The 2006 War in Lebanon: A Marxist Explanation

Samuel Conrad Macdonald

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Abstract

On July 12, 2006, Hizbullah forces near the Lebanese town of Ayta ash Shab crossed the Israeli border and attacked an Israeli army patrol, killing three soldiers and capturing two others. For 33 days a war ensued between Hizbullah and Israel, while internationally the United States sought to give Israel time to achieve victory by obstructing the imposition of a cease-fire. This war was foreseeable as many of the causes of this conflict had been in place before July 12. This thesis aims to identify the long-, medium-, and short-term causes of the 2006 War in Lebanon.

To identify the long-term causes this work constructs a Marxist theoretical framework to reveal and analyse the structural interests and conflicts between Hizbullah, and the United States and Israel. For Hizbullah, the historical catalysts for the party’s rise to power are combined with Gilbert Achcar’s Marxist theorisation on the modern resurgence of Islamism, to create an original historical materialist account of the Party of God. The structural interests of the United States in this period are identified by studying the 2003 invasion of Iraq using Global Oil Spigot theory, a contemporary Marxist theory of imperialism developed by David Harvey. Watchdog State theory, as advocated by John Rose, is the final component of this theoretical framework and identifies the long-term causes of Israel’s belligerence in 2006.

The long- and medium-term causes of the war arise from a contradiction between the structural interests of Hizbullah, and the United States and Israel. Hizbullah and the Iranian-led alliance, of which it is a part, are a centre of power that neither Israel, as a watchdog state, nor the United States, as an imperial power in the region, can tolerate. In addition, Hizbullah’s middle-class basis and nature push the party to use its weapons to maintain popular support among Lebanese Shi’a and to legitimise the preservation of its army. The target for these weapons is Israel and by extension US influence in the region. For the United States its opposition to rival centres of power was heightened by its pursuit of hegemony in the region and its
entanglement in Iraq by 2006. Israel’s opposition to Hizbullah seemingly arises from its own self-interest, but also discharges its role as a watchdog state. This is due to its continual hostility with the surrounding populations as determined by its existence as a colonial-settler state founded, with the support of foreign imperialism, on the displacement of the original inhabitants.

With respect to the short-term causes of the war, this thesis concludes that Hizbullah intended to incite a full-scale war with its capture operation on July 12, 2006. This work also concludes that the United States was a crucial participant in the war, effectively determining the conflict’s duration through the obstruction of a cease-fire agreement. At the same time there is no evidence that the United States pushed Israel to go to war, nor that the United States or Israel were searching for a pretext to start a war with Hizbullah. Israel for its part failed to achieve its aims in the war, while Hizbullah gained domestically and regionally from the conflict. Finally, this thesis concludes that the long and medium-term factors that led to the 2006 War in Lebanon remain active and in some respects have been exacerbated, and most probably will generate a future recurrence of military conflict involving Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States.
Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors William Harris and Brian Roper, without whose warm support and intellectual passion, this thesis would not have been possible. The long hours spent discussing my research and providing feedback on my writing, were invaluable. I could not have hoped for more supportive supervisors, nor can I fully express my gratitude. I would also like to acknowledge the financial support of the University of Otago, through the University of Otago Postgraduate Award.

My friends and family also made this thesis a reality. To my partner Park Pureunnarane, thank you for always supporting me and tolerating my long absences when locked away writing. I would like to acknowledge my friends Byron Richards and Markus Bell, who were able to tease out the ideas trapped in my head and were willing to trudge through the thesis drafts with me. To Andrew Tait and my comrades in the International Socialist Organisation I extend my sincere respect for your amazing commitment to the socialist cause, and the intellectual rigour you have instilled in me. It is to my parents, Susan and John Macdonald, that I wish to express my most heartfelt thanks for your encouragement and help throughout this long endeavour. This work is an expression of your support for me, and I will continue to strive to fulfil the possibilities you have provided me with.
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<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Congressional Research Service</td>
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<td>EBO</td>
<td>Effects-Based Operations</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FMF</td>
<td>Foreign Military Financing</td>
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<td>G8</td>
<td>Group of Eight</td>
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<td>GPE</td>
<td>Global Political Economy</td>
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<td>IAF</td>
<td>Israeli Air Force</td>
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<td>IDF</td>
<td>Israeli Defence Forces</td>
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<td>LAF</td>
<td>Lebanese Armed Forces</td>
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<td>LCP</td>
<td>Lebanese Communist Party</td>
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<td>PNAC</td>
<td>Project for a New American Century</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNIFIL</td>
<td>United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon</td>
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Introduction

The 2006 War in Lebanon was born out of the antagonistic interests of Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States.1 The 33 days of fighting did not resolve these antagonisms, but either left them intact or exacerbated them further. Therefore, the 2006 war remains of enduring significance and impact. This thesis analyses the interests of the warring parties in order to identify the long-, medium-, and short-term causes of the war.

For Hizbullah, its primary interest was to maintain popular support among Lebanese Shi’ā and legitimise the preservation of its army.2 Both of these aims had previously been achieved through its military successes against the 18-year Israeli occupation of Lebanon, which ended in 2000. The problem, however, was how to maintain these achievements when there was no war to fight. This dilemma arises from Hizbullah’s existence as a party of the petty bourgeoisie and the new middle class, which I collectively refer to as the ‘middle class’. The party is middle class in terms of its class basis (its leadership and cadre) and its nature (the group’s worldview and interests). The result is an inherent conservatism in the party’s economic and political programme, a conservatism that poorly addresses the concerns of its largely underprivileged Shi’ā constituency. Therefore, since 2000 Hizbullah has been in search of a military cause to maintain its popularity and legitimise its weapons. From 2000 to 2006, the party found its cause in the Sheba Farms dispute and the struggle to release Lebanese prisoners held in Israel. In 2006 Hizbullah went one step further, intentionally inciting the War in Lebanon.

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1 The transliteration of Arabic into the Latin alphabet is difficult; with the Party of God transliterated as Hizbullah, Hizbu’llah, Hizb’allah, Hizbollah or Hezbollah. While the later is the most commonly used term, I employ the second most common transliteration: Hizbullah. This is used by the Lebanese scholar Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh and in the English edition of Hizbullah: The Story from Within, by Hizbullah’s deputy leader Naim Qassem. Naim Qassem, Hizbullah: The Story from Within, trans. Dalia Khalil (London: SAQI, 2005). Unlike in Arabic, the term Hizbullah will not here be modified for its nominative, genitive, or accusative forms.

2 The term ‘Shi’ā’ (شيعه) is herein used to denote members of Islam’s second largest denomination, and represents the singular and plural form of the noun, and the adjective.
During the presidency of George W. Bush the United States was driven by a bipartisan acknowledgment that it would soon face challenges to its global power, from rising states such as China. This administration, therefore, sought to gain hegemony over the world’s most important source of fossil fuels: the Middle East. Such hegemony would provide the United States with a means to confront these challenges, by gaining “politically critical leverage” over these rival economies. This hegemonic project is the central focus of Global Oil Spigot theory, as espoused by British Marxist David Harvey. After the failure to achieve this goal in Iraq, the medium-term interests of the United States turned to re-energizing its regional strategy and crushing the growing challenge from Iran and its allies. Therefore, in 2006 the United States was only too eager to back Israel’s invasion of Lebanon, and while it was not directly involved in the fighting or the initiation of the war, its diplomatic sway determined the duration of the conflict.

Israel’s war was intimately linked to the long- and medium-term interests of the United States. The relationship between these states has been cemented over the past forty years, while Israel’s connection to Western imperialism goes back to the founding of the modern Zionist movement. The result is encapsulated in Watchdog State theory: an Israeli state whose very existence is defined by its ability to crush dissent and maintain an order conducive to US (and in the past British and French) imperialist interests in the Middle East. As the war in 2006 showed, Israel still maintains a level of sovereignty that distinguishes it from being a mere vassal of the United States; a point often downplayed in Watchdog State theory.

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4 According to BP’s 2009 Statistical Review of World Energy, globally the Middle East has 60% of proved oil reserves and 41% of proved gas reserves, and produces 32% of the world’s oil and 12% of the world’s gas.
7 The term ‘United States’ is used as the proper noun for the country, while US denotes the adjective form.
While Israel may seem to act out of its own self-interests, these are not the interests of a normal state, but are concerns wrought and constrained by its historical relationship to imperialism. The most significant of these is the state’s hostility toward the surrounding populations, a situation determined by its historical displacement of the Palestinians. This hostility manifests itself in inherent Israeli opposition to any centres of power in the region that diverge from US-Israeli interests, which in 2006 meant Iran. Such hostility goes both ways, however, as seen in 2006 when Israeli soldiers were captured by Hamas on June 25 and Hizbullah on July 12. These were direct challenges to Israel’s regional power and its status as a watchdog state. At the same time Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Defence Minister Amir Peretz lacked the military credentials so common among Israel’s leaders, so that the need to prove themselves and allay public concern over the soldiers was paramount. What transpired was an Israeli state that on the surface acted in response to short-term, domestic, political concerns, but nonetheless acted within confines set well before the events of July 12, 2006.

Existing Literature

The 2006 War in Lebanon has led to the publication of several books dealing solely with the war, namely: Amos Harel, 34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon; Cathy Sultan, Tragedy in South Lebanon: The Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006; Gilbert Achcar and Michael Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences; and The War on Lebanon: A Reader, edited by Nubar Hovsepian. There are also a number of realist military publications from think tanks,

8 Most Israeli prime ministers have had strong military backgrounds, a fact exemplified in the three prime ministers before Olmert: Ariel Sharon was a senior army commander; Ehud Barak was the supreme commander of Israel’s defence forces; and Benjamin Netanyahu reached the rank of captain and was a commander of the Sayeret Matkal (an elite IDF special-forces unit).

military colleges, and universities, which used the war as a case study in asymmetric warfare. These reports and articles aim to provide an objective account of the military conflict, focussing on the planning, dimensions, and timeline of the war. While such authors claim an objective mantle, they invariably stray into normative concerns as their accounts are specifically designed for the interests of the Israeli and US militaries.

Unlike these realist military authors, Achcar, Warschawski, and Hovsepian, along with Chris Harman, Khair el-Din Haseeb, and Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, produced normative accounts of the war from a Marxist or otherwise left-wing perspective. These accounts were produced to sway the debate in the immediate aftermath of the war and greatly assist this works’ explanation of the events of 2006. However, what these authors have not done, due to the immediacy of their publication, is to provide an extended explication of the theoretical foundations of their arguments. This thesis intends to remedy this shortcoming by creating a Marxist theoretical framework that clearly lays out for the reader the underlying concepts of this work.

In constructing a theory to explain the actions of Hizbullah this work looks to existing literature on the party and Marxist literature on the resurgence of Islamism
since the 1970s. The most significant publications on the party are books by Eitan Azani, Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, Judith Palmer Harik, Hala Jaber, Augustus Richard Norton, Hizbullah’s deputy secretary-general Naim Qassem, and Saad-Ghorayeb.12 Among Marxist accounts of the modern resurgence of Islamism, the two most relevant for this thesis are Achcar’s 1981 article Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism, and Harman’s 1994 article The Prophet and the Proletariat: Islamic Fundamentalism, Class and Revolution.13 While these are not the only Marxist publications on this subject they are the most significant attempts to identify and theorise the class basis of such movements. An important source of information for these theorisations is research on the Iranian Revolution by Marxists Ervand Abrahamian, Assef Bayat, Houchang E. Chehabi, and Mansoor Moaddel, which demonstrate the middle-class basis of Iranian Islamism.14

By combining the empirical accounts of the Party of God, with more general Marxist accounts of Islamism, one can attempt to overcome a limitation in the existing literature; namely, the absence of any major Marxist publications on Hizbullah in English. In order to synthesise these two bodies of literature this thesis has drawn on Fawwaz Traboulsi’s analysis of Hizbullah’s 2009 political platform, translated excerpts from Waddah Shararah’s Arabic language study of the party, and personal e-mail correspondence with Achcar.15 This work also uses the American

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sociologist Erik Olin Wright’s theory of contradictory class locations and his
definition of the new middle class, to standardise the class definitions used in the
above literature.\textsuperscript{16}

Marxist literature on the United States, unlike Hizbullah, is far from limited. In
this work I focus on literature about the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the
corresponding debate this sparked over contemporary Marxist theories of
imperialism. Alex Callinicos and Harman have published important articles on US
objectives in Iraq, as well as identifying some of the most compelling evidence for
Global Oil Spigot theory.\textsuperscript{17} Much of this evidence comes from publications by the
neo-conservatives Robert Kagan, Zalmay Khalilzad, Paul Wolfowitz, and The Project
for the New American Century think tank.\textsuperscript{18} These sources are essential to Global Oil
Spigot theory, alongside the works of US foreign policy intellectuals Henry Kissinger
and Zbigniew Brzezinski.\textsuperscript{19} Also of importance are: reports from the United States’
National Intelligence Council; the Bush administration’s 2001 \textit{National Energy Policy

\textit{Lubnan Mujtamaan Islamiyan} (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1996). Gilbert Achcar, e-mail message to author, 24
August 2009.

\textsuperscript{16} Wright’s theory of contradictory class locations plays a supplementary role in this thesis and,
therefore, only a limited survey of the extensive literature on this topic has been completed. The most
important publications on his theory are \textit{Class Structure and Income Determination} (were he first put
forward the theory), \textit{The Debate on Classes} (a large edited volume by Wright and his critics), and his
later books \textit{Classes} and \textit{Class Counts} Erik O. Wright, \textit{Class Structure and Income Determination} (New

\textsuperscript{17} Alex Callinicos, "Imperialism and Global Political Economy," \textit{International Socialism}, no. 108 (2005),
Alex Callinicos, "Iraq: Fulcrum of World Politics," \textit{Third World Quarterly} 26, no. 4/5 (2005), Alex

\textsuperscript{18} Robert Kagan, "America's Crisis of Legitimacy," \textit{Foreign Affairs} 83, no. 2 (2004), Zalmay Khalilzad,
\textit{From Containment to Global Leadership? America & the World after the Cold War} (Santa Monica:
Rand Corporation, 1995), Paul Wolfowitz, "Bridging Centuries: Fin De Siècle All over Again," \textit{The National
for the New American Century, September 2000).

\textsuperscript{19} Zbigniew Brzezinski, \textit{The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives} (New
also identify important evidence in the works of Philip Bobbitt, Joseph Nye and John Mearsheimer.
Philip Bobbitt, \textit{The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History} (New York: Knopf, 2002),
and 2002 *National Security Strategy*; and global energy statistics from BP, the International Energy Agency, and the OECD.  

In theorising the current nature of imperialism, I regard Harvey and Ellen Meiksins Wood as the most significant Marxist contributors to this debate since the invasion of Iraq. The journal *Historical Materialism* has devoted an issue to each of these theorists, which incorporates articles by them and other notable Marxist theorists of imperialism. I consider the articles of Sam Ashman, Robert Brenner, Callinicos, Harvey, Bob Sutcliffe and Wood, as the most important for this work.

To construct an understanding of Israel’s actions in 2006 this work’s starting point is the following publications: *The Class Character of Israel*, from 1969 by Israeli Marxists Moshe Machover and Akiva Orr; *Israel: A Colonial-Settlerstate?*, from 1973 by French Marxist Maxime Rodinson; and *Israel: The Hijack State: America’s Watchdog in*  

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the Middle East, a 1986 pamphlet by British Marxist John Rose. These publications establish the fundamentals of Watchdog State theory, namely its colonial nature and ties to imperialism, while Rose’s pamphlet is able to incorporate the later entry of the United States into this relationship. The number of Marxist and other left-wing authors writing about the US-Israel relationship is very large, but these can be divided between those who see the US as dominant, as explained in Watchdog State theory, and those who see power in the hands of the Israel Lobby. It is the former theory that is adopted in this work and its most prominent current advocates are Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, and Stephen Zunes. For empirical research on the financial relationship between Israel and the United States the most important authors are Clyde Mark and Jeremy Sharp of the US Congressional Research Service, and Shirl McArthur of the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs.

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25 Israel’s shift from British and French, to US patronage, took place in the 1950s and 1960s, but this was not clearly visible until the 1970s. Therefore, the works of Machover, Orr, and Rodinson (whose 1973 book is based on an article written in 1967), do not focus on the role of the United States. Machover and Orr, "The Class Character of Israel.", Rodinson, Israel: A Colonial-Settlerstate, Rene Theberge, "Books: Rodinson on Israel," MERIP Reports, no. 21 (1973).


27 Finkelstein does afford the Lobby more influence than the other two authors. None of these authors have produced major publications solely on this theory (unlike the earlier advocates of Watchdog State theory); however, it remains central to their work on Israel and in their debates with advocates of the Israel Lobby theory. See Noam Chomsky, "The Israel Lobby?,” Z Net (2006), http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/4134, James Petras and Norman Finkelstein, "The Lobby: The Debate over Aipac's Influence on US Foreign Policy," South and West Asia, and North Africa Collective (Los Angeles: KPFK, 2007), Stephen Zunes, "The Israel Lobby: How Powerful Is It Really?,” Foreign Policy in Focus (2006), http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/3270.

Motivation

The 2006 War in Lebanon is important for our understanding of the dynamics and issues facing the modern Middle East and for this reason is commonly referenced in broader discussions on the region. Nonetheless, in these discussions Lebanon’s war sits in the shadow of the far larger war in Iraq. It is also unlikely to be apportioned the same space in future textbooks as most of the preceding Arab-Israeli wars, of which it was the sixth. These preceding wars have cemented their place in history, with images of victorious soldiers erecting flags or standing solemnly at the Wailing Wall; leaders and generals in triumphant motorcades; or the dead heaped in piles on bloody streets. In this war there was no such image; no single depiction that encapsulates the collective understanding of what the war was about and how it ended.

This thesis concludes that the underlying economic, geo-strategic, ideological, and political factors that generated the conflict are still actively shaping events in the region. Hizbullah remains unsure of its position in Lebanon; Israel is still smarting from its humiliation; and, despite new leadership in Washington, the challenges to US global power that motivated its open support for Israel in 2006, remain ever present. Greater understanding of the war in 2006 may not prevent the conflict from flaring up again, but it may help to predict the course of a future outbreak, mitigate its effects, and prepare an intellectual and political response.

My motivation for writing this thesis arose during the war: from discussions at meetings to organise protests; from the speeches in Dunedin’s Museum Reserve and Octagon; and from the arguments I engaged in and reflected upon during those days. I agreed then, as I do now, that Israel’s attack on Lebanon had to be opposed in whatever way it could. To have argued to do nothing, as protest bystanders and many of the world’s governments did, was an act of support for Israel, for given its vastly superior military power it was the only party to gain from such inaction. As the radical Brazilian educator Paulo Freire once said: “‘Washing one's hands’ of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless [less-powerful in the case of
Hizbullah] means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.” I also believed that a failure by Israel to subdue Hizbullah would be the most positive outcome from an otherwise pointless war. Not only would this weaken Israeli and US dominance in the region, it could also have emboldened Middle Eastern people to challenge both Israel and their own regimes. With hindsight, my opinion has not changed.

