

Casimiro José Sanjuan Martínez

General of Division (in reserve). Master's degree in peace, security and defense

Doctorate in international peace and security (UNED).

E-mail: csanjuan31@yahoo.es

SOUTHERN LIBANO: A KEY AREA FOR SECURITY AND STABILITY

Abstract

Among all countries that make up the Middle East, Lebanon has often suffered the consequences of all conflicts taking place in the area. In addition to that, the creation of Israel meant an added risk factor for Lebanese stability because other actors, countries and groups, used their territory to attack this inconvenient neighbor. Israel has repeatedly invaded southern Lebanon in an attempt to ensure the necessary depth and avoid continuous attacks. Whenever this happened, it subsequently meant a call to the international community due to the risk it poses to world peace. Due to that fact, United Nations sent in 1978 a contingent (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon, which was subsequently reinforced in 2006, since, according to their criteria, the control of this area increased the security of the country and helped stabilize the region. Despite some setbacks, time has proven the effectiveness of this right decision and the importance that Lebanon has definitely acquired in terms of peace due to the presence of the blue berets.

KeyWords

Near East, Lebanon, Israel, UNIFIL, Chebaa Farms, Gadjar, Resolution 1701, Blue Line, Lebanese Armed Forces.

SOUTHERN LIBANO: A KEY AREA FOR SECURITY AND STABILITY

INTRODUCTION

The root of all problems that occur in the Middle East are to be found in the History and Religion. The area has been occupied by the major empires (Persian, Macedonian, Roman, Ottoman, British, etc.) and has been a crossing point for many civilizations. Furthermore the creation of Israel in 1948 represented a humiliation for the Arab countries on the grounds that a Western country was based in the heart of Islam displacing its historical inhabitants. As if this were not enough, since then, all the wars that the Arabs have carried out against their hated neighbors have resulted in clear losses for them. The conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is the insurmountable obstacle to a stable situation, according to experts it would not take place even in the unlikely event that the longed Palestinian state was created.

The hatred of Jews and desire to leave the land they occupy has been the trigger of many conflicts. As a matter of fact Israel has been attacked from all fronts. Since the Camp David Accords in 1978, relations with Egypt and Jordan have improved but this is not the case scenario of Syria and Iran, since both countries are still considered dangerous.

Israel does not consider Lebanon a threat to its security but its territory has been used by many groups to launch attacks and rockets into the Jewish state due to the fact that from the Lebanese side of the Israeli; northern cities can be dominated, the ease of concealment that provides the border area and perhaps most important, the proximity of several Palestinian refugee camps.

Among the groups mentioned, the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine (PLO) and Hezbollah have been the most active. Israel's reaction has resulted in repelling the attacks and sometimes venture into Lebanon in order to occupy the south. The whole country has been affected by these incidents but mostly the inhabitants of the border region who have suffered more intensely therefore exacerbating their aversion to Jews.

Israel has always maintained and continues to do so a close monitoring of this narrow strip of territory. The presence of UN troops was definitely an improvement of security but did not meant the end of all problems. Since the summer of 2006, the increase of multinational troops and invaluable presence of Lebanese army troops LAF determined a progressively problems reduction.

As a matter of fact one can say that South Lebanon has acquired great importance in regards to the relations between Lebanon and Israel.

ASSUMPTIONS

The hypothesis that arises is that southern Lebanon is key to the security and stability throughout the country and therefore the region. Its outlying situation in the Middle East might lead us to think that its importance is irrelevant, but history proves otherwise.

In recent past, the government of Lebanon allowed while failing to shoulder its sovereignty that certain groups could take control of the area rather than its soldiers who are entitled to. Since the creation of Israel in 1948, PLO fighters, who were refugees in Lebanon after being expelled from their land, used as a basis southern Lebanon to attack and harass the Jewish army with rockets to all border populations? The void left by the PLO, after leaving Lebanon in the early eighties, was filled in by Hezbollah militias that continued to conducting similar activities. Israel never hesitated and repeatedly occupied southern Lebanon in order to create a security zone to give depth to their territory and keep it out of reach of the rockets. This always meant a warning bell not only to the Near East but the whole world.

UN presence in Lebanon since 1978.¹ helped to ease tension for a while, but it was an insufficient measure because the entity of the quota was reduced and its mandate ambiguous enough to restrict its operations. On the other hand, the absence of Lebanese authority helped create the right breeding ground for a permanent conflict.

