Forum: Historical United Nations Security Council

Issue: Israel-Lebanese War 2006

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Introduction

The conflict which mainly occupies Southern Lebanon has a long recurring history of conflict amongst neighboring nations. The main root of the conflict can be traced back to the religious and denominational differences between and within the main parties involved. A paramilitary group based in Lebanon launched a cross-border attack on Israel which captured two Israeli soldiers and killed several others. At the time, due to the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, many militias partially independent from the Lebanese military forces were continuing their presence, leading the Lebanese government to take action in order to demilitarize all paramilitary forces or militias that formed as a result of the Civil War. This initiative was successful with the exception of the continued presence of the Hezbollah militant group.

After the attack of the Hezbollah forces, Israel launched several targeted attacks on Lebanon which resulted in back-to-back strikes between the countries. The conflict lasted for 34 days until the United Nations brokered a ceasefire agreement. During this process, many neighboring countries were involved in different extents. After the counteraction from Israel, Hezbollah forces, financially aided by other parties involved, once again retaliated which eventually resulted in the 34-day war between Israel and Lebanon.

It is important to consider the past conflicts between these nations when handling the Israel-Lebanon War. With the social, political, and military changeovers that the Civil War caused in Lebanon. Respectively, these tensions led to the prior attacks of the Lebanon War. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Syria, Iran, Beirut and several other nations, likewise, played a significant role in the dispute.

Definition of Key Terms

Paramilitary

An organized military group that is not the official army of a country. Paramilitary groups usually form independent from the official armed forces and often are illegal.

Militia

Military forces serve the function of an emergency supplemental army and are formed by the civilian populace to either support the army or rebel against it in terrorist activities.

Civil War

A war within a state between citizens of the same country or organized groups independent from the government. Civil Wars have a significant impact on a countries' social, political, and economic state.

Sect

The religious meaning of sect refers to the subgroups of a certain religion. A sect is "a religious group that exists inside of a larger religion" (vocabulary.com). In this case, the term will be majorly used to classify Sunni Muslims, Shi'a Muslims, Maronite Christians, and 16 other officially recognized sects in Lebanon.

Confessional System

A confessional system is a governmental system that distributes institutional power and authority with respect to the proportion of religious subcommunities or sects. "Confessionalism is a type of consociationalism" which is a political regime of functioning with internal division ("Understanding Lebanese Confessionalism").

Central Army

The central army of a country is fully dependent on and administered by the government. This army serves the primary and essential role of protecting its country and citizens. Unlike paramilitaries and militias, the central army is not formed by civilians or funding from other countries.

Background Information

After many disputes across the region, Israel and Lebanon went into full-scale war in July 2006. The political history between the countries held frequent and built-up tensions. Accordingly, this affected the course of the war until the United Nations' interference in August. To that end, although the duration of the war can make it be relatively perceived as unsubstantial, the 2006 War was a turning point for both countries, Israel and Lebanon, and several others who got remarkably involved. The difference of religion and religious sects both within and between the two countries is one of the key factors that resulted in this armed conflict. Furthermore, with time, as the countries are geographically located with a shared border, the conflict became a border issue which created a different scope for the agenda.

Before the War

The dispute over the region between the two countries has an extensive background where the initial problems built up and commenced the war. In March 1978, Israel followed through with Operation Litani which was the first invasion of Lebanon. During this period, Lebanon was undergoing a Civil War, the country had to form defense forces. As the attacks were mainly focused on South Lebanon, the region was mainly occupied by Shi'a Muslims which formed the South Lebanese Army (SLA). Subsequently, in 1982 Israel fired the second invasion of Lebanon which initiated the first major Lebanon War until the 2006 Armed Conflict. Consequently, the political relations between these two countries.