This train of argument is an application of the principle of “unconditional, but critical support” for any organisation fighting against imperialism and for national liberation. In the case of Hizbullah this principle was more relevant during the occupation of Lebanon prior to 2000, but in 2006 it again gained significance as Israel sought to re-assert its dominance in the region. It is important to note that this thesis expends more energy on highlighting the misdeeds of Israel and the United States, than those of Hizbullah. This does not mean I will gloss over the cynical and immoral actions of Hizbullah, as some on the left have attempted to do. It is instead an acknowledgment that in English language discourse on the war Israel and the United States were exempted from much of the criticism and demonisation that Hizbullah faced.

30 This is a long-standing principle of the British Socialist Workers Party. An early reference to this appeared in an editorial in the party’s newspaper, the Socialist Worker, on February 12, 1972: “Unconditional but critical support for all those, including both IRAs, fighting imperialism in Ireland. By unconditional we mean support regardless of our criticism of the leadership and tactics. By critical we mean opposing the sowing of illusions that the struggle can finally be won except by the victory of the working class fighting on a programme of social as well as national liberation.” Quoted in Duncan Hallas and Jim Higgins, “Marxism and Terrorism,” International Socialists Internal Bulletin (March 1972), http://www.marxists.org/archive/hallas/works/1972/03/terror.htm.
31 During attempts to counter the demonisation of Hizbullah when talking to the wider public, many anti-war activists ignored some of the more unsettling realities about the party. Unfortunately this sometimes crept into internal debates and articles by organisations that should have know better. Admittedly the most extreme examples came from semi-Stalinist organisations, such as the Workers World Party, who completely glossed over the crimes of Hizbullah and its associates. John Catalinotto, “A Liberation Hero to Lebanese Masses: Thousands Mourn Hezbollah Military Leader,” Workers World (21 February 2008), http://www.workers.org/2008/world/hezbollah_0228/ . “A Victory for the Resistance: Lebanese Joyful as Released Prisoners Return,” Workers World (27 July 2008), http://www.workers.org/2008/world/lebanon_0731/ . While I agree with both articles in their support for Hizbullah’s opposition to Israel and the United States, I do not agree with how they ignore the brutal actions of Imad Mughniyah and Samir al-Quntar. While Quntar is not a member of Hizbullah, the article clearly ignored his crimes for the sake of portraying a more positive view of his supporters (i.e., Hizbullah).
Limitations

The first and most obvious limitation placed on this work is my restriction of this study to the causes of the war, rather than its consequences. While events from both during and after the war are included in this thesis, they are used to the extent that they elucidate the causes. When analysing the causes of the war I have also limited myself to the three primary actors, Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States. There are many other actors mentioned in this work, but the bulk of this thesis is devoted to the three actors that dictated the course of the war. My decision to focus less attention on Hizbullah’s allies Iran and Syria does not deny their importance, but is part of a clear argument that they did not play a determining role in the war itself.

Despite broaching moral subjects, this work does not focus on drawing normative conclusions. This work also pays little attention to the role of international law, partly due to its quasi-normative focus, but mainly as a result of its ineffectuality in this conflict. As will be shown in this thesis, international law and international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) were largely powerless in the face of US diplomatic pressure. The United States blocked all attempts to end the conflict until it decided it was time to do so and despite the blatant targeting of civilians by both sides no individual has been brought to justice for these war crimes.

In 2006 journalists and politicians used terms such as ‘terrorist,’ ‘militant,’ ‘racist,’ ‘kidnapping,’ and ‘moderate Arab leaders,’ as if it was objective language. This work avoids such terms when their emotive connotations are deemed to outweigh their descriptive value. For Hizbullah’s action on July 12 I use the term ‘capture’ (rather than ‘kidnapping’), as the victims were soldiers (rather than civilians) from an army that had effectively been at war with Hizbullah for over two decades.

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The final limitation results from the fact that the war was recent and, therefore, the number of primary sources is limited. In researching this subject one is faced with a plethora of competing views, each held up stridently as the definitive explanation of the conflict, yet all relying on the same rather narrow pool of evidence. Despite the temptation to ignore all but one line of argument, I have produced a work that is self-aware of the limits of the current evidence. In several important cases my conclusions will include an exposition of the main competing arguments in order to create a robust analysis that can readily accommodate new evidence in the future.

Outline

The purpose of this thesis is to create a robust explanation of the causes of the 2006 War in Lebanon: an interpretation of the conflict as arising from immediate, historical and structural origins. To achieve this chapter 1 develops a Marxist theoretical framework to identify the underlying dynamics and motivations of the three primary actors in this conflict. This begins with a historical theorisation of Hizbullah’s emergence. Here I contend that Hizbullah’s popularity and position in Lebanon was determined most by its war against the Israeli occupation and its representation of the Iranian revolution (in terms of the prestige it gave the party, rather than the revolution’s ideology). I then present Achcar’s Marxist theory of Islamism and attempt an original application of this theory to Hizbullah, concluding that Hizbullah is a middle-class organisation.

Chapter 1 then explains Harvey’s Global Oil Spigot theory. Here I contend that under the Bush administration, the United States sought to gain hegemony over Middle Eastern oil in order to defend US power against future rival challenges. It is the 2003 invasion of Iraq, however, which provides the clearest and most well researched illustration of this grand strategy. For this reason the majority of the theoretical framework devoted to the United States will focus on identifying US
motivations for invading Iraq in 2003. Chapter 1 concludes with an exposition of Watchdog State theory, contending that Israel’s leaders operate on the basis of an underlying, although generally unstated, assumption that Israel serves the interests of foreign imperialism. This section begins by explaining the historical construction of this relationship under British patronage, followed by analysis of its current incarnation, and the obligations and benefits for Israel and the United States.

What I aim to demonstrate is the validity of this approach for analysing the War in Lebanon and the actions of Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States. At the same time the 2006 conflict provided an opportunity to reassess these theories, particularly on the question of Hizbullah’s class basis and place within the modern resurgence of Islamism, the United State’s grand strategy in the Middle East, and Israel’s seeming autonomy. What I conclude is that this Marxist theoretical framework, with minor modifications, is able to significantly enhance our understanding of the long-, medium-, and short-term causes of the 2006 War in Lebanon.

Chapter 2 explains the medium-term causes of the war, identifying Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States’ medium-term interests in 2006. Hizbullah’s primary concern was maintaining popular support among Lebanese Shi’a and legitimising the retention of its armed wing. Secondary to these aims was the party’s attempt to gain more influence in the Lebanese government, and support Iran and Syria in the face of US and Israeli threats. In the context of a failing occupation in Iraq, the United States confrontation with Iran had become a central concern in 2006. Therefore, its medium-term interests in relation to Lebanon were the need to weaken Iran’s influence, crush oppositional forces in the Middle East, and strengthen its regional allies. Israel’s interests are then presented in two categories, those that complemented the United States’ medium-term interests, such as weakening Iran

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33 The terms Islamism, Islamic fundamentalism, political Islam, and radical Islam are largely interchangeable. My preference for the term Islamism, over political Islam and radical Islam, is largely stylistic and in no way advocates the views of Bernard Lewis and others, that politics and religion are inseparable under Islam. For discussion of this see Deepa Kumar, “Political Islam: A Marxist Analysis,” International Socialist Review, no. 76 (2011). I do not use the term Islamic fundamentalism for two reasons: firstly, it is a Christian term (coined by a Protestant literalist movement of the early twentieth century) and secondly, important theological differences place Sunni Islamists slightly closer to this Christian movement than Twelver Shi’a Islamists (e.g., Hizbullah). This is because Twelver Shi’a Islamists, unlike Sunni Islamists, still allow some interpretation of the sources of Islam and do not aspire for the direct recreation of a past Islamic golden age (see chap. 1, n. 43).
and crushing oppositional forces, and those that were part of Israel’s sovereign interests. Among the latter concerns were Olmert and Peretz’s lack of military credentials, the loss of an Israeli soldier in Gaza a month before Hizbullah’s successful capture operation, and the importance in Israeli political culture of rescuing or regaining the bodies of captured soldiers.

The third chapter provides a timeline of the war, breaking the 33-day conflict down into four distinct phases, each describing the diplomatic and military conflict. Diplomatically the war was characterised by the efforts of the United States and its European allies to obstruct condemnation of Israel and international attempts to draw up a cease-fire agreement (particularly by France). Militarily the war was shaped by a hesitant and poorly prepared Israel, confronting an adversary that while largely on the defensive, achieved many embarrassing victories. This chapter provides important context for this thesis and is central to the arguments put forward in chapter 4.

The final chapter ascertains the intentions of Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States’ during the war, by answering five important questions. The first is whether Hizbullah was trying to incite a full-scale war by capturing Israeli soldiers on July 12, 2006, to which I believe the answer is yes. The next question addresses Israel’s war aims and tactics. Israel’s aims fluctuated throughout the war along a spectrum from the optimistic (destroying Hizbullah) to the resigned (gaining leverage in the cease-fire negotiations). Israel’s tactics included pressuring the non-Shi’a Lebanese communities, the employment of a military strategy centred on Effects-Based Operations (EBO), and the collective punishment of Lebanon’s Shi’a population. These tactics provide insight into Israel’s interests in the war and its methods for confronting oppositional forces in the Middle East. The next two questions arose from assertions by the left that Israel was actively seeking a pretext with which to justify a war on Hizbullah, and that the United States pushed Israel into the war. On both accounts there is little evidence to back up these claims. The final question in this chapter is whether the United States was complicit in the war. This is far easier to prove, as the United States blocked the calling of a cease-fire and rushed weapons to Israel, thus allowing the war to continue for a full 33 days.
The majority of works on the 2006 War in Lebanon appeared within a year of the conflict, the authors presumably hoping to influence the debates of those still impassioned by the bloodshed. In doing so these authors opted to limit the scope of their publications to a direct appraisal of the conflict, while omitting in-depth discussion of their underlying theoretical assumptions. With time on my side, I here intend to construct a Marxist theoretical framework to understand the three primary actors in this war: Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States.

The first section begins by identifying the catalysts for Hizbullah’s emergence and from these draws four important conclusions for this thesis: Hizbullah’s military achievements secured its position as the main representative of Lebanese Shi’a; the party’s popularity has little to do with its stated Islamist ideology; the party’s engagement in electoral politics has made it more dependent on popular support; and neither Iran nor Syria control the party. This historical account is then expanded upon with the incorporation of Gilbert Achcar’s theory on the modern resurgence of Islamism and Erik Olin Wright’s work on modern class positions. From this I conclude that Hizbullah is a party of the petty bourgeoisie and new middle class, what I will collectively refer to as the ‘middle class,’ in terms of its basis (leadership and cadre) and its nature (worldview and interests). I will end this section with my central theoretical conclusion on Hizbullah, namely that it continues to rely on its weapons, because its middle-class economic and political programme is too conservative to address Lebanese Shi’a concerns.

Section 1.2 identifies those long-term US interests that influenced its decision to allow the 2006 war to continue for as long as it did. To achieve this I look back to the

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34 The most important of these authors’ works are Achcar, "Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism.", Wright, Class Structure and Income Determination.
2003 US invasion of Iraq, as it is the clearest and most well researched illustration of US interests in the Middle East under the administration of George W. Bush. I contend that David Harvey’s Global Oil Spigot theory identifies the most important interest, which was to secure hegemony over Middle Eastern oil supplies in order to stave off challenges to US regional and global power.

This chapter concludes with an analysis of Watchdog State theory, which identifies long-term Israeli interests that arises from its unique relationship to foreign imperialism. This section will illustrate the historical emergence of this relationship under British, and to a lesser extent French patronage, and then analyse the current US-Israeli relationship. In this the United States provides financial, military, and diplomatic support to Israel, in exchange for a military stronghold and a ‘watchdog’ that threatens and confronts forces opposing US interests in the world’s most contentious region. While I contend that the United State’s is the dominant partner in this relationship, I shall emphasise that Israel maintains significant autonomy. This autonomy, however, is structurally limited by Israel’s historical displacement of the existing Palestinian population. The result is perpetual hostility with the surrounding populations and the convergence of Israeli and US interests over confronting any non-compliant centres of power in the Middle East.
1.1) Hizbullah and Islamism

At present there are many excellent English Language works on Hizbullah, but among the major works none has yet incorporated a Marxist perspective. Achcar, a French-Lebanese Marxist, has produced important works on Islamism more generally, in particular his 1981 article, *Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism.* 35 This widely circulated article builds on the seminal work of previous Marxist scholars of Islam, such as Maxime Rodinson. 36 While writing extensively on Lebanese issues Achcar has not explicitly applied his theories to Hizbullah. This section intends to synthesise the strongest existing theories on Hizbullah’s emergence, with Achcar’s theory of Islamism, in order to create a more robust understanding of the Party of God.

This section will identify the main catalysts for Hizbullah’s emergence, each of which continues to influence the party’s relationship to its social base. The term social base here refers to the party’s membership and broader support base of voters and sympathisers among Lebanese Shi’a. This section will then identify the role of ideology in the party’s popularity, the effects of its engagement in electoral politics over the last two decades, and its relationship to Iran and Syria. 37 The final component of this section is an explanation of Wright’s theory of contradictory class locations and Achcar’s general theory of Islamism and their application to Hizbullah.

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35 Achcar, "Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism."
36 Rodinson’s most important work on this subject is Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).
37 Islamist ideology intrigues many with its exotic and simplistic explanatory allure, while serving the interests of some as it can easily be used for demagogic abuse. This section rejects this historical-idealist approach, which fetishises the importance of ideology, particularly when trying to understand Hizbullah and its actions in 2006. Idealist theory includes ethical, historical, and metaphysical forms. Historical idealism locates the principal motor of historical change in agency, ideas, or consciousness, as seen in idealist theories of Islamism and idealist theories of GPE (e.g., the theory that neo-conservative ideas dictated the policies of the Bush administration; see section 1.2). Tom Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Reference, 1991), 247.
The Historical Development of Hizbullah

Existing literature on Hizbullah can be grouped into two broad categories: those that focus on the militancy of the group and tend to emphasize the role of ideology (i.e., historical idealism) and those that focus more on the historical dynamics underlying the group’s founding (i.e., historical realism).

It is the later category that I consider of greatest explanatory value, in particular the work of Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh and Augustus Richard Norton. These two authors develop a similar set of four main catalysts for Hizbullah’s formation: namely, identity crisis, structural imbalance, military defeat, and the demonstration effect. Norton, while agreeing with the formational role of these catalysts, also emphasizes their importance in explaining much of Hizbullah’s current behavior. This is because as the party has grown and engaged in electoral politics it has had to become more attentive to its social base, whose interests continue to stem from these four catalysts.

The first catalyst is the identity crisis that Lebanese Shi’a face as a result of a history of real and perceived persecution by a dominating Sunni world. Due to factors of Islamic, Lebanese and colonial history, Lebanon’s Sunni elite had long been the de-facto political representatives of all Lebanese Muslims. Exacerbating this was

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39 Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History. Compared to the other major works on Hizbullah, Hamzeh and Norton published their books relatively recently (2004 and 2007 respectively), allowing them to incorporate the developments since Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.

40 Hamzeh views the catalysts as most important for understanding the formation of Hizbullah, rather than their current political and operational choices, and lends greater explanatory value to the ideology and clerical leadership of the party.

41 Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 7.
the official rejection of temporal power by the majority of the Shi’a religious class (ulama, sing. alim), who I will refer to as clerics. This rejection arises from the Twelver Shi’a belief that while an Islamic state can be created, perfect Islamic order will only be established on the return of the hidden, twelfth, rightful-successor of Muhammad (Muhammad al-Mahdi). The mass of Shi’a were, therefore, economically and politically alienated in Lebanon, and they had not managed until the late 1970s to establish powerful religious organisations that could further their communal interests.

Structural imbalance, where Lebanese Shi’a were under-represented in government and over-represented in the lower socio-economic ranks, compounded the effects of identity crisis. This situation was caused by the historical marginalisation of Lebanese Shi’a by foreign and local rulers, and the concentration of Shi’a in agriculture in Southern Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley, rather than in commerce in Beirut, where Lebanon’s wealth and power is centred.

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42 The term alim literally means ‘scholar’ and refers to one who has gained specialised religious knowledge; but is generally translated as cleric. Unlike the Christian clergy, not all ulama hold a formal religious position and there is no clear equivalent of the Christian concept of ordination in Islam. Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 24, n. 3.

43 All Shi’a figures and organisations mentioned in this thesis are Twelver Shi’a unless otherwise stated. When referring to the Shi’a of Lebanon I am referring to Twelver Shi’a, rather than Alawi, Druze, or the tiny number of Ismaili Shi’a (Druze are a branch or off-shot of Ismaili Shi’a Islam, while Alawi claim to be Twelver Shi’a). The reason for doing so is that Twelver Shi’a, Alawi, Druze, and Ismaili are each separately recognized sects in Lebanon and have their own sectarian political parties (except, to the best of my knowledge, the Ismaili). Twelver Shi’a believe that only the Muhammad al-Mahdi can create a perfect Islamic state, distinguishing them from Sunni Islamists who aspire to recreate the “Golden Age comprising the first three Caliphs.” Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, Hizbu’llah: Politics and Religion (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 34. For Twelver Shi’a the Islamic state is a goal, but only in so far as it improves the social justice inherent in the imposition of Islamic law (Shari’a). Another difference is that unlike in Sunni Islam, Twelver Shi’a have not disavowed interpretation (ijtihad) of the sources of Islam (the Quran and the Sunnah), which allows slightly more flexibility in dealing with modern situations. Nonetheless, Twelver Shi’a Islam is primarily literalistic, with the sources of Islam essentially being fourteen-century-old civil-codes. Achcar contends that such factors lead to “an ‘elective affinity’ between Orthodox Islam – defined here as characterized by strict allegiance to the Sharia [therefore, including most Shi’a] and ‘medieval-reactionary utopianism.’” Gilbert Achcar, "Religion and Politics Today from a Marxist Perspective," in Socialist Register 2008: Global Flashpoints: Reactions to Imperialism and Neoliberalism, ed. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2007), 66. See also Anne Alexander, "Islam through the Looking-Glass: A Review of Gilbert Achcar, Eastern Cauldron: Islam, Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq in a Marxist Mirror," International Socialism, no. 104 (2004).

44 Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 12.