Even though the rest of Lebanon seems left out of turmoil in the south, the true fact is that the whole country was suffering the consequences whenever Israeli troops crossed the line of separation. The Israeli government repeatedly announced that on the assumption of receiving an attack from Lebanon (regardless who should do so) they would consider the Lebanese government responsible for its apparent carelessness and therefore, the whole country would suffer the consequences of retaliation. The above mentioned had an impact not only on Lebanon but also on their allies and guarantors of religious minorities, especially Syria and Iran.

The International Community (IC), aware of the risk involved in a widespread conflict in the region, said that Lebanon should remain stable and in order to do so the main priority was to maintain control of the south. The Security Council issued

¹ UNIFIL. Interim United Nations Force in Lebanon. UNSC Resolution 425. (March 19, 1978). "The situation in the Middle East." In www.un.org/es/peacekeeping/missions/unifil. Accessed June 8, 2014.

in 2006 a new Resolution, which was more ambitious than previous ones, and greatly strengthened the contingent and compelled the government of Lebanon so that, with the endorsement of Israel, would send its armed forces to the area.

This paper will conduct a comparative analysis of data from various expert authors on the subject. By the same token, the manifestations of political, religious authorities and the citizens who live in the area and the experience of the author of the present article, who participated three times in the operation of the Interim United Nations Force for Lebanon (UNIFIL), one as chief operating officer and two as head of Sector East in the vicinity of Marjayoun, can contribute to provide a broader view of reality of life in southern Lebanon.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

After having been part of the Ottoman Empire till the Turkish defeat in World War I, ² Lebanon became a French protectorate. In 1944 it became an State despite the fact that two years before it had been recognized its independence.

The civil war that took place between 1975 and 1989³ finished up with years of splendor in which it had the chance to become a first-rate financial and commercial center. The arrival of the PLO leadership which had been expelled from Jordan⁴ increased the problems of the Lebanese due to the fact that the militant attacks on Israeli territory provoked Israel's response.

Truth be told, the Lebanese government⁵ gave a large degree of leeway to Palestinians to carry out attacks against Israel, provided they refrain from intervening in Lebanese domestic politics. Due to this fact the incursions into Israeli territory increased, and with them the ensuing reprisals.

Southern Lebanon became the PLO operational base and the priority objective to Israeli people. On March 15, 1978,⁶ in response to an attack against its territory , in

2 Veiga, Francesc (2006). "The Turkish: ten centuries at the gates of Europe." Editorial Debate. P. 38. Accessed June 14, 2014.

3 Seaver, Brenda (2000), "The Regional Sources of Power-Sharing Failure: The Case of Lebanon", Political Science Quarterly, vol. 115, nº 2, Pág. 247-264. Consultado el 14 de junio de 2014.

4 Seaver, Brenda (2000), "The Regional Sources of Power-Sharing Failure: The Case of Lebanon", Political Science Quarterly, vol. 115, nº 2, Pág. 247-264. Consultado el 14 de junio de 2014.

5 Seaver, Brenda (2000), "The Regional Sources of Power-Sharing Failure: The Case of Lebanon", Political Science Quarterly, vol. 115, No. 2, pp. 247-264. Accessed June 14, 2014.

6 George E. Irani. (MAY 1996). "Meanwhile in Lebanon?". The Link, vol. 29, nº 2. Pág 14. Accessed

which there were thirty dead and seventy wounded, Israel occupied southern Lebanon with the intention of destroying the infrastructure of the terrorist organization.

Only four days later, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolutions 425⁷ and 426 indicating the truce of military actions, the withdrawal of the Israelis from Lebanon and subsequently they created the UNIFIL contingent. Nevertheless Israel was not satisfied due to the fact that in this fashion they considered that terrorism was not condemned and once again the lack of consensus emerged within the UN when reaching an agreement on its definition is due to the fact that Israel for the Arabs was considered a terrorist state.⁸

The blue helmets were deployed in the area and the lack of a physical obstacle which could be recognized as a border induced the UN with the endorsement of both Lebanon and Israel to draw an imaginary line made of marks on the ground which was renamed Blue Line,⁹ Nevertheless it could not be marked in all its dimension due to the fact that the area was whether disputed or mined. In fact it remains nowadays unmarked at the Eastern edge close to the Golan Heights. The presence of multinational troops failed to stop the activity of Palestinians who continually harassed the Israelis.