From a specific perspective, Lebanon has a multi-religious structure as can be seen from the figure below. This state has a significant impact on the social, political, and administrative setup of the Country. In accordance with these components, Lebanon adopted a confessional system that initially aimed to justly distribution power and authority among different groups. However, as the religious scale of the country underwent changes over time, certain groups felt restricted or rather

marginalized. This resulted in the development of different political parties and militias.
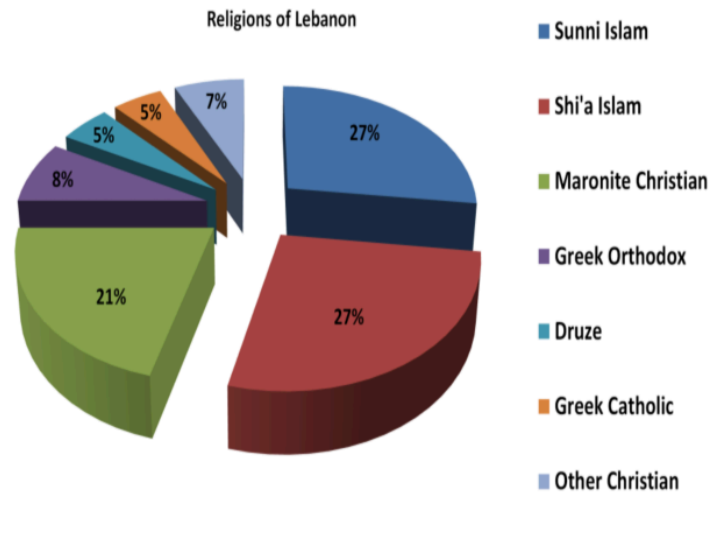

Figure 2: The division of religious subcommunities of Lebanon in 2007

Lastly, in 2000, Israel officially declared its unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon. The Israeli soldiers occupying mainly the South Lebanon region withdrew forces with the order of the new Prime Minister of Israel. This proceeding was a part of his campaign for his election in 1999. However, with the Israeli forces gone, Hezbollah's power and influence in the South Lebanon region strengthened until the war in 2006. The political and social instability in Lebanon caused different groups in the country to polarize and even oppose each other.

The progression of the war

After Hezbollah's first attack which started the war, a series of incursions took place from both parties. Israel initially received this as a threat, not only from Hezbollah, but its other allies such as Syria, and Iran, and Palestinian defense groups such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Israel's aim was to recover its soldiers who were kidnapped. However, in time as the war forged ahead, the increasing tensions led to Israel's motives being turned into dismantling Hezbollah.

Israel started launching numerous air attacks not only to South Lebanon but to Beirut as well. This ruined the country's infrastructure and resulted in, yet another country being involved.
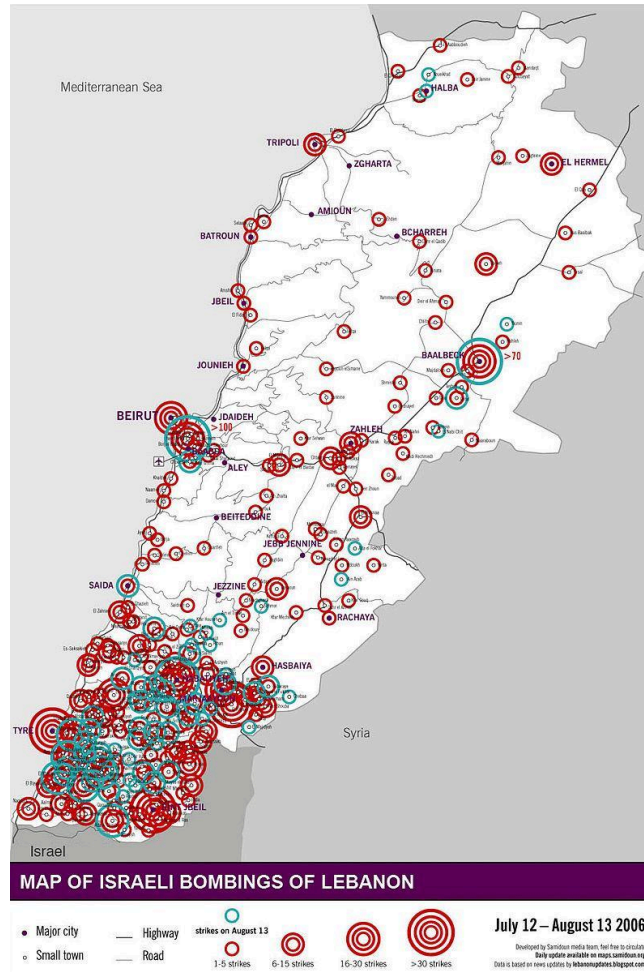