The third catalyst was military defeat, particularly the Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 (the latter initiating Israel’s 18-year occupation of the south of the country). While Hizbullah officially introduced itself to the world through its ‘open letter’ of 1985, the party had been created in 1982, in the wake that year’s invasion. According to Amal Saad-Ghorayeb this was the determining factor in the rise of Islamism in the Shi’a community, as Islamist groups came to dominate the resistance. The concept of military defeat also refers to the Lebanese civil war, where Shi’as suffered the highest casualties during the first years of the conflict.

The fourth catalyst was the demonstration effect provided by the successful Iranian Revolution in 1979. This smashed the historical Shi’a sense of political weakness by establishing Shi’a religious rule in one of the Muslim world’s most powerful states. The Iranian Revolution also had practical implications, with Ruhollah Khomeini’s regime urging Shi’a clerics to mobilise resistance to the Israeli occupation, a call taken up by more militant clerics, such as the late Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah. This new politicisation brought clarity and purpose to a Shi’a religious elite that had become factionalised since the 1978 disappearance of the Lebanese Shi’a leader Musa al Sadr.

Another impact of the Iranian Revolution was Khomeini’s creation/adoption of the theory of the Guardianship of the Jurist (wilayat al-faqih), which remains the official ideology of Iran and Hizbullah. This theory reversed the historical rejection of state power by Shi’a clerics. Khomeini argued that the Muhammad al-Mahdi’s right to rule was devolved upon the Islamic jurists (fuqaha, sing. faqih) and if one such jurist managed to establish an Islamic state then it was the duty of all jurists to follow

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46 Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 15.
49 Ibid., 9.
50 Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 17.
51 Ibid., 24.
52 The theory of *wilayat al-faqih* was developed and advocated most significantly by Khomeini, although the concept does predate him. See Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizb’ullah: Politics and Religion*, 59-61, Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 31.
Islamism, Imperialism, and the Watchdog State

him. Khomeini, therefore, emerged as the Guardian Jurist (wali al-faqih), and Hizbullah chose to follow him.

Among these four catalysts it was identity crisis and structural imbalance that created the social milieu necessary for the emergence of a radical Shi’a movement in Lebanon. It was, however, the party’s military prowess and position as representative of the victorious Iranian Revolution that allowed Hizbullah, rather than any other group, to arise as the most powerful Lebanese Shi’a organisation. Having identified the catalysts for Hizbullah’s emergence, I now wish to look at the role the party’s ideology plays in building its popular support.

Despite the high level of religiosity among Hizbullah’s social base, the vast majority of these people do not support the theory of wilayat al-faqih, especially under Khomeini’s successor, Ali Khamenei. Most Lebanese Shi’a are Twelver Shi’a and are obliged to subscribe to the rulings of one marja’ al-taqlid (literally “source of emulation,” who are the highest ranking clerics, usually holding the title of grand ayatollah). While it is difficult to know the exact number of followers of each marja’ al-taqlid, Norton estimated in 2007 that at least 60 percent of Lebanese Shi’a followed Ali al-Sistani, based in Najaf, Iraq, while the rest emulated Fadlallah of Beirut. Neither of these men has endorsed Khomeini’s theory of wilayat al-faqih. According

53 Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 31.
54 Ibid., 33.
55 In a comprehensive survey (n = 256) of Lebanese Shi’a, Simon Haddad concluded, “respondents who report high levels of religious devotion in their lives are more likely to support Hezbollah and to endorse its activities.” Haddad, “The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon’s Hezbollah,” 31. Khamenei lacks the religious credentials of his predecessor, and was given the title of grand ayatollah for more political than religious reasons. Maziar Behrooz, “The Islamic State and the Crisis of Marja’iyat in Iran,” Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 16, no. 2 (1996).
57 Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 151.
58 Al-Sistani has never explicitly supported or opposed Khomeini’s theory of wilayat al-faqih. He disagrees, however, with the fact that Khomeini and Khamenei’s power extends to all religious issues. As he states on his website, “Every jurisprudent (Faqih) has wilayah (guardianship) over non-litigious affairs. Non-litigious affairs are called ‘al-omour al-hesbiah’. As for general affairs to which social order is linked, wilayah of a Faqih and enforcement of wilayah depend on certain conditions one of which is popularity of Faqih among majority of momeneen [faithfull].” Ali al-Sistani, “Q & A » Governance of Jurist (1),” Official Website of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, http://www.sistani.org/local.php?modules =nav&mid=5&cid=485&h=Wilayat-e%20Faqih. Fadlallah more clearly expressed his own view, stating, “I don’t believe that Welayat al-Faqih has any role in Lebanon… My opinion is that I don’t see the Guardianship of the Jurist as the definitive Islamic regime.” Robert L. Pollock, “A Dialogue with Lebanon’s Ayatollah ” Wall Street Journal, 14 March 2009. See also Saad-Ghorayeb, Hizbu’llah: Politics and Religion, 64.
to Hamzeh, the majority of Hizbullah’s members follow Khamenei, the current *wali al-faqih*, but Norton contends that “very few” Lebanese Shi’a outside the party emulate him.59 Tellingly, the party’s 2009 political manifesto, the first since its ‘open letter’ in 1985, removed any mention of the theory *wilayat al-faqih*.60

Another reason to downplay the importance of the party’s ideology arises from the historical ability of Lebanese Shi’a to shift their allegiance from the secular left to Islamism. According to Lebanese based journalist Christian Henderson, “At the start of Lebanon’s civil war in 1976, the Shi’a formed the majority of the Lebanese Communist Party [LCP]. But as Islamist politics became increasingly popular in the mid-1980s, many Shi’a began to shift toward Hizbollah.”61 Shi’a support for the LCP arose partly from absence of any Shi’a party, but even after the founding of the Shi’a Movement of the Deprived (*mahrumeen*) in 1974, and its militia Amal in 1975, it was not until the late 1970s that the secular left started to lose its monopoly on Shi’a political allegiance.62 I contend that this dramatic transfer of support represented a shift in perception of who could best resolve the temporal needs of Shi’a, rather than

62 Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu’llah: Politics and Religion*, 9. While established in 1982, Hizbullah has its roots as a tolerated Khomeinist current within Amal. Gilbert Achcar and Michael Warschawski, *The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 21. It is important to note that the *mahrumeen* and Amal were formed with heavy support from traditional Shi’a elites who feared the popularity of militant left-wing politics. According to Achcar: “The post-1967 radicalization found expression in Lebanon in the spectacular growth of left-wing and radical left forces – the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) in particular – among Shiites above all, whether in poor rural areas or in Beirut’s plebeian belt. The traditional leaderships that used to dominate the Shiite community – mostly quasi-feudal large landowners [commonly referred to as Zu’ama families, as each was led by a political patriarch (Za’im, pl. Zu’ama)] that had converted to electoral feudalism and capitalized on their influence over the community to get lucrative positions in the Lebanese state – lost ground inexorably. The Shiite bourgeoisie, like its counterparts among other communities, worried about the rise of the radical left…. It was chiefly in an effort to face this situation that, in 1974, a Shiite religious dignitary, Musa al-Sadr, and an enlightened member of the Shiite “political class,” the MP Hussein el-Husseini, founded the Movement of the Deprived … [which] competed against the Lebanese left on its own social ground not only by organizing all kinds of services – thanks to the important financial means that were at its disposal from the start – but also by resorting to populist discourse that outbid the left.” Achcar and Warschawski, *The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences*, 18. The majority of Zu’ama families remain opposed to Hizbullah and have competed against it in national and municipal elections, often allied with Amal. Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 113.
a mass religious awakening. This shift has commonalities with many Islamist organisations that arose after the failure of democratic-nationalist movements in the Muslim world. The implication is that it is the party’s material actions and policies, rather than its spiritual message, which are responsible for the group’s popularity.

The most important development in Hizbullah’s recent history is the Lebanonisation or openness (infitah) of the party to the Lebanese government and society, epitomised by its engagement in electoral politics. This theory is associated with Hamzeh, Saad-Ghorayeb, and in particular Norton, and has faced accusations that it downplays Hizbullah’s continuing military activities and assumes that the party is adopting a purely civilian path. While this is an exaggeration of these authors’ actual views, this theory does contend that Hizbullah is becoming more civilianised, a point of major contention in this thesis. My own interpretation of this process is that it has led to a dramatic expansion of the group’s popularity, but has also exposed the party to more influence from its social base. The initial step in this process was Hizbullah’s contesting of the 1992 Lebanese national elections, the first held since 1975. Influencing this decision were shifts in power within the leadership of Hizbullah and Iran. This saw leaders in favour of contesting the Lebanese elections

63 Assaf and Henderson, “Hizbollah and Lebanon’s Resistance to Imperialism.”
64 Democratic-nationalist movements are groups attempting to establish democratic states, independent of imperialist control. In 1981, when Achcar wrote his Eleven Theses, the most prominent Islamist resurgences had been in Egypt, Syria, Iran, and Pakistan. These were countries where local democratic-nationalist leaders from the bourgeoisie and middle class had gained state power in the past, but had failed to create democratic rule and/or meaningful opposition to imperialism. All leaders had at some stage received massive middle-class support, but had lost this due to deteriorating socio-economic prospects for this class. The regimes that managed to retain power without middle-class support, did so through military rule. In Algeria, Iraq, and Libya the democratic-nationalist leaders contained Islamism by extending the economic benefits of oil to the middle class. Algeria’s economic crisis in the 1980s heavily affected the middle class, leading to the rise of Islamism and the founding of the Islamic Salvation Front in 1989. In the case of Lebanon and Tunisia, Achcar contends that the relative westernisation of these countries handicapped the rise of Islamism. The only noteworthy working-class leaders in these regional movements were Stalinists, who were later discredited such as in the case of Afghanistan. As Alejandro Colas has noted, it is no coincidence that the resurgence of Islamism took off in the 1970s after the humiliation of the region’s most important democratic-nationalist leader, Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, in 1967. Achcar, Eastern Cauldron: Islam, Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq in a Marxist Mirror, 268, Alejandro Colas, "The Re-Invention of Populism: Islamist Responses to Capitalist Development in the Contemporary Maghreb," Historical Materialism 12, no. 4 (2004): 240.
(Hizbullah’s then secretary general Abbas al-Musawi, current secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, Iranian president Hashemi Rafsanjari, and Khamenei), gaining ascendancy over a faction opposed to this decision (Hizbullah’s recently replaced secretary general Subhi al-Tufayli and Iran’s interior minister Ali Akbar Muhtashami).66

The pro-election camp knew that to build the party’s social base Hizbullah needed to utilise state power, particularly the allocation of funding and jobs to the Shi’a community that the control of state ministries allows. As Hizbullah’s deputy secretary-general Naim Qassem states, “being a part of the executive governmental body assists in securing a certain portion of the lot that is the subject of allocation.”67 This was despite Hizbullah’s leaders having long condemned Lebanon’s secular and corrupt confessional political system.68 The main stated fear of the anti-election camp was that the party would become a tame political entity when subjected to the compromising pressures of parliamentary politics.69 A more important issue, however, was how to accommodate the inherent limitations in the party’s economic and political programme with the democratic demands of its constituents.70 Nevertheless, in 2005 Hizbullah took another major step in its Lebanonisation by entering the Lebanese cabinet, a decision shaped by the recent departure of Syrian forces from Lebanon.71

Another aspect of Hizbullah’s evolution is its changing relationship to Iran and Syria. In the case of Syria the relationship has always been, as Qassem states, “based on a computation of the interests of the resistance [Hizbullah].”72 This functional association remains complex, but with Hizbullah’s rise in power since the end of the

67 Qassem, Hizbullah: The Story from Within, 201.
68 Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 98. Lebanon’s confessional political system is a form of consociationalism in which high-level state offices are proportionately allocated among the 18 recognized religious sects (confessions). According to the Lebanese scholar Fawwaz Traboulsi, “Consociationalism (al-tawafaqiyyah or al tawafaqiyah al-tawa’iffiyah) is a current Lebanese euphemism for the more traditional but increasingly disparaged ‘confessionalism.’” Traboulsi, “Hezbollah’s New Political Platform.”
69 Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 100.
70 See section 1.1.
71 See section 2.1.
72 Qassem, Hizbullah: The Story from Within, 242. Also see Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 35.
Israeli occupation in 2000, the relationship has become more balanced.\textsuperscript{73} In 2006 the most important element of this relationship for Hizbullah was Syria’s role as both a source of weapons and a conduit for arms from Iran.\textsuperscript{74} For Syria, Hizbullah remains a critical factor in its interaction with Lebanon, Iran, and Israel, leading the scholar Emile el-Hokayem to state in 2007, that “Syria is more pro-Hizballah than Hizballah is pro-Syria.”\textsuperscript{75}

Hizbullah’s relationship with Iran is much stronger than with Syria, but this has changed dramatically since its founding in the 1980s, when as Norton states, it existed “less as a concrete organisation than as a cat’s paw of Iran.”\textsuperscript{76} This is shown in the party’s founding charter where it states, “We, the sons of Hezbollah’s nation in Lebanon, whose vanguard God has given victory in Iran and which established the nucleus of the world’s central Islamic state, abide by the orders of the single wise and just command currently embodied in the supreme example of Ayatollah Khomeini.”\textsuperscript{77}

Today the Party of God is a dramatically different entity and few serious scholars of the party see it is a mere Iranian proxy.\textsuperscript{78} In 2009 the US Air Force sponsored a report by the RAND Corporation in which it was concluded that:

Based on these limitations, we assess that Iran will never reliably control these groups [Hizbullah, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, and the movement of Muqtada al-Sadr] and that, even in the case of Hizbullah, Iran’s expenditure of financial resources and military aid has not translated into unquestioned loyalty by a group it essentially founded. Thus, the use

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{73} Emile el-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria: Outgrowing the Proxy Relationship," The Washington Quarterly 30, no. 2 (2007): 36.\
\textsuperscript{74} See section 2.1.\
\textsuperscript{75} el-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria: Outgrowing the Proxy Relationship," 36.\
\textsuperscript{76} Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 72.\
\textsuperscript{77} Quoted in Frederic Wehrey et al., Dangerous but Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East, Project Air Force (RAND Corporation, 2009), 91.\
\textsuperscript{78} This can be seen in the following quotations from noted experts Ervand Abrahamian, Gary Gambill, and Hamzeh: “Hizbullah's leaders are not the types to take orders from elsewhere;” “Hezbollah has never displayed any willingness to sacrifice its pursuit of political hegemony among Shiite Lebanese to advance Iranian interests” “and even if the regime in Iran were to collapse, Hizbullah has reached a stage now where it can easily exist.” Guy Dinmore, "Experts Challenge White House Line on Iran's Influence," Financial Times, 18 July 2006. Gary C. Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hizbullah War " Mideast Monitor 1, no. 3 (2006), http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0609/0609_2.htm. Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 150.}
of the term “proxy” to define the relationship between Iran and its regional militant allies is overstated and inaccurate, with important implications for U.S. strategy.79

Throughout the 1990s, Hizbullah’s emphasis on its national/Arab liberation character slowly began to overshadow its message of spreading the successful Islamist revolution from Iran.80 As Israeli scholar Ron Schleifer has shown, Hizbullah’s rhetoric during this period focused on the following themes: unity with other Lebanese; the liberation of Jerusalem; the justness and ultimate victory of its struggle; that their struggle will be long; the demonisation of Zionism and Israel; and that their struggle was the enacting of God’s will.81 According to the RAND corporation report, Hizbullah’s changing focus meant that it did “not consider its interests to be in perfect alignment with those of Iran, and its behavior reaffirms this assessment—Hezbollah continues to focus its energies on internal Lebanese politics.”82 Nasrallah highlighted this in a 2007 speech, in which he proclaimed:

Nowadays, there is talk of reviving new initiatives, of Saudi-Iranian moves, of Arab moves. We bless any endeavor, and bless whoever seeks to help Lebanon. But to dispel any delusion, any . . . (changes thought) . . . I know the brothers in Iran, and based on what we heard from the brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—neither Saudi Arabia nor Iran is entertaining the notion of embarrassing its friends in Lebanon or forcing their hands. This is the first point. I am being polite here. Second, it goes without saying that any agreement that could be achieved between any two world states or governments, even if they are held in high esteem and enjoy respect, cannot be binding to the Lebanese, who should pursue their real national interests.83

79 Wehrey et al., Dangerous but Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East, 83.
82 Wehrey et al., Dangerous but Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East, 102.
83 Ibid.
Since the 2006 war Hizbullah has lost some independence from Iran due to its need for cash and arms to fund reconstruction and replenish its weapon stocks.84 Both before and during the war, however, Iran and Syria’s influence over Hizbullah was far less significant than many wished to portray it as.85

Islamism Through a Marxist Lens

Traditionally, Marxists have viewed capitalist societies as being divided into three main classes: the working class, the petty bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie.86 These classes are defined by the position they hold within contradictory relations of production. Therefore, a worker is one who is in a relationship with the bourgeoisie, whereby she sells her ability to work for a specified period of time in exchange for a wage.87 The petty bourgeoisie, such as artisans, farmers, and small shopkeepers, are the class who simultaneously own and work on the means of production without employing workers (family members generally being an exception as they share in the wealth produced). Wright elaborates on this by identifying new class positions that exist between the three main classes.88 This ‘new middle class’ includes semi-autonomous workers (located between the working class and petty bourgeoisie), small employers (located between the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie), and managers and supervisors (located between the bourgeoisie and the working class). These new positions are termed contradictory class locations, because unlike the petty bourgeoisie, the new middle class are directly involved in the primary struggle

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84 Ibid., 101.
85 See section 2.1.
86 Wright, Class Structure and Income Determination, 20-22.
87 This relationship is fostered by the worker’s lack of ownership of the means of production and subsequent need to sell her labour power, and by the bourgeoisie’s need to create capital or reduce costs by exploiting that labour.
between the working class and the bourgeoisie. As Wright states, the new middle class “are torn between the basic contradictory class relations of capitalist society.”

For Achcar, “In terms of the nature of their program and ideology, their social composition, and even the social origins of their founders, Islamic fundamentalist [Islamist] movements are petty bourgeois.” I contend that this is true as long as one includes the new middle class alongside the petty bourgeoisie. When determining the class basis of any organisation it is its “leading stratum,” not its rank-and-file membership, which is of greatest significance. This is especially true for an internally undemocratic party such as Hizbullah. Hizbullah is headed by a seven member Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura), whose members head the five executive branches of the group (see appendix A). Rather than being elected by the party rank-and-file, the Consultative Council is voted in by the roughly 200 strong Central Council (Majlis al-Markazi), composed of the party’s founders and most important cadre. In this thesis the leading stratum of Hizbullah is defined as comprising the Consultative and Central Council, and the civilian, military, and religious cadre in the lower and regional branches of the party (see appendix A).