In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon¹⁰ again with the intention of destroying the PLO and, moreover, weaken the existing Syrian presence that had lasted for two years in Lebanon where they had firstly entered as part of an Arab deterrent.¹¹ This action was considered, at an international level, a serious failure due to the significant loss of lives and considering that the response had been disproportionate¹².

In addition to that, the vacuum left by the Palestinians was occupied by a new enemy, a more dangerous and more supported one within the area, the pro-Iranian Shiite organization, Hezbollah.¹³

June 14, 2014.

7 Resolution 425 (1978) of the Security Council. S/20416 y Add.1, Add1/Corr.1 y Add.2, S/20742, S/21102, S/21406 y Corr.1 y Add.1, S/22129 y Add.1, S/22829, S/23253 y S/24341. Accessed June 14, 2014.

8 Bakit F. State Terrorism: Israel in the Middle East. Politics Part I. p. 2. Retrieved on June 14, 2014.

9 Ronald Cohn Jesse Russell. (January 2012). Blue Line (Lebanon). Page 2. Retrieved June 14, 2014.

10 Osvaldo Cifuentes. Santiago de Chile. (2009). History of Israel and Palestine. Volume II, ed. Ercilla. P. 43. Retrieved on June 18, 2014.

11 Pogany I (1987). "The Arab League and Peacekeeping in the Lebanon". St. Martin s Press, New York. P 132. Retrieved on June 18, 2014.

12 George W. Ball (1984). "Error and Betrayal in Lebanon: An Analysis of Israel? Invasion of Lebanon and the Implications for US-Israeli Relations ". Foundation for Middle East Peace. Washington DC. P 23-48. Accessed June 18, 2014.

13 Gilles Kepel. (2000). "Jihad, expansion and decline of Islam." Page 194. Accessed June 18, 2014.

The Jewish army remained in southern Lebanon until 1985, when at that point international pressure forced their withdrawal. Nevertheless it maintained the control over the area through an ally, a Christian Lebanese militia called South Lebanon Army (SLA).¹⁴

The civil war ended in 1989 and the Taif.¹⁵ Agreements between the various factions were signed. Shortly after there was a new redistribution of power but Lebanese society was divided by the prominence of Syria and the presence of its troops in Lebanon¹⁶ which in addition to violating the sovereignty, constituted a risk factor for Israel that threatened with a new invasion in case any aggression against its territory would occur.

Finally in year 2000 Israel disengaged from its allies in the ESL whose members felt abandoned¹⁷ because without the continues support and funding from Israel they wouldn't be able to cope with Hezbollah guerrillas. The ESL split up and Hezbollah guerrillas increased their presence and popularity skyrocketed.

The Lebanon Government reluctance to extend its authority till the Israeli border, with the intention of aiming a long lasting peace with Israel, were leveraged by Hezbollah to raise their prestige by becoming the only force capable of dealing with the Jews.¹⁸ Thus South Lebanon was left at their mercy exposing that the problems would soon arrive. The incidents along the Blue Line befell and tension grew. In addition, the hostile speech done by Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah, did nothing but increase the harbinger of another escalation.

In 2005 came the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri,¹⁹ which caused a stir worldwide. Syrian intelligence and Hezbollah were blamed of such assassination. Due to massive protests in Lebanon and the pressure of the International Community the Syrian military forces left Lebanon.

14 Palmer-Harik J. (2004). "Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism." London. I.B. Tauris & Co. Page 28-57. Accessed June 18, 2014.

15 Krayem, Hassan. American University of Beirut. "The Lebanese civil war and the Taif agreement". P 12. Retrieved on June 18, 2014.

16 The Country. File. 10/03/1989. "The Syrian presence, the main topic of discussion among the Lebanese deputies." In elpais.com/diario/1989/10/03/internacional/623372420_850215.html. Accessed June 18, 2014.

17 Cain Külbel, Jurgen. (26/07/2006) Krieg gegen Libanon ?. Provozierter, Neues Deutschland. P 74. Retrieved on June 18, 2014.

18 Atilio Molteni. International Agenda No. 10. The war in Lebanon and its consequences in the Middle East. "The escalation of violence demonstrated, once again, that military power is ineffective to impose stability." P. 49-53. In www.agendainternacional.com. Accessed June 18, 2014.