Figure 1: A map of Lebanon showing the locations of the Israeli Bombings during the Israel-Lebanon 2006 War (samidoun.net)

Respectively, Hezbollah proceeded with back strikes which further intensified the war. Throughout the war, the Hezbollah Defense Army was relatively much more involved than the Lebanese Government in the military scope. Some perspectives questioned Hezbollah's motives and suspected they had ulterior motives which raised the emergence of the conflict.

UN intervention

In 1978, as a precaution to settle the dispute over the Israel-Lebanon border, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was established. This establishment's mission was to end the surge of violence in the region. Accordingly, UN Peacekeeping Forces entered the region to serve the purpose of being a buffer component between the two countries. In 2006, UNIFIL was an important element in the UN's aim to demobilize the armed conflict in the area. On the 11th of August, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1701 which was an important step towards solving the issue.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Israel

Israel is one of the two major countries involved in the 2006 Lebanon War. Throughout the long-lasting conflict between the two parties, Israel's main goal was to disarm Hezbollah's armed forces and politically weaken them. To consider Israel's history with Lebanon, invasions over the South Lebanon region occurred well before the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War. Israel's first intrusion was in 1978, known as the Litani Operation. The second invasion took place in 1982 which resulted in what is now known as the First Lebanon War. During the time period of both these attacks, Lebanon was undergoing a Civil War. Considering the paramilitary and militia formations at the time, including the Hezbollah Party and Army, Israel's opposition grew even more. This eventually led to the 34-day war in 2006 which is also known as the Second Lebanon War.

Lebanon

Lebanon's involvement can be assessed both internally and externally. Lebanon's perspective of the offenses prior to the 2006 War can essentially be tied back to the internal shifts the country went through as the major result and process of the Civil War. From its independence in 1943 until the Civil War in 1975, Lebanon

followed a confessional system that "foresaw that the country's president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament a Shi'a Muslim" (Tür 2007, pg. 1). During the early years of this system, Christians, being the majority, held a superior role in the governmental proceedings. However, as the number of Muslim citizens increased over time, the system was questioned and rebelled against by certain groups. This eventually led to a Civil War which lasted for fifteen years. As the country held 18 officially recognized religious sects, the internal struggles reflected on the political relationships with neighboring countries. After a back-to-back invasion over time, Lebanon got into full-scale war with Israel in 2006 which started with 2 Israeli soldiers being captured and several others killed. During the conflict, different militias and paramilitary forces formed under Lebanon; therefore, certain actions occurred either out of control or with the partial administration of the government.

Hezbollah Paramilitary Organization

As previously mentioned, Hezbollah is both a political party and a paramilitary army formed under Lebanon. The confessional system giving the majority of the authority to Maronite Christians caused other groups to rebel against the system. Respectively, Hezbollah Paramilitary Organization was formed mainly with the purpose of representing Shi'a Muslim groups in Lebanon. Considering the major involvement of these forces during the 2006 War, Hezbollah did occupy an important position for Syria and Iran in their opposition against Israel. The war started with the attack of Hezbollah forces on several Israeli soldiers. Accordingly, it can be said that Hezbollah played an integral role in the trajectory of the Israel-Lebanon War. After the end of the Civil War in Lebanon in 1990, all militias and paramilitaries were gathered under the central army. However, with its political and military influence, Hezbollah remained an exception to this proceeding.