Based on discussions with scholars and partially translated Arabic books, most of the party’s founders appear to have came from humble clerical backgrounds, either being clerics themselves or from clerical families. These were not wealthy religious elites, but were local clerics that shared a standard of living comparable to the larger Lebanese Shi’á community. At the time of the party’s founding in the 1980s,

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89 Wright, Class Structure and Income Determination, 26. The interests of the new middle class in relation to this struggle are shaped, as Wright contends, by their: control over investment and resources; control over physical means of production; and control over the labour power of others. Wright includes a secondary set of influences, namely, legal ownership of property, legal status of being the employer of labour power, and being the seller of one’s own labour power for a wage. Wright, Class Structure and Income Determination, 39-40.


91 Achcar, e-mail message to author, 24 August 2009.

92 This includes discussions with William Harris about his reading of Waddah Shararah’s Arabic language study of Hizbullah; general discussions with Harris about his perceptions of the class nature of the Lebanese Shi’a community, with which he has an extensive knowledge; and email correspondence with Achcar. Shararah, Dawlat Hizb Allah: Lubnan Mujtamaan Islamiyan. Achcar, e-mail message to author, 24 August 2009.
this community was predominately petty bourgeois, consisting mainly of artisans, farmers, and small shopkeepers.\footnote{Achcar, e-mail message to author, 24 August 2009.}

Among the party’s leading civilian cadre at the lower and regional levels, Hamzeh has shown in the 2004 municipal elections, that “The candidates or lists backed by Hizbollah … consisted mainly of individuals from professions—engineers, doctors, lawyers and businessmen.” \footnote{Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 135.} The first three professions among this ‘electoral cadre’ are middle class, either being petty bourgeois, semi-autonomous workers, small employers, managers or supervisors. Given the nature of these professions the majority are likely to be semi-autonomous workers, employed by the state or private firms. Those owning their own businesses can be classified as petty bourgeoisie or small employers, depending on whether or not they employ staff.\footnote{Wright gives a low estimate of ten workers and a high estimate of 50 workers for the maximum number of employees a small employer can have before he moves into the position of the bourgeoisie. Wright nonetheless agrees with Marx’s assertion that the qualitative difference between small employers and the bourgeoisie is that for the latter the vast majority of their time is spent not as a worker, but as a capitalist controlling the labour of others. Wright, Class Structure and Income Determination, 45-51.} Few Shi’a engineers, doctors, lawyers, or even businesspeople in Lebanon are likely to be large employers, given the scale of the economy and the relatively low position of Shi’a within it. For the few possible exceptions it seems improbable that many would suspend such privilege to compete for mere municipal offices.

In identifying the class basis of the rest of Hizbullah’s cadre one is faced with a scarcity of English-language research on the subject, and so I now turn to broader research on the class composition of Islamist cadre. For Achcar and the late British Marxist Chris Harman, the majority of Islamist cadre are the first generation of university students and graduates from traditional petty-bourgeois and small-employer families.\footnote{Achcar, “Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism.”, Harman, The Prophet and the Proletariat: Islamic Fundamentalism, Class and Revolution (New Updated Edition), 18-24. Achcar and Harman also contend that this stratum of students and graduates are motivated by social immobility. According to these authors, these students and graduates benefited from the massive expansion of education systems that occurred throughout the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s. This expansion was not, they contend, coupled with the requisite development to provide employment (bar in the bloated state sector), a result of what Leon Trotsky termed combined and uneven development. Achcar, “Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism,” 53.} As Achcar contends, “In a period of ascendancy Islamic
fundamentalism recruits widely at universities and other institutions that produce ‘intellectuals,’ where they are still more conditioned by their social origins than by a hypothetical and often doubtful future.”  

The best statistical illustration of Achcar and Harman’s theory is Ervand Abrahamian’s study of the People’s Mujahadeen of Iran. This study includes an analysis of the occupations and family backgrounds of 69 of the group’s members who were tried by Iranian military tribunals in 1972. Those tried accounted for almost half of the group’s fully active membership at the time, and their “social backgrounds … [were] much the same as those of the original leaders.” Among them, 27 (39%) were engineers, 24 (35%) were university students (over half studying engineering), and the rest were civil servants, high-school teachers, accountants, university professors, doctors, a tailor employed as a train driver, and several bazaari. The term bazaari encompasses the range of classes working in Iran’s...
traditional marketplaces, with the overwhelming majority being petty bourgeois, small employers and apprentices (that is workers training to join the middle class).\textsuperscript{101} In Lebanon the traditional marketplace (\textit{souq}) is of less importance in the national economy, but the \textit{bazaar}i professions (that is petty-bourgeois artisans, shopkeepers and traders) continue to occupy a central economic role in Shi’a towns and cities.\textsuperscript{102} Of the 60 Mujahadeen defendants whose social backgrounds are known, 32 (53\%) came from \textit{bazaar}i families, 19 (32\%) from “unspecified types of middle-class homes,” five (8\%) from clerical families, and four (7\%) from “lower class” families.\textsuperscript{103} Abrahamian suggests that many of the “middle-class homes” would have in fact been \textit{bazaar}i families (i.e., families headed by petty-bourgeoisie and small-employers), rather than families of the “modern middle class.”\textsuperscript{104}

When applying these findings, and Achcar and Harman’s theory to Hizbullah, it is credible to assume that the majority of the party’s cadre come from petty-bourgeois backgrounds, due to the economic nature of Southern Lebanon, the Beqaa Valley, and Beirut’s southern suburbs (the \textit{dahiya}), where most Shi’a reside. As Achcar has stated, “Given the social composition of the areas where Hezbollah is grounded, one can safely presume that most of its cadres belong neither to the proletariat nor to the capitalist class.”\textsuperscript{105} The university-educated professionals that dominate Hizbullah’s electoral lists reinforce the second part of Achcar and

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the workers’ organisations in the factories, the regime could rely on the professional engineers who worked there.” Harman, \textit{The Prophet and the Proletariat: Islamic Fundamentalism, Class and Revolution (New Updated Edition)}, 19.
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\textsuperscript{101} One of the few statistical sources of evidence for the class composition of Iranian bazaars is the 1928 Iranian census. According to Ahmad Ashraf, the census revealed the composition of the “some 32,000 people working in the bazaar of Tehran, which was: big merchants, over two percent; guild masters, about 40\% (24\% petty traders and 16\% artisans); apprentices, 45\%; and footboys, 13\%.” Ahmad Ashraf, "Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions," \textit{International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society}, 1, no. 4 (1988): 541.
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\textsuperscript{102} In Lebanon the national economy has long been centred on Christian and Sunni commercial banking and trade in Beirut, whereas Shi’a wealth lay in the hands of the large landowning \textit{Zu’ama} families. See chap. 1, n. 62.
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\textsuperscript{103} Abrahamian, \textit{Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin}, 130.
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\textsuperscript{104} As Abrahamian points out, only four members had names of a pre-Islamic origin, which were popular in the 1940s and 1950s among the aristocratic elite and “more secularised, modern middle class.” Ibid. While I have referred to the large number of apprentices in the bazaar (see chap. 1, n. 101), by the time they have families they are likely to have become petty-bourgeoisie and small-employers in their own right.
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\textsuperscript{105} Achcar, e-mail message to author, 24 August 2009. Achcar concludes by stating, “Even if some of them are of proletarian background, the fact of becoming salaried cadres of such an organisation means a social upgrade, constituting a petty-bourgeois mentality.”
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Harman’s theory, although I am unaware of any data on the educational backgrounds of the rest of Hizbullah’s cadre.\textsuperscript{106} Scholars Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova do, however, provide an indication of the educational levels of Hizbullah’s cadre, through their analysis of 129 members of Hizbullah’s military wing that died in action between 1982 and 1994.\textsuperscript{107} What they show, is that compared to the general population of the same age the deceased were more likely to have a secondary education (33\% compared to 23\%) and were just as likely to have a university education (13\% compared to 14\%).\textsuperscript{108} While these numbers may seem low the authors point out that most of the deceased were “foot soldiers” and were less likely to have attended university due to their ages (41\% were aged 18-20, and 42\% aged 21-25).\textsuperscript{109} Therefore, the education levels of the more senior fighters, comprising the party’s cadre in its military wing, are likely to have been “even greater.”\textsuperscript{110}

Although more research is needed, there are indications that the party’s cadre conforms to Achcar and Harman’s theory, such as its highly educated electoral cadre and relatively educated military cadre. What one can conclude is that Hizbullah has a middle-class basis, due to the petty-bourgeois backgrounds of much of its leading stratum, as well as the middle-class basis of its electoral cadre. It is my contention that this class basis shapes the nature of the party, as expressed through its conservative economic and political programme.\textsuperscript{111} Put another way, the fundamental issues of authoritarianism, economic stagnation, and imperialism, frustrate both the middle class and the working class in the Middle East. Unlike the working class though (who have the potential to overthrow the existing capitalist order), the middle class’ horizons for social change are limited to the confines of the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{106} It should be noted that while the expansion of the educational institutions throughout the Middle East occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, Shi’a were slower to benefit from this than other Lebanese, and did not gain access to the better universities in Beirut until the 1980s. Saad-Ghorayeb, Hizbu’llah: Politics and Religion, 18.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{107} Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, "Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?," Journal of Economic Perspectives 17, no. 4 (2003).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.: 21-23.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.: 23.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{111} See section 2.1.}
current system. In essence the workers have nothing to lose but their chains, while the middle class has something to lose, its privilege and means of production.\textsuperscript{112}

What I term economic and political conservatism is relative to the radical class-based programmes that I view as necessary for real social change in the Middle East. This is a region splintered by ethnicity, religion, nationality, and inequality, but underlying all of this are the fundamental class contradictions generated by capitalism. This is no truer than in Lebanon, where wealthy landholders and financial elites have concentrated political and economic power in their hands, while using sectarianism to splinter the population into antagonistic groups under their own patronage. For many, Hizbullah represents a radical solution to these problems, but their radicalism does not extend to the economic sphere, where respect for property is maintained and economic redistribution is limited to charity.\textsuperscript{113}

This lack of radicalism is reinforced by Hizbullah’s sources of funding. The party was founded on financial support from the Lebanese Shi’a middle class, the Iranian government, and the alms (\textit{zakat}) collected by Hizbullah on behalf of Khomeini.\textsuperscript{114} According to Hamzeh, the party now relies on, “donations from individuals, groups, shops, companies, and banks as well as their counterparts in countries such as the United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe and Australia,” and on Hizbullah’s own business interests, which take “advantage of Lebanon’s free market economy” with “dozens of supermarkets, gas stations, department stores, restaurants, construction companies and travel agencies.”\textsuperscript{115} Based on his conversations with Achcar, Harman argues that:

\begin{quote}
It is hardly surprising that an organisation so dependent on functioning within capitalism in reality accepts a ‘conservative’ economic programme at home and rejects the overthrow of the neighbouring Arab governments.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{112} Alex Callinicos, "The 'New Middle Class' and Socialists," \textit{International Socialism}, no. 20 (1983).
\textsuperscript{113} As Harman argues, “such a movement cannot be described as a ‘conservative’ movement. The educated, Arab speaking youth do not turn to Islam because they want things to stay as they are, but because they believe it offers massive social change.” Harman, \textit{The Prophet and the Proletariat: Islamic Fundamentalism, Class and Revolution (New Updated Edition)}, 21.
\textsuperscript{114} Khomeini, as a \textit{marja’} \textit{al-taqlid}, made Hizbullah his representatives in Lebanon so that the party could collect and use the alms given by his Lebanese followers. This relationship continues with Khamenei.
\textsuperscript{115} Hamzeh, \textit{In the Path of Hizbullah}, 64.
One is reminded of the degree to which the social radicalism of the IRA/Sinn Fein was moderated by its dependence on money from prosperous supporters in the United States even while it waged a guerrilla war in the North of Ireland.\textsuperscript{116}

For real solutions to the economic and political problems of Lebanon, the answer does not lie in Hizbullah, a middle-class party allied to neighbouring authoritarian regimes.\textsuperscript{117} The solution is a programme based on a realistic appreciation of the central importance of capitalism and class within Middle Eastern societies. Such a movement must incorporate the middle class, but at its core needs to be the organised working class whose centrality to the functioning of capitalism and potential for solidarity makes them capable of changing the region for the better.\textsuperscript{118}

Hizbullah is now the hegemonic representative of the Lebanese Shi’a, as a result of the catalysts identified above. In terms of identity crisis, the party has established the prestige of Lebanese Shi’a domestically and regionally through its military accomplishments, but when it comes to structural imbalance the party’s achievements are limited. While the party has aided development, provided welfare services, and increased Shi’a political influence, it has not fundamentally addressed the economic and political inequalities for Shi’a in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{119} The glory Hizbullah gained from its expulsion of the Israeli occupation and its representation of the Iranian revolution, were important for building the party’s social base, but such past glory is now fading. Restrained by its middle-class basis and nature; I will contend

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{116} Harman, "Hizbollah and the War Israel Lost."
    \item \textsuperscript{117} For discussion of Hizbullah’s foreign allies see also section 2.1. As Achcar has argued, a unique feature of the middle class is as follows: "Of course, as long as capitalism on the rise seems to open up prospects of upward social mobility for the middle classes, as long as their conditions of existence are improving, they do not question the established order. Even when depoliticized or unenthused, they normally play the role of ‘silent majority’ in the bourgeois order. But if ever the capitalist evolution of society weighs on them with all its force-the weight of national and/or international competition, inflation and debt-then the middle classes become a formidable reservoir of opposition to the powers that be. Then they are free of any bourgeois control, and all the more formidable because the violence and rage of the petty bourgeois in distress are unparalleled." Achcar, "Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism," 53.
    \item \textsuperscript{118} Among workers solidarity is a necessity, as it is the only real power they have. For semi-autonomous workers and the upper working class this necessity is the same, but can often be less forthcoming due to ideas of individual social mobility. For the petty bourgeoisie and small employers solidarity is important, but their atomised self-interest means that such solidarity is often fragile.
    \item \textsuperscript{119} See section 2.1.
\end{itemize}
that the party is resorting to its weapons to appease the demands of Lebanese Shi’a, but in a way that addresses very few of the problems they face.

1.2) US Imperialism and the 2003 Invasion of Iraq

By 2006, the seemingly “crackpot idealism” of the Bush administration had led the United States into a tenuous situation in Iraq. The occupation, far from being “greeted with sweets and flowers,” was facing determined resistance both from the population and among Iraq’s political elites.\(^{120}\) Not only had the Bush administration failed to secure US interests in Iraq, but they had also jeopardised their broader aims in the region. In 2006 the United States: had around 130,000 troops in Iraq with no exit in sight; it was facing fierce popular opposition throughout the region; it had empowered its regional opponent Iran; and its credibility, both politically and militarily, had been tarnished.\(^{121}\) Even the most optimistic of the neo-conservatives were aware of this, such as Project for a New American Century (PNAC) co-chairman Robert Kagan, as seen in his 2004 article America’s Crisis of Legitimacy.\(^{122}\) Therefore, US interests in the 2006 war cannot be separated from its misadventure in Iraq. The 2003 invasion of Iraq also caused a flurry of academic interest over the US role in the Middle East and Global Political Economy (GPE), leading to a wealth of scholarly publications.\(^{123}\) For these reasons my theorisation of US actions in 2006 will be based on an analysis of the still unresolved structural concerns identified in 2003.

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\(^{122}\) Kagan, "America’s Crisis of Legitimacy."

\(^{123}\) The term GPE is consciously used to reject the ontological and ideological assumptions of traditional international relations (IR) theories, which tend to study the state in isolation from its economic basis.
The most important of these, as identified in Harvey’s Global Oil Spigot theory, was the United States’ consciousness of regional and global rivals, and its subsequent attempt to secure control over Middle Eastern oil.\(^\text{124}\) When explaining this theory I will include a brief discussion on Harvey’s place within the Marxist debate over contemporary imperialism. Of particular import is his perspective on the relative power of the state and capital in modern GPE. Before discussing Iraq and Harvey’s theorisations, a brief critique will be applied to the main competing theoretical schools in GPE, namely idealism and realism.

Among idealist theories pertinent to the War in Lebanon there are two identifiable strands. The first of these views the neo-conservative “crusade” to create a pro-American, democratic Middle East as the determining element in the Bush administration’s policies towards the region.\(^\text{125}\) However genuine these neo-conservatives were in their pursuit, their influence arose only in so far as they complemented the material self-interest of the US state and dominant economic class. As will be shown in the administration’s most important policy documents, the neo-conservative narrative of ‘democracy promotion’ was always underscored by material US concerns. The Bush administration itself was not some neo-conservative monolith: containing neo-conservative “liberal imperialists,” such as Paul Wolfowitz, and “realist imperialists,” (what Alex Callinicos calls “old fashioned conservative nationalists”) such as Vice President Dick Cheney and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.\(^\text{126}\) To argue that neo-conservative idealism dominated the Bush administration not only ignores the influence of these latter figures, but also isolates the US state from the influence of the US bourgeoisie.\(^\text{127}\)

Another strand of idealist theory contends that normative ethical ideals, realised through the mechanism of international law and organisations such as the United Nations (UN), play an increasingly important role in GPE. In 2006 the UN

\(^{124}\) Harvey, The New Imperialism, 19.


\(^{127}\) Harman, "Analysing Imperialism," 46. While I accept that capitalist liberal-representative democracy is influenced by a multitude of actors, I contend that the dominant influences arise from among the bourgeoisie.
Security Council provided a forum for France and other powers to push for a cease-fire, while the General Assembly allowed states to voice their opinions on the war. Nonetheless, the importance of the UN in this conflict paled in comparison to the United States, who brought the war to an end when they no longer saw any use in prolonging it.\textsuperscript{128} In regards to international law, Hizbullah and Israel were both rightly condemned for targeting civilians, but this did not stop their actions and has yet to lead to any prosecutions.\textsuperscript{129}

Compared to such idealist theories, realism is of greater value in explaining the causes of the 2006 war and in fact reaches similar conclusions to those of Marxist thinkers. The limitation of realism, however, comes from its tendency to fetishise power.\textsuperscript{130} In Robert Cox’s influential article \textit{Social Forces, States and World Orders} he argues correctly, that “power is seen as emerging from social processes rather than taken as given in the form of accumulated material capabilities, that is as the result of these processes.”\textsuperscript{131} What realism does is ignore the first premise of this argument, that power emerges from social processes, and analyses state action as if its power is inherent. While realists can proceed adequately with their analysis, it is more useful to incorporate these processes in order to critically understand state action. Another limitation of realism is its often a-priori state-centrism, which analyses the state in isolation from its economic setting.\textsuperscript{132} The aim now is to show how the interests of the US capitalist state determined the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

\textsuperscript{128} This is a major point of discussion throughout chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{129} See sections 3.1 and 4.2.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Matthew Stephen, "Globalisation, Counter-Hegemony and the 'Anti-Globalisation Movement': A Neo-Gramscian Analysis" (Master of Arts' Thesis, University of Otago, 2008), 6.
The 2003 Invasion of Iraq and Global Oil Spigot Theory

The British comedian Robert Newman once quipped, in reference to a particular theory on the invasion of Iraq, that “I am not saying this is the reason for the invasion, I am saying it’s a reason. Clearly part of a nexus of multiple weakly acting causal pathways. That’s my new catch phrase.” Of prominence in my own conceptual nexus is Global Oil Spigot theory. There were other interests playing a role in the 2003 invasion, such as the immediate bonanza for US corporations as Iraq was rebuilt and privatised at the foreseeable expense of French and Russian commercial interests. Nonetheless, US concerns over challenges to its superpower status, and to an extent its own energy security, played a greater role in this invasion.