19 Thierry Meyssan. (November 2010). "Lebanon and the geopolitical situation in the Middle East." P. 2. www.voltairenet.org Accessed June 18, 2014.

Hezbollah therefore continued as master of southern Lebanon and substantially increased its interference in Lebanese political life.²⁰ The Beirut government was under the International pressure, and at the behest of Israel and the United States, disarmed the militia to prevent its growing importance but, as expected, the Lebanese authorities failed to stop this situation and the continues attacks on Israel were a prelude to worsening of the situation.

On July 2006, a raid by Hezbollah on Israeli territory resulted in eight Israeli soldiers killed and two were captured.²¹ Israel called the action an act of war²² and accused the Lebanese government of being behind this serious event.²³ A few days later there was a new Israeli invasion which led to the last conflict that has taken place between Lebanon and Israel to date.

The pressure of the UN and the CI forced Israel into retreating its territory with the agreement to increase UNIFIL entity with members of EU countries and with the proviso that the Lebanese army occupied the south of Lebanon to the detriment of Hezbollah.²⁴

On August that year, EU and NATO sent troops to the UNIFIL area giving another dimension not only due to the number of troops (around thirteen thousand troops of all fifteen thousand authorized) but by the multinational presence. Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Belgium and Luxembourg sent new contingents or increased the existing ones. In addition to that territorial waters were controlled by a multinational maritime force. Lebanon 's government, meanwhile, sent about eight thousand soldiers in his army (he was allowed fifteen thousand) to work together with UNIFIL.

Since then, the situation in southern Lebanon began to improve although violence has not disappeared altogether. During the last eight years the random moments of tension have been mitigated due to the presence of both the international force and the Lebanese soldiers.

20 Qassem N. (2005). "Hizbullah: The Story from Within" Saqi. London. P. 20-83. Accessed June 19, 2014.

21 Yaakov Katz. (2012). Israel vs. Iran: The Shadow War. P. 17 Retrieved on June 19, 2014.

22 Molteni A. "The war in Lebanon and its consequences in the Middle East." International Agency No.10. P. 50. Retrieved on June 20, 2014.

23 Michael Walter (2001). Just and Unjust Wars. A moral argument with historical arguments. Paidós State and Society. P. 448 Accessed June 20, 2014.

24 Juan M. Muñoz. (September, 2006). 'Israel reverses and rises today the air and sea blockade over Lebanon eight-week' El Pais. File. Accessed June 20, 2014.

Nevertheless, feeling of instability that has increased today due to the current situation prevailing in Syria still remains. Thus it is more than likely that any attack on Israel would provoke new and unpredictable escalations.²⁵

In point of fact the calm that prevailed in the south has been conveyed to the rest of Lebanon although occasional moments of tension have occurred due to other reasons.

SOUTHERN LEBANON

Several aspects grant Southern Lebanon a special importance, even though it doesn't convey an strategic, political or other claims target in itself. Its border situation with Syria and Israel, which are traditional enemies, forced it into being the scenario of many events. Moreover, the confessions of its inhabitants (mostly Shia but with substantial Sunni, Christian and Druze communities) has helped some extremist groups choose the area to sow panic in the cities of northern Israel.²⁶

Despite all traditional feuds between Arabs, the hatred of Israel²⁷ and the wish that the territory occupied is returned to its original inhabitants, the Palestinians, have been a catalyst²⁸ for countries like Iran or Saudi Arabia and Qatar that have lavished on supporting the different Lebanese communities.

The UN and the CI, aware that peace in southern Lebanon can provide stability throughout Lebanon and help pacify the region pushed to significantly increase the multinational contingent in the area. The European Union (EU), meanwhile, sensitive to any event in the Middle East due to its proximity to the numerous communities of Arabs and the rise of anti-Semitism in the countries of the region,²⁹ was also involved in a direct way and enabled a greater contribution to the mission of UNIFIL³⁰ after the last conflict in 2006.

25 R.Lowe and C.Spencer. (August 2006). *Iran, Its Neighbours and the Regional Crises* (Chatham House). Page 24 Retrieved on June 20, 2014.

26 Javier Jordan. "Radical groups in the Middle East. Strategy, capabilities and partnerships." (University of Granada) p. 2 Accessed June 10, 2014.

