim, *Hizbollah*; Azani, "The Hezbollah Movement."
18. See, for example, an interview given by Hassan Nasrallah to the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Ra'y al A'am*, December 27, 2004. See also *al-Safir* (Beirut), March 8, 2005.
19. See *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), August 12, 2006; AFP (French news agency), August 19, 2006.
20. See NTV television channel, August 27, 2006.
21. See interviews with Hassan Nasrallah to the al-Jazeera television station, September 12, 2006 and to *al-Safir* (Beirut), September 5, 2006.
22. See *al-Nahar* (Beirut), August 7, August 11, 2006.
23. See Bashar Asad's address, *Tishrin* (Damascus), August 15, 2006; clarifications of Syrian information minister, Damascus Radio, September 5, 2006; Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister, *al-Thawra* (Damascus), September 3, 2006.
24. See interview with Bashar Asad to Abu Dhabi television, August 23, 2006, and *al-Thawra* (Damascus), August 24, 2006.
25. See Sana (Syrian Arab News Agency), September 12, 2006.
26. For a discussion of the US policy on Bashar Asad, see: <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/L/Joshua.M.Landis-1/syriablog/2006/09/news-round-up-2-september-2006.htm>.
27. For comments by the Saudi foreign minister, see Saudi News Agency, August 26, 2006.
28. See Hassan Nasrallah's address, al-Manar TV, July 14, 2006.