Harvey first outlined Global Oil Spigot theory in his 2005 book, The New Imperialism, in which he reworded Halford Mackinder’s famous quotation to read, “whoever controls the Middle East controls the global oil spigot, and whoever controls the global oil spigot can control the global economy, at least for the near future.” In writing the New Imperialism Harvey was engaging in an important Marxist debate over the contemporary nature of imperialism. A central issue in this debate is the relative influence of capitalist versus geopolitical power, a question that drew much interest after the publication of the top-selling book Empire, in 2000, by the autonomist Marxists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. Empire conceptualised a world order where states served the interests of a dominant global capitalist oligarchy, by institutionalising and policing global exploitation. Harvey on the other

133 Robert Newman, Robert Newman’s History of Oil (Spirit Entertainment Ltd, 2007), DVD.
134 For analysis of US efforts to privatise Iraqi oil see Majed, "Hezbollah and the Shiite Community: From Political Confessionalization to Confessional Specialization."
hand refuses to relegate the importance of the state, instead advocating the existence of a “contradictory fusion” between a capitalist logic (the drive of members of the bourgeoisie to find profitable investments) and a territorial logic (the drive of state leaders to strengthen the power of their own state vis-à-vis other states). As Harvey contends:

The relationship between these two logics should be seen therefore as problematic and often contradictory (that is, dialectical) rather than as functional or one-sided.... The problem for concrete analyses of actual situations is to keep the two sides of this dialectic simultaneously in motion and not to lapse into either a solely political [as realists do] or a predominantly economic [as Hardt and Negri do] mode of argumentation.

This dialectical view of imperialism underpins Global Oil Spigot theory. Harvey concludes that the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and as I contend, the 2006 War in Lebanon, exemplified an American state driven by long-term geopolitical and economic concerns rather than a fixation with the short-term interests of fractional and sub-fractional groupings of US capital.

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139 Ibid., 30. The United States’ invasion of Iraq, and the antagonisms this caused with other major powers, is often cited as a refutation of *Empire*. Alex Callinicos, "Imperialism and Global Political Economy," *International Socialism*, no. 108 (2005).
140 The scope of Harvey’s theory of the new imperialism is broad, and it is unfortunate that there is not greater room for its accommodation in this thesis. The core elements of his theory not mentioned in this thesis are: his contentions that global capitalism is currently experiencing a crisis of over-accumulation; his elucidation of capitalism’s resort to spatio-temporal fixes (e.g., absorbing excess capital values in long-term capital projects or social expenditure, or the opening up of new markets, production capacities and resources); and his controversial resurrection of the concept of accumulation by dispossession to explain the current tools of imperialism. Accumulation by dispossession is a re-adoptation of the Marxist concept of primitive accumulation, even though most Marxists had considered this an initial and, therefore, completed stage of capitalism. Harvey’s own definition of accumulation by dispossession is somewhat too broad, and for this reason I use the Sam Ashman and Alex Callinicos’ definition (a definition that Harvey does not seem adverse to). According to Ashman and Callinicos accumulation by dispossession is the commodification of previously unknown resources; the recommodification of things such as water and health care which had previously been made public; and the restructuring of state run industries or institutions that allow private interests, particularly financial capital, to enter in. These have all happened in advanced and less-advanced capitalist countries, particularly in South America and South East Asia. David Harvey, "Comment on Commentaries," *Historical Materialism* 14, no. 4 (2006), Sam Ashman and Alex Callinicos,
An early expression of these geopolitical and economic concerns is found in the initial version of the US Defense Planning Guidance for the 1994–99 Fiscal Years, which was leaked to the *New York Times* in March 1992. Now commonly known as the ‘Wolfowitz Doctrine’ after its author, then US undersecretary of defence for policy Paul Wolfowitz, this document heralded many of the tenets of the later ‘Bush Doctrine’. Among these it states, “Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival … that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union.... Our strategy must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor.” This document was at the time repudiated by the administration of George H. W. Bush, and hastily re-written by then US secretary of defence Dick Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell. The ideas, nevertheless, remained alive and were restated in an essay by Wolfowitz during the Clinton years, where he compared China to Germany at the beginning of the 20th Century: a state long denied and now determined to gain its rightful “place in the sun.”

Zalamy Khalilzad, a key influence over George W. Bush’s Middle Eastern policies, iterated the same ideas in his 1995 book *From Containment to Global Leadership?* In this book he argued that it was a “vital” US interest to “preclude the rise of another global rival for the indefinite future,” and that the United States must “be willing to use force if necessary for the purpose.” Such ideas coalesced in the now infamous forum for neo-conservatives: PNAC. PNAC argued in their September 2000 report, *Rebuilding America’s Defenses*, that the United States must preserve its global dominance both in the face of rival challenges, and in the context of its own relative and absolute decline in power.

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143 Wolfowitz, "Bridging Centuries: Fin De Siècle All over Again."
144 Khalilzad, *From Containment to Global Leadership? America & the World after the Cold War."
145 Ibid., 21 & 25.
146 The most important quotation from this report is: “At present the United States faces no global rival. America's grand strategy should aim to preserve and extend this advantageous position as far into the future as possible. There are, however, potentially powerful states dissatisfied with the
The election of Bush and the attacks of September 11, 2001, brought the ideas of Wolfowitz, Khalilzad, and PNAC to the fore. It was in September 2002 that Bush presented his new *National Security Strategy*, which laid out the objectives of the Bush Doctrine.\(^{147}\) The document began with the declaration, “The United States possesses unprecedented--and unequalled--strength and influence in the world,”\(^{148}\) and closed with the warning, “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in the hopes of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United States.”\(^{149}\) Along with enshrining the concept of “pre-emptive retaliation,” the *National Security Strategy* advocated a major expansion of the US military presence around the world.\(^{150}\)

This document contains a special focus on China, stating, “In pursuing advanced military capabilities that can threaten its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region, China is following an outdated path that, in the end, will hamper its own pursuit of national greatness.”\(^{151}\) The United States’ warning to its greatest potential rival that only it can pursue advanced military capabilities, was reinforced by its scrapping of the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty and the construction of a National Missile Defence system in 2002.\(^{152}\) The United States’ pursuit of unfettered nuclear superiority realised what PNAC had in fact advocated in 2000.\(^{153}\)
While the neo-conservatives were a crucial element in the Bush administration they were not alone in their acknowledgment of challenges to US global power, or in their advocacy of war. Realists, such as Cheney and Rumsfeld, as well as foreign policy heavyweights outside the administration also shared such ideas.\textsuperscript{154} As Callinicos argues:

If one takes the work of policy intellectuals other than the neoconservatives and in some cases hostile to them or at least critical of the Iraq adventure—for example, Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Philip Bobbitt, Joseph Nye and John Mearsheimer, one finds the same preoccupation with the future of US hegemony in the face of a variety of powers that can be expected to challenge it at least at the regional level.\textsuperscript{155}

The Bush administration was also acutely aware of its own energy concerns, as shown in the administration’s primary document on the subject, the May 2001 \textit{National Energy Policy}. Produced by the National Energy Policy Development Group, a task force dominated by the US energy industry and headed by Cheney, this document contained three essential points:\textsuperscript{156}

1. The US will become increasingly dependent on imported oil over the next 20 years, increasing from 53 to 65 percent of consumption.\textsuperscript{157}

2. While the US needs to diversify its foreign oil suppliers, the world economy will remain dependent on Middle Eastern oil.\textsuperscript{158}

3. The US government cannot rely on market forces alone to secure future supplies, and as Michael Klare observes, must persuade oil producing nations to “open up their oil industries to greater U.S. oil-company

\textsuperscript{154} Callinicos, "Iraq: Fulcrum of World Politics," 594.
\textsuperscript{155} Callinicos, "Imperialism and Global Political Economy."
involvement and to send more of their petroleum to the United States.”\textsuperscript{159}

Given such a clear statement of interests by both the administration and its important backers in the energy industry, it is difficult to see these concerns not playing a role in the 2003 invasion of a country with the world’s second largest oil reserves. Such concerns became more pertinent after September 11, 2001, due to deteriorating US-Saudi relations. Demands from the anti-Saudi wing of the neo-conservatives to freeze numerous Saudi assets, and the Bush administration’s increasing support for Israel, had angered Saudi elites who already faced increasing instability at home.\textsuperscript{160} These factors heightened US interests in securing an alternative energy and military stronghold in Iraq.

It is not the United States, however, but its potential rivals in South and East Asia who are most dependent on Middle Eastern oil, as shown in table 1.1. In table 1.2, one can see the world’s continuing dependence on Middle Eastern oil for the foreseeable future, due to the scale of its proved reserves, as well as the relative cost efficiency of its extraction.\textsuperscript{161}

What is not reflected in these statistics is China’s increasing energy demands, with its oil imports set to triple by 2030 and its total importation of gas and oil expected to surpass the United States by 2025.\textsuperscript{162} Therefore, China will be most affected by the world’s increasing dependence on Middle Eastern oil, and as Callinicos argues, “What better way for the United States to ward off that competition and secure its own hegemonic position than to control the prices, conditions, and distribution of the key economic resource upon which those competitors rely? And what better way to do that than to use the one line of force

\textsuperscript{159} Klare, "Bush's Master Oil Plan."
\textsuperscript{161} Coupled with this is the high reserves-to-production ratio in the Middle East. This means that if existing Middle Eastern reserves are extracted at the current production rate, they will last for almost 79 years. This is before calculating in future exploration. See table 1.2.
where the US still remain [sic] all-powerful—military might?"  

This argument, however, is not the sole preserve of Marxists, as can be seen in the words of arch-realist Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Not only does America benefit economically from the relatively low costs of Middle Eastern oil, but America’s security role in the region gives it indirect but politically critical leverage on the European and Asian economies that are also dependent on energy exports from the region.”

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163 While China is less dependent now on Middle Eastern oil than India or Japan, its consumption of oil increased by roughly 91% between 1998 and 2008, compared to 46% for India, minus 13% for Japan, and 2% for the United States over the same period. Much of this increase has been driven by the growing energy demands of transportation in China, which over a similar period (1997 to 2007) increased by 137%. This demand will increase as China’s transportation sector presently accounts for only 11% of China’s total energy consumption, compared to the OECD average of 33%. Based on historical statistics from "BP Statistical Review of World Energy June 2009," BP (2009), http://www.bp.com/statisticalreview. And "OECD in Figures 2009 Extract: Energy Consumption and Electricity Generation, 2007," OECD (2009), http://www.oecd.org/document/47/0,3343,en_2649_37459_43896303_1_1_1_1,00.html. Callinicos, "Iraq: Fulcrum of World Politics," 599-600.

### Table 1.1: 2008 Inter-Area Movement of Oil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Europe *</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Other Asia Pacific</th>
<th>Total Exports (TE)†</th>
<th>TE as % of World Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>121.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>‡</td>
<td>‡</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>123.6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. &amp; C. America</td>
<td>119.4</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>178.3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>318.5</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>404.8</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East (ME)</td>
<td>119.7</td>
<td>127.6</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>107.6</td>
<td>196.9</td>
<td>296.8</td>
<td>1000.7</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME as % of Total Imports</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>101.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>161.5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>228.8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asia Pacific</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>129.3</td>
<td>116.5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Imports (TI)†</strong></td>
<td>636.6</td>
<td>680.9</td>
<td>217.8</td>
<td>149.7</td>
<td>244.2</td>
<td>520.2</td>
<td>2697.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TI as % of World Imports</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* European members of the OECD plus Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, FYR of Macedonia, Gibraltar, Malta, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovenia.

† Totals differ, as not all data is included in this condensed table.

‡ This value is unidentified in the report, but is assumed to be negligible or unknown and is not included in the totals here or in the original report.
### Table 1.2: 2008 Global Proved Reserves and Consumption of Oil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proved Reserves</th>
<th>Consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thousand</td>
<td>Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Million Tonnes</td>
<td>Tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Share of Total</td>
<td>Share of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R/P Ratio*</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>884.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total North America</strong></td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td><strong>1076.6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total S. &amp; C. America</strong></td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td><strong>270.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>130.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Europe &amp; Eurasia†</strong></td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td><strong>955.5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>104.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Middle East‡</strong></td>
<td><strong>102.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>306.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Africa</strong></td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>135.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>375.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Asia Pacific§</strong></td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1183.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Total World</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Reserves-to-production (R/P) ratio - If the reserves remaining at the end of any year are divided by the production in that year, the result is the length of time that those remaining reserves would last if production were to continue at that rate.

† Europe and countries of the Former Soviet Union.

‡ Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

§ Excludes the Former Soviet Union.

||Excludes Canadian oil sands, which have proved reserves (remaining established reserves, less reserves under active development) of 24.5 thousand million tonnes. FUSSR: Former Soviet Union.
This leverage is the core of Global Oil Spigot theory and provides the ideal tool for those conscious of future rivalry with China, as well as other powers. By 2006, however, the United States had failed to achieve a firm hold over Middle Eastern energy supplies, with Iraqi society and the Iraqi oil industry in disarray. The great winner from this fiasco was Iran who grew more powerful due its pivotal sway among Iraqi Shi’a, its broadening influence in the region, and its increasing wealth on the back of record oil prices. If the United States hoped to secure the region against global rivals it would first have to confront the influence of this regional rival.

Hizbullah’s decision to attack Israel on July 12, 2006, must have been seen by many in the United States as a perfect opportunity to deal with its woes. To crush Hizbullah would not only have secured the United States influence in Lebanon, but would have also removed a threat/constraint on its Israeli ally. Regionally the demise of Hizbullah would seriously quiet the influence of Iran, allowing the Bush administration to try and redeem itself in Iraq and regain momentum in the region. The United States could then proceed with its grand strategy to prepare itself for oncoming challenges. Unfortunately for the United States the War in Lebanon did not turn out this way.

The mechanisms for using this power are varied, ranging from influencing production levels and US currency manipulation, to direct strangulation, as has been practiced by Russia over gas supplies in recent years (Russia cut off gas supplies to the Ukraine in 2006, 2008, and 2009, each time for mainly political reasons). While at present, such aggressive behaviour may seem unlikely, the Bush administration was prepared to ramp up tensions with China by expanding US bases in central Asia and beginning the ‘Son of Star Wars’ programme. The neo-conservative wing of the administration, and even more middle of the road scholars such as Michael O’Hanlon of the Brookings Institution, view direct military confrontation with China as a real possibility in the future. For the Russian gas conflicts see Andrew E. Kramer, "Russia-Ukraine Feud Goes Beyond Gas Pipes," New York Times, 4 January 2009. Similar disputes have arisen with Georgia, Moldova, and Belarus. See Victor J. Yassmann, "Russia: Is Georgian Gas Crisis Evidence of Moscow’s New Energy Strategy?", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 24 January 2006. For the Bush administration’s aggressive behaviour towards China see Harman, "Analysing Imperialism." On the topic of future direct confrontation with China see Callinicos, "Imperialism and Global Political Economy." Michael O’Hanlon, "The Risk of War over Taiwan Is Real," Financial Times, 2 May 2005. Wolfowitz, "Bridging Centuries: Fin De Siècle All over Again."
1.3) Watchdog State Theory

In 1969 the noted Israeli Marxists Moshe Machover and Akiva Orr wrote an article entitled *The Class Character of Israel.* This work made many enduring observations about the nature of the Israeli state, among which is the seemingly obvious, but essential statement that “Israel is neither a classic capitalist country nor is it a classic colony. Its economic, social, and political features are so unique that any attempt to analyze it through the application of theories or analogies evolved for different societies will be a caricature. An analysis must be based rather on the specific characteristics and specific history of Israeli society.”

In this same tradition Watchdog State theory identifies a dynamic that sets Israel apart from other states, namely that Israel’s past and present existence is predicated on its services to imperialism. This section looks at the historical development of Israel’s watchdog state role and identifies the features of its current relationship with the United States. I conclude that Israel remains structurally dependent on US support, particularly diplomatic support, which was so essential for Israel’s war in 2006. Nonetheless, I contend that Israel maintains significant autonomy. This differentiates Israel from countries such as Britain and Australia that are more voluntarily than structurally tied to the United States, and more dependent US allies, such as Palau and Puerto Rico, who lack the economic or political strength to express much independence.

Watchdog State theory vies against mainstream conceptualisations that see Israel as having a privileged, but normal relationship with the United States, and the opposing view that Israel’s interests dominate this relationship. The latter opinion

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167 Ibid., 55.

exists on the right, centre, and left of the political spectrum in the form of the Israel Lobby theory.\textsuperscript{169} The problems with this theory are numerous, and beyond the scope of this section, but in summary this theory: overlooks the more powerful US weapons and oil industry lobbies; highlights contributions to members of congress, while inflating the influence congress has over US foreign policy; conveniently deflects blame from the US state for its misadventures and misdeeds; and ignores the disparity in power between Israel and the United States.\textsuperscript{170}

The Historical Development of the Watchdog State

The term ‘watchdog state’ comes from a 1951 article in the newspaper \textit{Haaretz}, representing an Israeli perspective on its relationship to the United States:

The West is none too happy about its relations with states in the Middle East. The feudal regimes there have to make such concessions to the nationalist movements, which sometimes have a pronounced socialist-leftist colouring, that they become more and more reluctant to supply Britain and the United States with their natural resources and military bases ... Therefore, strengthening Israel helps the Western powers maintain equilibrium and stability in the Middle East. Israel is to become the watchdog. There is no fear that Israel will undertake any aggressive policy towards the Arab states when this would explicitly contradict the wishes of the US and Britain. But if for any reason the Western powers should sometimes prefer to close their eyes, Israel could be relied upon to punish one or several neighbouring states whose discourtesy to the West went beyond the bounds of the permissible.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{169} For the right, centre, and left respectively see Eli Lake, "David Duke Claims to Be Vindicated by a Harvard Dean," \textit{New York Sun}, 20 March 2006, Mearsheimer and Walt, \textit{The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy}, Blankfort, "Damage Control: Noam Chomsky and the Israel-Palestine Conflict."
Israel is a colonial-settler state founded on Zionist theory, an ideology that sought to establish a Jewish state free from European anti-Semitism, of which the most famous proponent was Theodor Herzl. It was Herzl who first identified European (including Ottoman) imperialism, as the vehicle for establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. At the beginning of World War One, the British Zionist Chaim Weizmann foresaw Palestine coming under Britain’s influence and appealed to the British cabinet minister Robert Cecil, “A Jewish Palestine would be a safeguard to England, in particular in respect to the Suez Canal.”