27 Morris, Benny. (2001). "Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881 - 2001" Vintage Books. P. 10-11. Accessed June 14, 2014.

28 Fraser, T. (2004). "The Arab-Israeli Conflict. Palgrave MacMillan. "P. 6-8. Accessed June 14, 2014.

29 Yadlin, Rifka. (2002). "Antisemitism". *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East*. Ed. Avraham Sela. New York: Continuum. P. 52. Retrieved on June 14, 2014.

30 A. Carbajosa. M. Gonzalez. (August 2006). "The EU agrees to coordinate the European contribution to the peacekeeping force in Lebanon. Spain, France and Italy remain the supply of troops awaiting clarification of the UN. "The Country. File. In elpais.com/diario/2006/08/21/internacional. Accessed June 14, 2014.

Lebanese narrow strip near the Israeli border has therefore become a key piece for contestants. It is bounded on the north by the Litani River³¹ and south by the Blue Line, with no major physical obstacles. Therefore due to the absence of a recognized border, Israel extended a metal fence (technical fence)³² with a range of electronic means and which is constantly guarded by soldiers.

The area, dotted with small towns, is sparsely populated highlighting Tyre, has the most important city. Its inhabitants are Arabs mainly of Shiite confession,³³ except for some Christian, Sunni and Druze. Near the city of Tyre is one of the largest existing Palestinian camps³⁴ in the country.

Under a military perspective some factors grant it a special relevance. Due to its ripple and few roads, it is a suitable ground for defense. In addition two of the most contentious points (Shebaa Farms in the Golan Heights, and the population of Gadjar) exists there and are disputed with Israel since the Six-Day War in 1967.³⁵

Surplus in southern Lebanon there are two major waterways,³⁶ even though the flow of both is not very big in a specific area where this resource is critical, the water becomes a strategic weapon. The Litani River runs only through Lebanon but the Hasbani river enters Israeli territory, in the course of this river, which is usually dry in summer, there is a spring at the height of Gadjar,³⁷ controlled by the Israelis, that supplies the Lebanese population and small villages in the area.

31 Amery, H. A. 1993. "The Litani River of Lebanon". *Geographical Review* 83 (3). P. 229-237. Accessed June 22, 2014.

32 Barahona, Ana (2013). "Bearing Witness - Eight weeks in Palestine". London: get down. P. 39. Retrieved on June 22, 2014.

33 Halm, Heinz. (1991). "Shiism". Janet Watson. University of Edinburgh. P 12. Retrieved on June 23, 2014.

34 Patricia Cases, Carolina Cerrano and Gisela Figueroa. Palestinian refugees. Observatory conflicts. P. 3 Retrieved on June 23, 2014.

35 Alvaro Abós (1982). *The Six-Day War*. Hyspamerica Ediciones SA Madrid. Volume 9 p.41. Accessed June 24, 2014.

36 Brichs Ferran Izquierdo (1995). "In the Jordan River Basin: the struggle for scarce resources." Autonomous University of Barcelona. P. 120-138. Accessed June 24, 2014.

37 Nicholas Blanford. (September, 2002). "Wazzani Springs pump nearing completion." *The Daily Star*. Page 2. Retrieved on June 23, 2014.

The remaining water is attached further in the course and comes from the Golan³⁸ Heights to form the Jordan River, the main waterway of Israel. We can therefore establish that both the people of Gadjar³⁹ and the Golan Heights are essential objectives for Israel.

POINTS OF DISPUTE

Southern Lebanon is home to several hot spots that have caused many altercations between Lebanese and Israelis. The most prominent are the Shebaa Farms and the population of Gadjar, located in the foothills of the Golan Heights. Both are close to historical Lebanese Shiite strongholds, Hezbollah domains such as of Al Khiam, Aytaroun, The Adeisse, etc. The closest area to the Syrian border, known as the Arkoub, mostly Sunni, has Kfer Chouba as the main population.

The Shebaa farms

Such is the name of the small sheepfolds located in an area claimed by Lebanon as part of its territory. Israel considers them to be included within the Golan Heights and were taken from Syria after the Six-Day War,⁴⁰ in addition to that, Israel refuses to discuss that with any representative other than the Alawite country.