Iran

Iran is one of the countries from which Hezbollah forces received various types of support. Therefore, Hezbollah had a dependent relationship with Iran during

the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War. Respectively, Iran played a significant role in Hezbollah's stand against Israel. Iran held an antagonistic view on Lebanon's aim to unify the paramilitaries and militias under the central army since the Hezbollah armed forces were important for Iran in accordance with its opposing stance against Israel.

Syria

Correspondingly, Syria is yet another country to which Hezbollah is financially dependent which is why Syria is politically involved in Lebanon's both internal and external affairs to this certain extent. After the withdrawal of Israel in 2000, the Syrian presence in Lebanon started being questioned. Regardless of this, Syria maintained its position in Lebanon and continued its close relationships between Hezbollah and Shi'a Muslims.

Beirut

Beirut, being a neighboring country, was one of the countries involved in the war. During Israel's launched air strikes, certain regions of Beirut were targeted as well. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) held its leadership in Beirut until 1982. Through this, the PLO had an influence over Lebanon. Therefore, Beirut and Lebanon had considerably close relations during the conflict.

Timeline of Events

April 13, 1975	**Lebanese Civil War begins**
March 1978	**Israeli invasion of South Lebanon (Operation Litani)**

March 19, 1978	The establishment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)
June 1982	Second Israeli invasion of Lebanon, also known as the First Lebanon War
October 13, 1990	Lebanese Civil War ends
May 2000	Israeli Unilateral Withdrawal
September 2, 2004	Adoption of the UN Resolution 1559
July 12, 2006	Hezbollah launches the first attack on Israel (the Israel-Lebanon War begins)
August 11, 2006	Adoption of the UN Resolution 1701
August 14, 2006	The end of the Israel-Lebanon War with the ceasefire agreement

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IL-LB_060814_SCR1701.pdf

(Resolution 1701 (2006) / adopted by the Security Council at its 5511th meeting, on 11 August 2006, [on full cessation of hostilities in Lebanon and on extending and strengthening the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to monitor the ceasefire)

- https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/unsc/2005/en/38018
  (Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon on 21 July 2005)

- https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/unhrc/2006/en/61214
  (Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon Pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution S-2/1)

- https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/529421?v=pdf
  (Resolution 1559 (2004) / Adopted by the Security Council at its 5028th meeting, on 2 September 2004, on the political independence and withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

United Nations' attempts

The UN has countless initiatives taken with the aim of solving the dispute between Israel and Lebanon. The first one was, as previously mentioned, the establishment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon which sent out UN Peacekeeping forces to the region. This attempt can rather be questioned since adding another factor into the region where multiple parties were occupied can further complicate the situation. Furthermore, the UN has passed several resolutions such as, Resolution 1701 and 1559 which aims to disarm the region and strengthen UNIFIL's supervision over the region.

Attempts from the parties involved

Considering the long history of this dispute, certain measures were taken by the countries involved to solve the issue. For instance, in 2000, Israel declared its unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon. This attempt, although temporary, was an important step towards resolving the dispute. However, this attempt failed when the 2006 War started with Hezbollah capturing Israeli soldiers. All things considered, none of these attempts were completely successful as the dispute lasted for a much longer time after the war as well.

Possible Solutions

There are many steps towards the complete resolution of this issue. A first key component to consider should be the strengthening of state institutions and the integration of militias in Lebanon. This can help unify certain parties involved which would help the opposing states to reach negotiation. Respectively, as this is an intricate issue with many different opposing views, it is essential to find common ground. The implementation of democratic reforms can be a key element in resolving this issue. Establishing negotiations between involved parties in order to come to a peaceful resolution is an approach that should first and foremost be followed. Recognition of the terms and conditions of all parties is an important step towards peace in the region. This can be done through border cooperation and exchange between Israel and Lebanon. Furthermore, as the war has affected countless civilians and resulted in many displaced people, providing humanitarian aid is highly urgent. Nonetheless, the solution alternatives should promote peace and settlement in the region for all parties involved in order to achieve sustainable agreements with regard to this issue.

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