At this point in history the Suez Canal was considered the “jugular vein” of the British Empire and the idea of a client state adjacent to this essential transportation route, began to win over British policy-makers. British interest was intensified by the significance of the Suez Canal for the flow of oil, particularly from newly discovered sources in the Middle East. The importance of oil for Britain had been heightened by the conversion of its navy to this fuel in 1911, leading historian Hugh Thomas to note, “British politicians have seemed to have a feeling about oil supplies comparable to the fear of castration.” World War One, where the allies supposedly “floated to victory on a wave of oil,” further sharpened the importance of oil and the Suez Canal. As the British began to seize control of Palestine they gave their first open support to the Zionist cause in the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

By the time of the 1956 British, French and Israeli invasion of Egypt, two thirds of the traffic through the Suez Canal was oil. At this point in history the United States was surpassing Britain as the global and regional power, a shift observed in the changing control of oil by the prominent Marxist Yg’al Gluckstein (a.k.a. Tony Cliff):

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172 Rose, Israel: The Hijack State: America’s Watchdog in the Middle East, 25.
Then [Before the Second World War] Britain controlled 100 percent of Iranian oil and 47.5 percent of Iraqi oil; the US interest was only 23.75 percent in Iraq (equal to France’s). Since then the situation has changed radically; in 1959 the US share of all Middle East oil rose to 50 percent, while that of Britain declined to 18 percent (France had 5 percent, the Netherlands 3 percent, others, including local Arab governments, 24 percent).\(^{178}\)

At the time of the 1956 war, the United States had been wary of antagonising its Muslim allies by building stronger ties with Israel. The growing strength of Arab nationalism led the United States to soon change its stance.\(^{179}\) Pro-western regimes were overthrown in Iraq, in 1958, and Yemen, in 1962, and despite attempts to protect such regimes (e.g., the deployment of US marines to Lebanon in 1958) Arab nationalism continued to rise and garner support from the Soviet Union.\(^ {180}\) A declassified US National Security Council memorandum of 1958, argued that a “logical corollary” of opposition to radical Arab nationalism “would be to support Israel as the only strong pro-West power left in the Near East.”\(^ {181}\)

By 1967, Israel’s role had changed from being an ally of British, and to some extent French imperialism, to being the primary ally of US imperialism in the Middle East. This relationship became more apparent in the early 1970s with a dramatic increase in direct US government assistance to Israel, as seen in 1971 when the US congress began specifically earmarking aid for Israel.\(^{182}\) This new practice presumably led the Speaker of the US House of Representatives John McCormack to state that year, that “Great Britain, at the height of its struggle with Hitler, never received such a blank check [as Israel has].”\(^ {183}\) In 1974, the US congress initiated military grants to Israel, allowing “the Pentagon to hand weapons to Israel without


expecting any payment.” Henceforth, Israel has remained closely linked to the United States, and US interests in the Middle East.

The US-Israeli Relationship

The current relationship between the United States and Israel is reciprocal with the United States providing financial, military, and political support, in exchange for a military stronghold and watchdog in the world’s most contentious region. Israel’s greatest benefit from this relationship is the United States’ ability to protect it from international condemnation. From 1967 to 2008, the United States cast its veto 42 times in the UN Security Council to protect Israel, representing half of all US vetoes up until this time and almost 40 percent of all the vetoes cast during these years. As Brzezinski states, Israel “has benefited from almost solitary American protection against UN disapprobation or sanctions.” This protection extends well beyond the UN, with few non-Arab states, bar the likes of Bolivia, North Korea, and Venezuela, willing to antagonise the United States by censuring Israel for its actions. Without this protection Israel would likely have become a pariah state; as happened to apartheid South Africa, despite the United States’ best efforts. While South Africa served US imperialism in Southern Africa, the Middle East is a far more important region, and for this reason the United States is unlikely to abandon Israel to international condemnation.

Financially Israel has received the largest cumulative amount of US civilian and military aid in the world. Relative to Israel’s GDP this aid may not seem vital, but

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187 These states were among the few countries that reduced or severed relations with Israel over the War in Lebanon in 2006 and in Gaza in 2008-2009.
188 From 1976 to 2004 Israel was the largest annual recipient of US aid, but has been surpassed by Iraq since 2003. One conservative estimate puts total direct US aid to Israel at an estimated total of $113.8554 billion from 1949 to 2008, with an average of $2.9 billion per year from 2000 to 2008. This does not, however, take into account many other sources of indirect funding such as loans, the receipt
many scholars argue that it is critical for the maintenance of Israel’s standard of living, its historical ability to weather economic crises, its preservation of welfare services in the face of neo-liberal pressures, and its bloated military expenditure.\textsuperscript{189} A 2005 report by the US Congressional Research Service opens with the statement, “Israel is not economically self-sufficient, and relies on foreign assistance and borrowing to maintain its economy.”\textsuperscript{190} In a similar vein academic Michael Wolfssohn, a staunch supporter of Israel, has noted, “The importance of the United States as a source of capital imports (as well as of political support in general—not to mention defence goods!) can hardly be overemphasized.”\textsuperscript{191} Not much data is provided for the above arguments though, and the only strong empirical case I have discovered comes from the early 1970s, at the beginning of the US-Israeli special relationship.\textsuperscript{192} The importance of US aid to Israel, however, does not necessarily lie in its absolute amount, but in how it highlights the unique status Israel has in US GPE.

In 2008 the United States ceased direct economic grants to Israel, but it is set to compensate for this with increased military grants over the coming years.\textsuperscript{193} At present US Foreign Military Financing grants to Israel represent 18.2 percent of the overall Israeli defence budget.\textsuperscript{194} Israel is the only country that can spend US civilian

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\item\textsuperscript{190} Mark, "Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance."
\item\textsuperscript{191} Wolfssohn, \textit{Israel, Polity, Society and Economy 1882-1986}, 264.
\item\textsuperscript{192} Machover and Orr, "The Class Character of Israel."
\item\textsuperscript{193} Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," 3.
\item\textsuperscript{194} "Highlights: Israel Economy News 14-20 Jun 09 (Israel -- OSC Summary in English) Gmp20090620739005," Director of National Intelligence Open Source Center (20 June 2009), quoted in Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," 3.
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aid on arms and can purchase weapons directly from US weapons manufacturers without going through the US State Department. This relationship is symbiotic, as Israel has long provided the US army and arms industry with a testing ground and important upgrade centre for its weapon systems. Israel has also allowed the United States to indirectly develop and test controversial weapons, and export arms and military training to dictatorial regimes.

This support of course does not come without costs. In this special relationship Israel must not only provide a de facto military foothold for US imperialism, but must actively counter any challenges to Israeli-US dominance in the Middle East. In a 1992 article in the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth, the former head of Israeli Military Intelligence and West Bank Administrator Shlomo Gazit, reaffirmed what Haaretz had stated in 1951:

In the aftermath of the disappearance of the USSR as a political power with interests of its own in the region a number of Middle Eastern states lost a patron.... A vacuum was thus created, leading to the region's instability. Under such conditions the Israeli role as a strategic asset guaranteeing a modicum of stability in the entire Middle East did not dwindle or disappear but was elevated to the first order of magnitude. Without Israel, the West would have to perform this role by itself, when none of the

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196 According to former high-ranking Israeli-US diplomat Yoram Ettinger, “the vice president of the company that produces the F16 fighter jets told me Israel is responsible for 600 improvements in the plane’s systems, modifications estimated to be worth billions of dollars, which spared dozens of research and development years.” He also contends that such cooperation has helped the US arms industry stay ahead of its main European competitors. Yoram Ettinger, "Two Way Independence: In Many Ways, Israel Is the Giver and the U.S. Is the Receiver," Ynetnews (12 May 2005), http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3084569,00.html.
197 According to Selfa, “Israeli military advisors provided training to the military and police forces of some of the twentieth century’s worst dictators, including the Shah of Iran, Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, Emperor Bokassa in the Central African Republic, General Idi Amin in Uganda, and Ian Smith of Rhodesia. Israel did not respect the international arms embargo on the South African apartheid regime, and remained one of its biggest arms suppliers. In the last year of the embargoed Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua, Israel provided 98 percent of the arms to Somoza, who killed 50,000 Nicaraguans. In 1980, Israel supplied 83 percent of the arms to the genocidal military regime of Guatemala. Israel also sold US jets and attack helicopters to the Indonesian military, at the same time as it was carrying out genocide in East Timor. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Israel earned more than $1 billion a year selling weapons to the military dictatorships in Argentina, Chile and Brazil. Israel was also the anchor to an international terroristor network which ran guns, drugs and other weapons between Panama's Noriega, the contras in Nicaragua, Middle Eastern arms dealers, the Sultan of Brunei and the CIA.” Selfa, "Israel: The U.S. Watchdog," 33-34.
existing superpowers really could perform it, because of various domestic and international constraints. For Israel, by contrast, the need to intervene is a matter of survival.198

It is the final sentence of this quotation that highlights a crucial element of Watchdog State theory. Israel does not oppose rival configurations of power in the region solely to serve its imperial backer, but it is structurally bound to do so for its own security. As a colonial-settler state Israel was founded on the dispossession of the Palestinians, and as a Zionist state it denies the Palestinian’s return in order to maintain a Jewish majority.199 As the British likely foresaw when they endorsed the Zionist cause, Israel is fated to being a paranoid, ultra-militarised state, surrounded by hostile Palestinians and countries populated by their ethnic and religious kin. This not only affects the state, but the Israeli people, who are bound by fear to the Zionist state. For its neighbours, Israel’s militarisation is a continual source of provocation. Therefore, wars, such as the one in 2006, should not be seen as an aberration, but as part of ongoing hostilities.

Israel’s permanent state of fear and isolation actually makes it the most stable, and, therefore, vital of US allies in the Middle East. This is not to deny the importance of other US allies, on which the United States expends much effort and resources to maintain. The never-ending US sponsored ‘peace process’ is part of this effort, where the United States seeks to limit Israeli expansion, quell popular unrest, and foster compliant regimes in the region.200 The peace process is limited to a

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200 Initiated by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, a central aim of the peace process was to entice states to end hostilities with Israel, or as argued by scholar and former member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation’s legislative body Naseer Aruri, it was “to peripheralize the centrality of the Palestine question and to advance the bilateral dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict.” Naseer Aruri, The Obstruction of Peace (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1995): 111, quoted in Sella, “Israel: The U.S. Watchdog.” While the Oslo Accords were portrayed as extending sovereignty to the Palestinians, they in fact outsourced Israel’s repression of the Palestinians to a faction of the Palestine Liberation
settlement that will not undermine Israeli’s absolute and “qualitative military edge” in the region, nor upset the demographics of the Israeli state.\textsuperscript{201} The United States willingness to pressure Israel is dependent on its overall position in the region and its need for Israeli support.\textsuperscript{202}

Ever since 1967 Israel has aimed to hold up its end of the relationship by defeating challenges to US-Israeli power in the Middle East. In 1967 the greatest threat was Arab nationalism, personified by the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. The United States and Britain had already crushed a similar threat in Iran in 1953, and were eager to see the Soviet-backed Arab nationalist movement in Egypt brought into line. In the words of Norman Finkelstein, the United States was “euphoric” about Israel’s defeat of Egypt in 1967, with a US State Department memorandum at the time stating:

\textit{Israel has probably done more for the US in the Middle East in relation to money and effort invested than any of our so-called allies and friends elsewhere around the world since the end of the Second World War. In the Far East, we can get almost nobody to help us in Vietnam. Here, the Israelis won the war single-handedly, have taken us off the hook, and have served our interests as well as theirs.}\textsuperscript{203}

In 1970, Israel prevented Syrian intervention in Jordan in support of the Palestinians and was rewarded by the United States with a sharp increase in financial and military aid.\textsuperscript{204} Israel’s second defeat of Egypt in 1973, crushed not only the

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\textsuperscript{201} Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," 1.

\textsuperscript{202} 1991 represented a period of US hegemony in the Middle East, which allowed President Bush to pressure the Likud government of Israel to enter peace negotiations, leading to the Madrid Peace Conference. A similar situation arose in 2003, when Bush’s assumption of success in Iraq led him to push for the Middle East Road Map. When the brutal reality of the Iraqi occupation became apparent, the Road Map faded away. See Gilbert Achcar and Noam Chomsky, \textit{Perilous Power: The Middle East & U.S. Foreign Policy: Dialogues on Terror, Democracy, War, and Justice} (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 67-68.


\textsuperscript{204} Noam Chomsky, \textit{Middle East Illusions} (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 178.
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strongest Arab state in the region, but began Egypt’s movement into the US fold.\footnote{D’Amato, "U.S. Intervention in the Middle East: Blood for Oil," 54.} As Stephen Zunes notes, “Israel has helped suppress victories by radical nationalist movements in Lebanon, Jordan, and Yemen, as well as in Palestine. The Israeli military has kept Syria, for many years an ally of the Soviet Union, in check, and its air force is predominant throughout the region.”\footnote{Stephen Zunes, "Continuing Storm: The U.S. Role in the Middle East," in Global Focus: US Foreign Policy at the Turn of the Century, ed. Marthe Honey and Tom Barry (New York: St. Martins Press, 2000), 249.}

The maintenance of a credible military threat in the region has been an important dynamic in Israel’s recent history, both for its own security and, as I contend, to maintain its value in the eyes of US imperialism. This leads to an Israeli proclivity to use disproportionate force against its opponents to demonstrate this threat, as seen in 2006.\footnote{See sections 3.4 and 4.2.}

Alongside its independent military role Israel provides the United States with a long-term military foothold in the world’s most important region. This is not only strategically important, but saves the United States billions of dollars on the deployment of an already stretched volunteer army.\footnote{Ettinger, "Two Way Independence: In Many Ways, Israel Is the Giver and the U.S. Is the Receiver."} As Brzezinski and Alexander Haig (former US secretary of state and North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces commander) acknowledge in the following quotations:

As the dominant military power in the Middle East, Israel has the potential, in the event of a major regional crisis, not only to be America’s military base but also to make a significant contribution to any required U.S. military engagement.\footnote{Brzezinski, "Hegemonic Quicksand," 8.}

Israel is the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk, does not carry even one American soldier, and is located in a critical region for American national security.\footnote{Ettinger, "Two Way Independence: In Many Ways, Israel Is the Giver and the U.S. Is the Receiver."}

While no states can claim full independence in action from the world’s great imperial powers, for Israel this fact is not only apparent, but is embraced. The state’s
historical cooperation with imperialism has placed it in an isolated and confrontational relationship with its neighbours and despite significant autonomy it remains dependent on US support and diplomatic protection. Because the relationship between Israel and the United States is so unique and systematic any discussion of major events, such as the war in 2006, would be disingenuous if Israel was analysed as a normal state, rather than one tied to the interests of US imperialism.
Conclusion

This chapter conceptualises the structural and historical interests of Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States, in order to explain the long-term causes of the 2006 War in Lebanon. For Hizbullah, the main conclusion is that it is a middle-class party, not only in terms of its leadership and cadre, but also in terms of its worldview and interests. This class basis and nature limits the horizons of the Party of God, making it unwilling to fundamentally challenge the economic and political situation in Lebanon. This creates a contradiction between the party and the economic and political requirements of its largely underprivileged social base. The need to maintain and appease its social base has grown during Hizbullah’s Lebanonisation, where now the party’s power is not just determined on the battlefield, but also in the electoral booth. This chapter has also highlighted the historical dynamics behind Hizbullah’s emergence, contending that the identity crisis of Shi’a and the structural imbalance they faced in Lebanon created the social setting for the emergence of a new political force. It was Hizbullah’s military achievements against Israel and its representation of the successful Iranian Revolution that secured its position at the helm of this community. At the same time this chapter has shown that ideology has not played a central role in Hizbullah’s popularity, and that in 2006 the party’s relationship with Iran and Syria was far from that of a proxy.

US long-term interests under the Bush administration were shaped by an acknowledgement that US global power would soon face challenges from emerging competitors at the regional and potentially global level. To prepare for these challenges the United State’s invaded Iraq in order to gain pivotal control over Middle Eastern oil supplies: the global oil spigot. US policy in 2003 transcended individuals and constituted a common apprehension among different factions of the US dominant class. This war was not simply an ideological endeavour, nor the sole preserve of the capitalist or territorial logics, but represented the economic and geopolitical concerns of US imperialism. The result, in 2006, was an administration determined to regain momentum for its grand strategy, for which the most tangible means for doing so was to confront Iran and its allies.
This chapter concludes that Israel is structurally tied to serving US interests, while still maintaining a level of autonomy. This makes Israel a special US ally, outside of the main groups of either quasi-voluntary or largely dependent participants in US imperialism. For Israel, the United States provides economic, military, and, most crucially, diplomatic support. In return Israel provides a military foothold, a laboratory and conduit for weapons, and a watchdog against opponents of Israeli and US power in the Middle East.