Israel continuously procrastinates any negotiation regarding this issue due to the fact that the control of the region is very important for the survival of its territory since it provides⁴¹ depth and because the water from its accounts makes up forty percent of the country's overall consumption.⁴²

38 Murakami, Masahiro (1995). "Annex C". *Managing Water for Peace in the Middle East*. United Nations University Press. . Page 295 - 297. Retrieved on June 24, 2014.

39 Benny Morris. (2001). "Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999." Vintage Books, New York. P. 327. Retrieved on June 24, 2014.

40 Pimlott, John (1983). "Middle East Conflicts: From 1945 to the Present." *Orbis*. P. 53. Retrieved on June 24, 2014.

41 Culla, Joan B. (2005) *More disputed land: Zionism, Israel and Palestine conflict*. Alianza Editorial SA P. 199. Retrieved on June 24, 2014.

42 Haim Gvirtzman. "Israel's water resources." *Yad Ben-Zvi*. Jerusalem. P. 10-24. Accessed June 24, 2014.

Population of Gadjar

The existing dispute with the population of Gadjar presents certain similarities with that of Shebaa Farms. This border town with Alawite population, was also occupied by Israel in 1967.⁴³ At that time many Israelis moved to Gadjar and both its population and its surface increased considerably but when Israel withdrew to the initial positions, more than half of Gadjar had been divided by the Blue Line⁴⁴ nevertheless the whole village came under Israeli control.

Lebanon claims sovereignty over the territory but Israel refuses to negotiate⁴⁵ for two reasons; firstly due to the fact that Gadjar inhabitants enjoy the same standards of living (education, health, etc.) than any other Israeli therefore they refuse returning to the precarious situation that the Lebanese villages suffer and secondly due to the water supply coming from Hasbani river.⁴⁶

UNIFIL

UNIFIL has become a staple for the pacification of southern Lebanon⁴⁷ although its work is not easy. Neither party has traditionally worked in a consistent manner. The Lebanese authorities have always harbored reservations to the work of the blue berets and Israel believes that there is not enough celerity and severity when it comes to taking decisions.⁴⁸

43 E. Samuels. Feb 2011. "An open to peace in Lebanon door." Document 77/2011. 10. p ieee.es. Accessed June 26, 2014.

44 Nawaf Salam. 30-08-2011. "The situation in the Middle East". P, 1-2. In www.un.int. Accessed June 26, 2014.

45 Neuhold, Hanspeter. (January, 2001). "The United Nations System for the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes." The United Nations, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. P. 66 Retrieved on June 26, 2014.

46 Fayanás Escuer E. (April 2010). Water in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rebellion. P 28. Retrieved on June 26, 2014.

47 Barred D. International Peace. UN missions. 2.4.2. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. P 165. IUGM. Accessed June 26, 2014.

48 J. Mendelson Forman. (October 2005). "Can he save the UN reform? Opportunities for the creation of an effective multilateral body for the twenty-first century." Working Paper (WP) 40/2005. P. 3-5. Accessed June 26, 2014.

In addition to all inconvenient there are also the rules of engagement and the ambiguity of the UN mandate.⁴⁹ The first case scenario due to the fact that they don't provide sufficient leeway to the missions fulfillment since the use of force is not authorized in certain occasions. Regarding the mandate it is considered limited and therefore it doesn't allow to take action in many cases thus limiting UNIFIL to maintain presence, observe and report. Although it is possible to intervene in case of a clear aggression the Lebanese army, at all times, has the authority to register buildings, facilities, etc.

UNIFIL has to face other additional difficulties; the country is an amalgam and thus is an obstacle for cohesion, on the other hand the excessive bureaucracy and slowness in the modus operandi of the UN,⁵⁰ are an added obstacle. Finally, the permanent presence of Hezbollah, some jihadi groups, the destabilizing pressure from Syria and Iran, and the difficulty in understanding Israel need to be emphasized.

Experts on the Middle East believe that, although not sufficient, UNIFIL is a necessary condition for conflict resolution; the soldier's presence is a guarantee for peace,⁵¹ nevertheless they all agree when stating that It needs a firm commitment from the IC in order to consolidate it and contribute to the development of Lebanon.

Nowadays Israelis consider UNIFIL crucial, in fact the Israeli government isn't in favor of having a new crisis and doesn't want to be appointed as an aggressor.⁵² Moreover this government is aware that citizens public opinion wouldn't support anything with the exception of a defense against a direct attack on their people. These are enough reasons to justify UNIFIL deployment in southern Lebanon.