The conceptual framework created in this chapter is not just an analytic tool, but is also a causal map of the inevitable hostilities between Hizbullah and the US-Israeli alliance. The existence of Hizbullah is a challenge to Israeli military superiority, while to the United States it is a hurdle for its grand strategy in the Middle East. For Hizbullah, Israel poses an existential threat, but at the same time opposition to Israel has always been the party’s raison d’être. Hizbullah and Israel can never exist in a state of real, meaningful peace, a situation only worsened by an insecure United States. These factors found their expression in the medium- and short-term causes of the 2006 war; causes which one cannot properly explain without a long-term perspective on the interests of, and structural antagonisms between, Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States.
The structural concerns and dynamics identified in chapter 1 manifested themselves in the medium-term interests of Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States in the period leading up to the 2006 war. For Hizbullah, it was domestically focussed on maintaining its popular support, legitimising the retention of its military wing, and securing influence in the Lebanese government, alongside a need to aid its Syrian ally. Among the United States’ many interests in the Middle East, the most important in relation to Lebanon were the need to weaken Iranian influence, bolster its Arab allies, and defeat centres of opposition to its regional power. Israel shared the United States’ interests, except in regards to the United States’ allies in Lebanon, for which it showed little regard. Israel’s medium-term interests were firmly shaped by its domestic concerns. These included the War in Gaza that began in June 2006; the imperative in Israeli political culture to rescue or regain the bodies of captured Israeli soldiers; and the fact that Israel’s current leaders were seen as weak, due to their lack of military credentials. The medium-term interests of Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States, provide us with the medium-term causes of the war, as confrontation and militarism came to be seen as providing solutions to each of these actors’ concerns.
2.1) Hizbullah’s Medium-Term Interests

Three of Hizbullah’s interests are identified in this section, each stemming from the party’s middle-class basis and nature. The first and most important of these medium-term interests in 2006 was the party’s need to maintain popular support and legitimise the preservation of its army. I will begin by illustrating the conservatism of the party’s economic and political programme by looking at: its past electoral platforms; its failure to stand against neo-liberalism and the economic manifestations of imperialism; and its duplicitous opposition to sectarianism. I will argue that because of this economic and political conservatism the party has had to, since the end of the Israeli occupation in 2000, create new military causes to maintain its popularity and legitimise its weapons. These military causes were the fight for the Sheba Farms and the pledge to free Lebanese prisoners held in Israel. I also contend that Hizbullah’s weapons are essential to support the Palestinian cause, and defend itself against Israel, but that domestically these weapons can threaten the other sects and jeopardise the party’s important inter-sectarian alliances.

Discussion of Hizbullah’s medium-term interests will conclude with two briefer concerns. One was the need to secure influence in the Lebanese government; as a result of the new opportunities and uncertainties the party has faced since the end of the Syrian occupation in 2005. The next arose from Hizbullah’s apprehension over the threat of war against Iran, and the potential indictment of Syria’s leaders for the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik al-Hariri.
Maintaining Support and Legitimising its Army

Hizbullah’s interests in maintaining popular support and legitimising the preservation of its army are deeply intertwined. The party’s predicament in 2006 was that it was an army without a war; an organisation whose popular support was drawn largely from its defeat of an occupation that had ended. The party was also able to draw support through its provision of social services and its political advocacy for Lebanese Shi’a. The question since 2000, however, was whether the party’s conservative economic and political programme alone could hope to maintain the group’s popularity. The best illustration of this programme is Hizbullah’s electoral platforms. For example, in the 1998 Lebanese municipal elections, the first held in 35 years, Hizbullah campaigned on the following issues:

1. Encourage the citizen to play a more active role in the selection process of development projects.
2. Increase the functions and powers of municipalities in the provision of education, healthcare and socioeconomic affairs.
3. Involve qualified people in development projects.
4. Finance development projects from both municipal revenues and donations.
5. Exercise control over public works and prevent embezzlement.
6. Renovate the physical and administrative structures of municipalities and provide them with computer facilities.\(^{211}\)

As one commentator noted, these “were hardly more radical than New Labour’s [United Kingdom].”\(^{212}\) Given that this electoral platform appeared in 1998, at a time when Lebanese Shi’a were in a worse economic situation than today, it fell far short of fulfilling their real economic and political interests. Even today, with a

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\(^{212}\) Harman, "Hizbollah and the War Israel Lost."
relative rise in prosperity among the Shi’a of Southern Lebanon and Shi’a expatriates, the majority of Shi’a in Beirut’s southern suburbs (the dahiya) and the Beqaa Valley remain economically near the bottom of Lebanese society.\(^ {213}\) The party’s 2009 electoral platform provided few innovations, with the first two pages devoted entirely to the party’s military activities.\(^ {214}\)

Hizbullah’s large welfare system is often sighted as an example of the party’s progressive attempts to challenge socio-economic inequalities.\(^ {215}\) In fact this is a perfect representation of the limits of the party’s middle-class economic outlook. While the party provides welfare to the poorest Shi’a it refuses to challenge the economically regressive policies of Lebanon’s financial-political elites.\(^ {216}\) In the 1990s Hizbullah did little to oppose Rafik al-Hariri’s neo-liberal ‘reforms,’ despite their detrimental effect on much of its own social base. Instead the party directed its energies, and those of its supporters, towards the fight against Israel. In 2005, the party again ignored the economic interests of its supporters by assuring the victory of Hariri’s successors when it joined Prime Minister Fouad Siniora’s cabinet.\(^ {217}\) The neo-liberal policies of this government sparked massive protests in May 2006, which were called by Lebanon’s unions, and supported by Hizbullah and the parliamentary opposition (including some right-wing parties).\(^ {218}\) Hizbullah was hesitant in its opposition to Siniora’s policies, however, with one of its cabinet ministers partaking in the Higher Council for Privatisation, and its other minister (the Minister of Energy

\(^ {213}\) In the last two decades Shi’a have seen an improvement in their situation, thanks in part to remittances from the Arabian Gulf, and West and Central Africa. Casey L. Addis and Christopher M. Blanchar, “Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress,” (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 3 January 2011), 20-21.


\(^ {216}\) Lebanese politics has always been dominated by the wealthiest members of the society, particularly the Sunni financial elites in Beirut, epitomized in the last two decades by the multi-billionaire Hariri family.

\(^ {217}\) The Future Movement party of Saad al-Hariri, Rafik al-Hariri’s son, dominated this government. Saad al-Hariri gave the prime minister’s position to his father’s ex-finance minister Fouad Siniora. After the 2009 national elections Saad al-Hariri replaced Siniora as prime minister.

and Water) being only just “finally convinced” to oppose the privatisation of the electricity sector.\textsuperscript{219}

One of the most revealing episodes in Hizbullah’s recent history was its reaction to the Paris III conference of January 2007. This was convened by the major world powers and donors from the Gulf States, “to relieve debt and to create dynamism” in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{220} Such relief, however, was only to be given in exchange for the acceptance of harsh neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes.\textsuperscript{221} Hizbullah and its ally in the parliamentary opposition Michel Aoun, reacted with mild disagreement stating that they did not want to jeopardize the deal.\textsuperscript{222} Hizbullah half-heartedly called on the leadership of the major union confederation to protest the conference, which they did, assembling a measly 2,000 people.\textsuperscript{223} Such confused behaviour highlights the internal contradictions in the party. Lebanese scholar Fawwaz Traboulsi emphasises this point in his critical analysis of Hizbullah’s second political platform (manifesto) that was presented in 2009. As Traboulsi states, “The platform declares Hezbollah’s intention to reduce poverty, for example, but how will this be achieved by abiding by the World Bank’s [and Paris III’s] neo-liberal policies (readily accepted by successive Lebanese governments) rather than by reducing income disparities between classes?”\textsuperscript{224}

The neo-liberal imperatives of the Paris III conference fit within a Marxist conception of imperialism, or what David Harvey calls accumulation by dispossession.\textsuperscript{225} The Lebanese Communist Party, which shares this view, reacted to the Paris III conference by boycotting the rally organized by its Hizbullah ally and

\textsuperscript{219} Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 29-30. The two ministers were Trad Hamadeh (the Minister of Labour) and Muhammad Fneish. Since 2005 Hizbullah has had ministers in Lebanon’s unity cabinets, while remaining an opposition party. Hizbullah’s eventual disagreement with the privatisation plan was driven by concern over its social base, but also by pressure from its Communist Party allies and the opportunity the protests provided for rallying opposition against the government.


\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{224} Traboulsi, “Hezbollah’s New Political Platform.”

\textsuperscript{225} For Harvey, the current expression of accumulation by dispossession is an attempt by imperialist states to open up new geographical and economic areas for capitalist exploitation. See chap. 1, n. 140.
planning its own. Hizbullah’s reaction to this conference reflects the middle-class nature of Islamism: opposing the political manifestations of imperialism, while blurring imperialism’s economic dimensions as it pursues its own engagement with the capitalist economy. As Traboulsi states, the party’s new political platform:

> Does not ignore the economic basis of imperialist domination, which it identifies as “savage capitalism” -- assuming it does not harbor any illusion that the alternative of “soft capitalism” will be any less cruel. Although its reference to the “military-industrial complex”, rather than financial capitalism, is somewhat outdated as the determining factor shaping US policies, the platform rightly designates the latest stage of imperialism as the globalization of monopolies and military alliances. On this understanding, one would expect Hezbollah to reconsider its positions on the struggle between wealth and poverty and between oppressor and oppressed.

On the issue of Lebanon’s sectarian political system Hizbullah officially remains opposed to it, and this is one of its two fixed principles (thawabit). In reality Hizbullah is the largest and most prominent sectarian organisation in the country, and gains immense political and economic benefits from this system. If the sectarian political system was abolished Hizbullah would benefit in the short term, as Shi’a are the largest sect in Lebanon, but are currently allocated far fewer electoral seats than their population deserves. If this happened, however, the way would be opened for non-sectarian parties to emerge and challenge Hizbullah’s hegemony among

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226 D’Amato, "Lebanon and the Middle East Crisis: Interview with Gilbert Achcar." Due to a deteriorating security situation the Lebanese Communist Party had to cancel its rally.
227 An illustration of this is Ruhollah Khomeini’s distortion of imperialism from being a fundamentally economic phenomenon, to a political and cultural one. As Ervand Abrahamian has explained in his study of Khomeini’s Islamist populism, it is “a movement of the propertied middle class that mobilises the lower classes, especially the urban poor, with radical rhetoric directed against imperialism, foreign capitalism, and the political establishment.” Ervand Abrahamian, Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 17. This is also one of Achcar’s eleven theses on the resurgence of Islamism. Achcar, “Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism,” 58.
228 Traboulsi, “Hezbollah’s New Political Platform.” Ideologically Hizbullah does not oppose capitalism or its neo-liberal variant, although as the above quotation reveals it is somewhat vague on this issue. Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 30.
230 See chap. 2, n. 248.
Shi’a. For this reason the repeal of the sectarian system has always been secondary to defeating the Israeli occupation, the party’s second thawabit. This is why since 2000 opposition to the sectarian system has remained an often referenced, but seldom acted upon principle.\textsuperscript{231} As Traboulsi observes:

Although Hezbollah’s new [political] platform asserts that confessionalism is the bane of Lebanon’s system of government and the chief obstacle to the realization of true democracy, it shies away from even issuing a call to supersede it. In the press conference on the day following the platform’s publication, Hassan Nasrallah [Hizbullah’s secretary general] limited himself to a call for the formation of a national council for the elimination of confessionalism, but quickly added that the formation of such a council does not necessarily mean adoption of its eventual directives.\textsuperscript{232}

The relative weakness of Hizbullah’s economic and political programme, has led the party to manufacture two new military causes to maintain its popularity and legitimise its weapons. The first is the party’s armed conflict over the Israeli occupied Sheba Farms: a 25 square kilometre area consisting of 14 farms located south of Sheba, a Lebanese village on the western slopes of Mount Hermon.\textsuperscript{233} The UN and Israel consider the farms to be part of the Israeli occupied Syrian Golan Heights, where as the Lebanese government and Hizbullah declare they are Lebanese.\textsuperscript{234} In reality the farms were a non-issue prior to 2000 and have been used by Hizbullah and Syria, as part of a continued justification for conflict with Israel.\textsuperscript{235} Syria for its

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\textsuperscript{231} Saad-Ghorayeb, 
\textsuperscript{232} Traboulsi, "Hezbollah’s New Political Platform."
\textsuperscript{233} The ‘cause’ of the Sheba Farms has been criticised by many within Lebanon, if at times cautiously. As scholar and journalist Michael Young has written, “One evening earlier this summer, Lebanon’s most popular satire show, ‘Bas Mat Watan,’ broadcast a sketch showing an ‘interview’ with Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah’s leader and secretary general. ‘Nasrallah’ was asked whether his party would surrender its weapons. He answered that it would, but first several conditions had to be met: there was that woman in Australia, whose land was being encroached upon by Jewish neighbors; then there was the baker in the United States, whose bakery the Jews wanted to take over. The joke was obvious: there were an infinite number of reasons why Hezbollah would never agree to lay down its weapons and become one political party among others.” Michael Young, "Hezbollah’s Other War," \textit{New York Times}, 4 August 2006.
\textsuperscript{235} It was Nabih Berri, the leader of Amal, who was the first to raise this issue in 2000, with strong Syrian endorsement. See William Harris, "Crisis in the Levant: Lebanon at Risk," \textit{Mediterranean}
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part, regularly suggests that the Sheba Farms are Lebanese, in order to justify Hizbullah’s attacks, but refuses to officially state this in writing and renounce Syria’s claim to the territory. Ideally Syria wants to regain the farms in future negotiations with Israel, but is happy to remain vague on the issue, leaving open the possibility that it could cede the territory to Lebanon. If it had done so prior to 2006 it would have locally and internationally strengthened the legitimacy and scale of Hizbullah’s operations in the area.

The second cause is the “True Promise” (Al-wad al-sadiq), a pledge to release three Lebanese prisoners held in Israel; Samir al-Quntar, Yahya Skaf, and Nasim Nisr. True Promise is also the abbreviated name for the party’s July 12, 2006, capture operation; originally titled “Freedom for Samir Al-Quntar and his brothers.” The prisoners became a cause célèbre in Lebanon, which along with the

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236 Saad-Ghorayeb, Hizb‘ullah: Politics and Religion, 188. If Syria did this it would place Israel’s occupation of these farms in breach of UN Security Council Resolution 425, a 1978 resolution calling for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the establishment of the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL). Nonetheless, since 2006 Israel has created a new breach of this resolution by occupying the Lebanese half of the village of Ghajar (see section 3.4). After the war of 2006, fighting in the Sheba Farms has ceased due to the removal of Hizbullah’s armed presence on the border with Israel, although Lebanon’s claim to the territory remains (see section 4.2).

237 This pledge is also translated as faithful or truthful promise. Other sources also include as part of this pledge, the detention of Mohammad Faran and the bodies of 45 Lebanese held by Israel. Nasrallah did not, however, mention them during his press conference on July 12, 2006. "Al-Manar: Press Conference with Hasan Nasrallah," Understanding the Present Crisis (12 July 2006), http://web.archive.org/web/20061230184520/http://www.upc.org.uk/hasann12jul06.html. Samir al-Quntar is a Lebanese Druze who was arrested in Israel in 1979 following a brutal Palestine Liberation Front kidnapping operation in Northern Israel. Quntar was the longest held Lebanese detainee in Israel and had become a sort of national hero in Lebanon. Quntar was released in July 2008 as part of an Israeli-Hizbullah prisoner exchange, which saw Hizbullah return the bodies of Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, the soldiers captured on July 12, 2006. Yahya Skaf was a member of a Fatah team that carried out the 1978 Coastal Road massacre in Israel. Nasrallah continues to claim that Skaf is held in detention by Israel, while Israeli claims that he was killed during the ensuing shoot-out with Israeli police in 1978. Nasim Nisr was born in Lebanon to a Shi’ite father and a mother who was a Jewish convert to Islam, and in 1991 moved to Israel and gained citizenship. In 2002 he was convicted of spying for Hizbullah, but was released as part of the July 2008 prisoner swap. "Hezbollah Says Israel Holding Lebanese Prisoner," Ynetnews (17 July 2009), http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3748213,00.html. Rym Ghazal, "34 Days of War for 4 Men: Who Are They?," Daily Star (Beirut), 11 September 2006, Christoph Marcinkowski, "Prelude to Occupation? Implications of Israel’s War on Hizbullah in Lebanon," IDSS Commentaries 69/2006 (26 July 2006), http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/IDSS0692006.pdf, Yossi Melman, Yoav Stern, and Barak Ravid, "German Fm: Transfer of Bodies by Hezbollah Is Bid to Advance Swap Talks," Haaretz, 31 May 2008, Augustus R. Norton, "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics," International Spectator 42, no. 4 (2007).

238 "Al-Manar: Press Conference with Hasan Nasrallah."
Sheba Farms helped to maintain the party’s popularity and quell local proponents of the groups’ disarmament.\(^{239}\) In a 2007 opinion poll, Lebanese respondents were asked if “Hizbullah’s arms are necessary to face Israel until the liberation of Sheba’a Farms and the detainees.”\(^{240}\) Not only did 92 percent of Shi’a agree with this statement, but so to did 56 percent of Sunnis, 54 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 43 percent of Maronite Christians (see table 2.1).

### Table 2.1: Lebanese Support for the Sheba Farms and Detainees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maronite</th>
<th>Orthodox*</th>
<th>Catholic†</th>
<th>Sunni</th>
<th>Shi’a</th>
<th>Druze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* In Lebanon there are three official Orthodox sects and three official Catholic sects (in rough order from largest to smallest: Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Assyrian Orthodox, and Assyrian Catholic).† I assume that this survey combines these six sects under the title of either Orthodox or Catholic.


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Through its support of the Palestinian cause, Hizbullah’s weapons also allow the group to deflect anti-Shi’a opposition to the party and gain wider support, particularly among Sunni Muslims (domestically and regionally). As Hamzeh observes, Hizbullah has always been “totally involved” in the Palestinian cause, providing military training, social welfare services, and logistical support, particularly to Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas. However, without Hizbullah’s ability to confront and defeat Israel militarily, its support for the Palestinian cause would have garnered far less popularity for the party. All of this does not mean that the party’s support is purely strategic. While Amal was waging war against the Palestinian camps in Southern Lebanon in the 1980s, Hizbullah always maintained principled support for the Palestinians, even in the face of widespread Shi’a anger. Today Hizbullah continues to hold to this position and as scholar Noam Chomsky argues, “In the entire Arab world there is no meaningful support for Palestinians other than Hezbollah.”

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241 The events of May 2008 have undermined, for the indefinite future, much of Lebanese Sunni sympathy for Hizbullah (see chap. 1, n. 248). Regionally, however, the party is still seen in a positive light by many Arabs, as shown in the Pew Global Attitudes Project surveys from Spring 2007 and Spring 2009. Favourable views of the party and confidence in Nasrallah have remained somewhat stable in Jordan over the two-year period (Party: 54% to 51%, Nasrallah 54% to 56%), while there has been more of a decline in Egypt (Party: 56% to 43%, Nasrallah 50% to 34%) and the Palestinian territories (Party: 76% to 61%, Nasrallah 79% to 65%). While these were the only three majority Arab countries in the survey, I believe Jordan is likely to better represent regional opinion than the other two cases. In the Egyptian case this change is most likely due to the arrest of 49 men in Egypt in the months prior to the survey, who the Egyptian government accused of being Hizbullah agents planning to carry out attacks in Israel and Egypt. In the Palestinian case this could be just a normal decline from the historically high level of support seen for Hizbullah after the 2006 war, for I see no other reason why the fluctuation in its opinion should be so different from Jordan’s. “Little Enthusiasm for Many Muslim Leaders: Mixed Views of Hamas and Hezbollah in Largely Muslim Nations,” Pew Global Attitudes Project (4 February 2010), http://pewglobal.org/files/pdf/268.pdf. Hizbullah has also managed to gain support/acquiescence from more extreme Sunni Islamists, but this has also created some expectations, as seen during the War in Gaza in 2006 when Islamist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, accused Hizbullah of “raising false banners regarding the liberation of Palestine.” Gary C. Gambill, “Islamist Groups in Lebanon,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 11, no. 4 (December 2007), http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue4/jv11no4a3.asp#_edn13.