LEBANESE ARMED FORCES (LAF)

The LAF have traditionally been poorly equipped in terms of material and limited in the number of troops for what they have not had enough entity to become the backbone of the country and ensure their security and stability. The Lebanon special

49 Amélie Gauthier. (June 2007). "UN mission in Lebanon." FRIDE. P. 3 Retrieved on June 26, 2014.

50 Giovanni E.REYES (September 2006) "United Nations: Rhetoric restructuring." UNP n°81. International. Page 2. Retrieved June 28, 2014.

51 Giovanni E. REYES (September 2006) "United Nations: Rhetoric restructuring.". UNP n°81. International. Page 2. Retrieved June 28, 2014.

52 Ferran Izquierdo Brichs. (August 2013). "Brief Introduction to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." P. 69-71. Accessed June 28, 2014.

features have allowed Christian officers⁵³ leadership for a long time, therefore relegating to people belonging to other confessions to the lowest social stratum. Today the situation has changed and they are all represented in the military leadership.

Internal conflicts forced them into dealing with multiple enemies in Beirut and in the Syrian border thus abandoning to their fate the area belonging to the Israeli border. Israel has therefore always considered the Lebanese government responsible for the control of its territory and in this way of any aggression. The 2006 conflict enabled the LAF to return to the south of Lebanon and occupy, along with UNIFIL, the void left in theory by the Hezbollah militia and even though this hasn't been fulfilled completely, it is therefore noteworthy that since then no serious problems have occurred. Thus joint efforts with UNIFIL members has provided a greater safety in the area.

Today, the conflict in Syria has affected people in northern Lebanon and the Bekaa⁵⁴ border areas forcing a redeployment of the Lebanese soldiers at the expense of the south. The LAF have become element of stability but this poses a danger because the lack of troops near Israel can contribute to losing back control of the area and to increase the risk of reopening the conflict.

PENDING ISSUES

Even though the situation in southern Lebanon has improved since the reinforcement of UNIFIL,⁵⁵ there are still several pending issues in order to ensure peace. Among them we can emphasize the disarmament of Hezbollah, the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied areas and the violations of Lebanese airspace.

Disarming Hezbollah is considered essential due to the fact that the role of the LAF would be strengthened and a climate of more lasting stability would therefore be achieved. As a matter of fact a strong Lebanese army, aimed to control the country, would raise the country's self-esteem⁵⁶ and would ensure tranquility for the CI most specifically in Israel.

53 Jurdeini, Paul A., McLaurin, RD, & Price, James M. (June 1979). "Military Operations in Built Up Areas 1975-1978." Appendix BUS Human Eng Army Laboratory. Aberdeen Proving Ground. Technical Memorandum 11-79. P 24. Retrieved on June 28, 2014.

54 Hatzad Hasheni. The civil war in Syria and its regional influence. P 19. Retrieved on July 31, 2014.

55 Marta Lucia. ARI N° 125/2009. Area: Security and Defence. 19-11-2009. The mission of the UNIFIL II in Lebanon. P 5-7. In www.realinstitutoelcano.org. Retrieved July 31, 2014.

56 J. C. Antonio Alcazar. (January 2012). "The Lebanese labyrinth: the need to be a nation." Pág.8 10. In www.ieee.es. Retrieved August 3, 2014.

The disputed territories are a sensitive issue to which we must find a solution but rather would be necessary to complete the whole marking of the Blue Line.⁵⁷ Despite all progress, this issue is difficult to solve due to the fact that it implies the presence of certain factors such as sovereignty, security, water resources, etc.

The continuing violations of Lebanese airspace by Israel must stop and, in fact Israel shouldn't continue claiming that is a staple for safety.⁵⁸ This would be a paramount step forward aiming to avoid Hezbollah appealing its right to keep weapons in order to cope with a hypothetical attack.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Future is uncertain although there are certain indicators that provide grounds for optimism. However several premises are considered to be necessary in order to make this a reality.

Hezbollah must be integrated into the Lebanese political and social life and abandon their military ambitions. Maintaining an army in the shadow and this continuous speech against Israel clearly leave the organization in a lock-in situation. In addition to that participating in the war in Syria⁵⁹ calls into question the neutrality policy of the Lebanese government and has become a serious obstacle to peace in Lebanon.

The new situation created by the war in Syria has led to greater uncertainty in the Lebanese peace process. Since the war started, the number of refugees has done nothing but increase⁶⁰ thereby affecting Lebanon stability. Even though there have been no serious altercations in southern Lebanon, unlike elsewhere in the country, incidents have not been discarded in a near future which would threaten the uneasy calm that prevails in Israel which for a long time has been provoked to engage in the conflict.

57 P. Sánchez Herráez. The conflict in Lebanon. Contemporary International Conflict No. 11. Ap. 6.2.2. The measures proposed by the United Nations for a peace process. P. 205. e-archivo.uc3m.es. Retrieved August 3, 2014.

58 M. Á. Benedicto. 16-11-2007. CESEDEN. Documentos de Seguridad y Defensa nº 16. Pág 53. En www.defensa.gob.es. Consultado el 03 de agosto de 2014.

59 C. Rengel. (August 17, 2013). "Hezbollah promises to redouble its support for Assad despite the attacks." In www.cadenaser.com/internacional. Retrieved August 3, 2014.

60 Laura J. Varo. (April 3, 2014). War in Syria. "More than a million refugees from the war in Syria, Lebanon collapse." The Country International. Retrieved August 5, 2014.

There is an ongoing risk of conflict between Israel and Iran. This current Iranian government attitude seems to have lowered the tension that existed on the previous. But Israel continues its usual distrust and won't hesitate to act if it considers threaten its survival. The consequences of a crisis between the two countries would directly affect Lebanon⁶¹ and it is likely that the south would unwillingly become its protagonist.

Another destabilizing front is the presence of Hamas controlling the Gaza Strip because it is a serious setback to the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis. Reprisals suffered by the Palestinian population as a result of Hamas attacks in Israel directly affect the refugee camps in Lebanon where it was found a long time ago the presence of jihadist groups (in 2007 the Lebanese army had to make cleaning within the refugee camp of Nahr el-Bared in the vicinity of Tripoli).⁶²

It is therefore easy to understand that whenever the fans conflict enlivens in Gaza , rocket attacks on Israel occur from southern Lebanon.

According to G. E. Irani⁶³ Real Instituto Elcano, the full implementation of Resolution 1701 is a basic requirement for peace. In order to achieve this, it is crucial to clearly determine the border between Israel and Lebanon.⁶⁴ Although this is an issue that affects both nations and they are responsible for defining its own borders, it is nonetheless true that the agreement reached to establish the Blue Line can help reduce tension until it reaches a final⁶⁵ solution but it is necessary to mark it in its entirety .

UNIFIL success is closely linked to Resolution 1701. Although it has been breached by the parties repeatedly it needs to be emphasized that since the last conflict in 2006, there have been no major problems in southern Lebanon, except for some isolated riots. Clearly, the international presence has been the key to reaching this point and thus it should be noted favorably that the last eight years have become the longest in the area since the creation of the State of Israel peacetime.

61 Schiff, Ze'ev "Israel's War With Iran". Foreign Affairs. Vol. 85 No. 6 (Nov / Dec. 2006). P. 23-32. Retrieved July 12, 2014.

62 Reinales F. Professor Univ. Rey Juan Carlos. (June 26, 2007). The Country. File. "Al Qaeda in the Land of Cedars." Retrieved July 12, 2014.

63 G. E. Irani. DT No. 21/2008 - 23/07/2008. Real Instituto Elcano. Spain, Lebanon and UNIFIL (DT). Lebanon since the war waged in the summer of 2006. In www.realinstitutoelcano.org. Retrieved on August 6, 2014.

64 Gideon B. 2005. "The Boundaries of Modern Palestine, 1840-1947". London: Routledge. P 173. Retrieved on July 14, 2014.

65 Kacowicz Arie M. "The borders of Israel." Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel), 2005. p. 28. Retrieved on July 14, 2014.

But also, and not coincidentally, this period also coincides with greater stability throughout Lebanon. As a matter of fact and according to experts and analysts, UNIFIL and the permanent deployment of the LAF in south Lebanon are the great hope for stability both within the territory and the rest of the country, due to the fact that their close cooperation is the best guarantee of deterrence against new attacks on Israel.

- Submitted: 15 January 2015.

- Accepted: 16 April 2015.