242 Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 147.

243 If Hizbullah relinquished its weapons it would either become part of a Lebanese government that would abandon the Palestinian cause and align with other US client regimes in the region, or it would become a pariah state like Syria. In reality Syria can be described as a ‘client state in waiting,’ having long seemed willing to come under the United States’ wing for the right price.

244 Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 72.

Hizbullah’s need to maintain its weapons is not just for political ends, but is necessary to face the perpetual threat from Israel. Israeli and US leaders are often eager to talk of existential threats to Israel, but these are less realistic than the threat they themselves pose to Hizbullah. If Hizbullah’s military wing merged with the Lebanese army, as some suggest it should, it would nullify the military advantages that have allowed Hizbullah to confront Israel. As Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah has stated, merging with the army would put Hizbullah “at the total mercy of Israeli military might.”

A problem arising from Hizbullah’s highly militarised programme is that in order to gain power in the Lebanese political system it must form coalitions with other sectarian parties; parties that largely abolished their militias after the civil war. This is a result of Lebanon’s sectarian allocated political system, where despite Hizbullah and its ally Amal having an electoral monopoly among the Shi’a, this only equates to about 35 of the 128 seats in parliament. Thus the party has had to build inter-sectarian alliances, which can only be maintained if these allies do not see the party’s weapons as a threat. Prior to the war in 2006 the party had managed to maintain this equilibrium, although after the clashes in Lebanon in May 2008 this has come into question. The most important inter-sectarian alliance is between the party and the Maronite Christian leader Aoun, who together seriously challenged the

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246 Assaf Kfouri, "Meeting Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah: 'Encounter with a Fighter'," in Inside Lebanon: Journey to a Shattered Land with Noam and Carol Chomsky, ed. Assaf Kfouri (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2007), 100. If such a merger happened Hizbullah would lose the element of surprise, the secrecy of its locations, its commander’s safety would be jeopardised, and its units would become easy targets for Israel’s superior weapons.

247 Ibid.

248 Officially Shi’a are allocated 27 seats in parliament, however, due to the electoral system they control about 35 seats. For example, in the 2009 national elections the electorate of Baalbek-Hermal had ten seats, which were allocated as follows: Shi’a, six; Sunni, two; Catholic, one; and Maronite, one. However, every elector is eligible to cast a vote for each of the ten seats and normally will vote for a list supplied by the party they support. Therefore, given the overwhelming size of the Shi’a population in this electorate, they were able to determine all of the ten seats. The other electorates where Shi’a determined non-Shi’a seats were Marjeyoun-Hasbaya and Zahrani.

249 The conflict was sparked by a May 2008 decision of the Lebanese government to shut down Hizbullah’s private telecommunication network and remove Beirut Airport’s security chief Wafic Shkeir for alleged ties with the party. Hizbullah called this a declaration of war, given among other things, the importance of its telecommunications network for its military activities in 2006. The armed conflict occurred throughout the country and roughly lasted from May 7 to May 14, resulting in the deaths of 84 people. The conflict ended with the Lebanese army deploying throughout the country and the government reversing its previous decisions.
ruling coalition in the last two national elections (2005 and 2009). At the time of writing, this alliance has officially taken control of the cabinet, although this is yet to sit. This was precipitated by Druze leader Walid Jumblatt’s defection from the ruling coalition to Hizbullah’s alliance in January 2011. The situation remains tense, however, as the Syrian uprising that began in March 2011 has undermined Hizbullah’s credibility, due to its hypocritical support for the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad.

Securing Influence in the Lebanese Government

With the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in April 2005, Hizbullah embarked on a new chapter in its history. While Syria has long supported the party, it has also sought to contain the group’s power by supporting Amal and manipulating the Lebanese electoral system. For Hizbullah, Syria’s withdrawal “removed the glass ceiling blocking its pursuit of absolute Shi’a political hegemony,” as analyst Gary Gambill notes. At the same time as it was limiting Hizbullah’s power, however, Syria had prevented domestic Lebanese attempts to disarm the party in order to facilitate the party’s ongoing conflict with Israel. Therefore, since 2005 Hizbullah’s fear of disarmament has driven it to seek more direct influence over the Lebanese government.

In July 2005, Hizbullah joined the Lebanese cabinet, a move it had previously avoided out of fears that as a minority member it might be tied to decisions that

252 The uprising in Syria occurred at a time when the Lebanese were wrangling over the formation of a new cabinet after Hizbullah and its allies had withdrawn from the unity cabinet on January 12, 2011. Nada Bakri, "Resignations Deepen Crisis for Lebanon," New York Times, 12 January 2011. See the concluding chapter.
253 Gambill, "Islamist Groups in Lebanon."
antagonised Lebanon’s Syrian occupier. The party’s decision was predicated on assurances from the majority alliance in the cabinet that neither its weapons nor its military operations against Israel would be hindered.\footnote{254 Ibid. See chap. 2, n. 217.} This was by no means a stable arrangement, for in November 2006 Hizbullah’s ministers resigned from the cabinet, leading to the paralysis of the Lebanese political system and 18 months of sit-in protests in Beirut.\footnote{255 The resignations came after the ruling alliance rejected Hizbullah’s demands for a consensus based ‘national unity government,’ that would have given the party veto power over all major government decisions. This was demanded as the government was preparing to endorse a special tribunal over the murder of Rafik al-Hariri. After the resignations, Hizbullah and the parliamentary opposition called for protests and a sit-in in Beirut, which began on December 1, 2006. These ended with the signing of the Doha Agreement on May 21, 2008, following the clashes during that month (see chap. 2, n. 249). The Doha Agreement was a victory for Hizbullah, giving it its veto power (through a third plus one blocking minority in the cabinet).} During these sit-in protests, Hizbullah used the sheer size of its social base to pressure the government. In the background, however, lurked the party’s military wing; quietly ensuring that the government could not disperse the protesters. In other words, Hizbullah needs to secure influence in the Lebanese government to protect its weapons, and needs its weapons to secure influence over the Lebanese government.

Hizbullah’s weapons have long determined the party’s influence over the Lebanese government, even before Syria’s withdrawal, and this is a reality endorsed by most Shi’a. In a 2005 survey, 80 percent of Shi’a respondents supported Hizbullah maintaining its weapons.\footnote{256 Simon Haddad, "A Survey of Lebanese Shi’i Attitudes Towards Hezbollah," \textit{Small Wars \\& Insurgencies} 16, no. 3 (2005): 327.} Shi’a influence over the Lebanese government has always been relatively weak, lacking the economic power of the Sunni community or the disproportionate electoral power of Christians.\footnote{257 At present Shi’a are generally considered the largest sectarian group in Lebanon, although there has been no official census since 1932. After the Taif Agreement in 1989, Shi’a were allotted 21% of the seats in parliament, while the largest Christian sect, the Maronites, were allotted 27% even though they were a smaller community.} As Amal Saad-Ghorayeb states, the party’s weapons provide a form of “compensation for Shiite political [and one could say economic] under-representation.”\footnote{258 Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, "Hizbullah’s Arms and Shiite Empowerment," \textit{Daily Star}, 22 August 2005.} Until Shi’a gain economic or political parity with the other sects they will continue, as Gambill puts it, to see Hizbullah’s weapons as their “critical instrument of communal leverage.”\footnote{259 Gambill, "Islamist Groups in Lebanon."} This is yet another
reason why the party must protect its military wing by securing its position in the Lebanese government.

Supporting Iran and Syria

Hizbullah’s final interests in 2006 arose from its relationship with Iran and Syria. The notion that the 2006 war was a ‘proxy war’ for Iran or Syria, was a discourse manufactured by Hizbullah’s opponents and is a gross distortion of the party’s current external relations. Nonetheless, in 2006 Iran was facing continuing threats from Israel and the United States, while Syria’s Assad regime, still coming to terms with its expulsion from Lebanon, faced an international investigation into the 2005 assassination of Hariri (who had recently resigned as Lebanese prime minister). Hizbullah was, therefore, concerned for the fate of its allies, Syria more immediately so than Iran.

In the final chapter of this thesis I explore two competing explanations for Hizbullah’s 2006 capture operation; namely, to capture Israeli soldiers for a prisoner exchange or to spark a full-scale war. If it were the first case, then this served Hizbullah’s domestic interests and provided little assistance to Iran or Syria. Were it for the later, as I contend, then Hizbullah’s domestic concerns remain the most obvious explanation. Indirectly the war increased Iran’s perceived deterrence capability, but few scholars see this as a primary motivation for the capture operation, and it seems more likely that Iran was unwittingly dragged along in the conflict.

Syria’s interests are more pertinent, as the threat posed to the Assad regime by the Hariri investigation jeopardised Hizbullah’s supply line for Iranian and Syrian weapons. While experts such as Norton and Saad-Ghorayeb did not consider this a

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260 See section 1.1.
261 Hariri resigned in October 2004.
motivation for Hizbullah’s actions in 2006, I contend it was important. The destabilisation of its Syrian ally posed a serious threat to the party and must have weighed on its leaders during this period. As Saad-Ghorayeb rightly argues, this does not mean that Syria used the party as a proxy, as Hizbullah’s decision would have been based on its own self-interests.263 As established above, the party’s relationship to Syria is functional rather than subservient, and it is the party’s domestic concerns that provided the greatest impetus for its actions in July 2006.

Hizbullah’s medium-term interests in 2006 centred on its need to maintain popular support, legitimise its arms, secure influence in the Lebanese government, and to a lesser extent aid Syria. Without any real perspectives for how to address these interests peacefully, Hizbullah fell back on its traditional means for building support and gaining power: its weapons.

263 Saad-Ghorayeb, "The Framing of Hizbullah."
2.2) The United States’ Medium-Term Interests

The United States may not have had troops fighting in the war of 2006, but it was a participant in the conflict. The United States’ interests in this war stemmed from its then quagmire in Iraq, with the administration of George W. Bush needing a victory to regain credibility for its personnel and its pursuit of hegemony over Middle Eastern oil supplies. To achieve this the United States had three identifiable medium-term interests in 2006: to weaken Iran’s influence in the Middle East; to strengthen its regional allies; and to weaken opposition to US power in the region.

When referring to the United States in this conflict the primary agent was the executive branch of government (i.e., the Bush administration) that in the United States dominates foreign policy. US involvement in the 2006 war appears to have been shaped primarily by the territorial logic of US imperialism, rather than serving any immediate interests of US capital. Another theoretical conclusion from chapter 1 is that this administration was not dominated by liberal imperialists (i.e., neo-conservatives). According to anonymous sources cited by reporter Seymour Hersh, the war sparked major disagreements over how to handle the war, pitting “career diplomats in the State Department,” such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, against “conservatives” like Vice President Dick Cheney and Elliott Abrams. This is in line with Bush’s memoir, where he states, “The disagreement within the team was heated. ‘We need to let the Israelis finish off Hezbollah,’ Dick Cheney said. ‘If you do that,’ Condi replied, ‘America will be dead in the Middle East.’ She recommended we seek a UN resolution calling for a ceasefire and deploying a multinational peacekeeping force…. Neither choice was ideal.”

Far from a neo-conservative monolith, the fight between these fellow realist imperialists (Rice and Cheney) represented an administration divided over expectations for the war, rather than ideology. These figures also agreed on the need

264 Zunes, “The Israel Lobby: How Powerful Is It Really?.”
to confront Hizbullah, and by extension Iran. Such unity of opinion extended beyond the administration to both parties in the US congress. This is shown in US House Resolution 921, from July 18, 2006, which gave Israel almost unconditional support to attack Lebanon, and painted Hizbullah as a proxy of Iran and Syria.267 While most of the world was calling for a cease-fire, the US House of Representatives passed this resolution by a vote of 410 to eight.268 A similar resolution entitled, “Condemning Hezbollah and Hamas and their state sponsors and supporting Israel’s exercise of its right to self-defense,” passed without amendment in the US Senate.269 While in 2006, Bush’s Republican administration was more proactive in its support of Israel than a Democrat administration was likely to have been, the structural concerns of the United States limited the divergence between these two parties.

**Weakening Iranian Influence in the Middle East**

The above resolutions, and their attempt to portray Hizbullah as an Iranian proxy, represent systemic US opposition to Iran. This has existed since the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, but gained new importance after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. As scholar Virginia Tilley explains, “Since the fall of Saddam Hussein and the dissolution of Iraq’s army, Iran has emerged as the sole regional power capable of


contesting unfettered US hegemony in the world’s richest oil region.” From its involvement in neighbouring Iraq and Afghanistan, to its growing reach into Lebanon and Palestine, Iran’s influence was upsetting the United States’ plans to secure hegemony over the global oil spigot. A Chatham House report in 2006 warned that:

There exists a very real possibility that, if the US attacks Iran, then Iran will inflict a devastating defeat upon the US in Iraq, and also take the fight to the US across the Middle East. Even now the Multinational Force is struggling to influence political developments in the south and central Euphrates regions of Iraq, where there is a predominantly Shia population, and the Arab Sunni insurgency continues to be a deadly presence inflicting catastrophic losses upon the nascent Iraqi security forces and their US backers. These situations could be magnified by Iranian intervention, to the point that the coalition might conceivably be forced to evacuate Iraq, leaving Iran not only as the undeniable formative force in Iraq, but also as the undisputed hegemon in the Gulf.

In 2006 the United States and Israel seemed intent on striking Iran, and both realised that Hizbullah would not stand idly by if this happened. As a 2009 RAND Corporation report for the US Air Force contended:

Our research findings suggest that Hezbollah likely will feel obliged to help Iran should it confront the United States, given Iran’s continued support to Hezbollah in its conflict with Israel. But Hezbollah may only feel this obligation under certain circumstances. The most likely circumstance would be in response to U.S. aggression against Iran, whether preemptive or after an escalation of tensions. If Iran asks Hezbollah to attack U.S.

interests under these circumstances, it may feel as if it has no option but to attack.273

This understanding led the Bush administration to initiate a political campaign against Hizbullah in the years preceding the 2006 war. Domestically, the administration tried to refocus attention on the Party of God, regardless of whether the party’s actions at that time warranted it. Until 1998 Hizbullah was never mentioned by name in a US congressional resolution, yet during the session of Congress prior to the 2006 war the group was named over two dozen times.274 In 2005, the US House of Representatives passed Resolution 101 condemning “continuous terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hezbollah.”275 This was despite the conclusions of the US State Department and the US Congressional Research Service (CRS) that Hizbullah had not committed a major act of terrorism since 1994.276 This resolution, entitled “Urging the European Union to add Hezbollah to the European Union’s wide-ranging list of terrorist organizations,” had clear bi-partisan support, being passed with a vote of 380 to three.277

Militarily any campaign against Hizbullah would invariably involve Israel. This fact was acknowledged by Martin Indyk, former undersecretary of state in the Clinton administration and former ambassador to Israel, who stated that the United

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273 Wehrey et al., Dangerous but Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East, 103. Hizbullah’s deputy secretary-general Naim Qassem, however, portrayed some hesitancy in the following quotation from 2007 in response to the question of retaliation following attacks on Iran or Syria, “The state that comes under attack is responsible for responding to the attack and defending itself.” Interview with Naim Qassem, Al Watan, September 23, 2007, quoted in Abbas W. Samii, “A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship,” Middle East Journal 62, no. 1 (2008): 53. As Samii concludes on the same page as Qassem’s quotation, “Hizbullah’s willingness to put itself at risk on Iran’s behalf under current circumstances is questionable. Hizbullah may act if the survival of Iran’s Shi‘a regime is at stake — if a war against Iran is launched, for example. Short of that, Hizbullah is unlikely to sacrifice its achievements or endanger its constituency due to its investment in Lebanese politics.”


277 Urging the European Union to Add Hezbollah to the European Union’s Wide-Ranging List of Terrorist Organizations, In my view the near unanimous bi-partisan support for this resolution reflects US elite fears over the rise of Iran and the position of the United States in the Iraq and the region more broadly. It also reflects domestic electoral concerns, as few members of congress are willing to oppose legislation condemning terrorism, no matter what the intention of the legislation.
States had no leverage over Hizbullah except “through Israel's use of force.”

Therefore, the defeat of Hizbullah was a crucial step in the United States’ campaign against Iran. Bush’s aim in the 2006 war is made clear in his memoir where he states, “In the short run, I wanted to see Hezbollah and their backers badly damaged. In the long run, our strategy was to isolate Iran and Syria as a way to reduce their influence and encourage change from within.”

**Strengthening its Allies**

The next identifiable set of US interests was the need to bolster its non-Israeli allies. Prior to the war, the most significant US effort in this vein occurred after Hamas’s victory in the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Elections. The United States response to this victory was to “orchestrate” an international sanctions regime that went well beyond its ostensible goal of pressuring Hamas, and imposed “a brutal collective punishment on the population.”

As John Dugard, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, reported just prior to the 2006 War in Gaza, “the Palestinian people have been subjected to possibly the most rigorous form of international sanctions imposed in modern times.”

The United States clearly hoped that by pressuring the Palestinians as a whole, they could turn support away from Hamas toward its own allies in Fatah. This was seen in the dramatic escalation of US funding and training for Fatah forces.

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in the wake of Hamas’s victory, and the lifting of sanctions on the West Bank once it was under Fatah’s control.283

In Lebanon, the United States had found its ally in the March 14 Alliance, which at the time firmly opposed Hizbullah, Iran and Syria.284 As a CRS report from 2007 contends, “Many U.S. policy makers fear that without significant outside support, the March 14 Movement will not be able to withstand Syrian and Iranian meddling through their Shiite proxy, Hezbollah. Since 2005, the Administration has pursued a policy of strengthening the pro-Western elements of the Lebanese government.”285

The actual implementation of this policy, however, was relatively weak. Prior to 2006 the United States had focused on advocating UN Security Council Resolution 1559, which it had sponsored alongside France. The resolution was primarily concerned with expelling Syria from Lebanon, but also called for the disarming of “all militias” in Lebanon (i.e., Hizbullah). Militarily the CRS report determined that

283 It is worth here quoting at length the report of the mainstream/conservative International Institute for Strategic Studies on US support for Fatah, “The June escalation was triggered by Hamas’s conviction that the PA’s Presidential Guard, which US Security Coordinator Lieutenant General Keith Dayton had helped build up to 3,500 men since August 2006, was being positioned to take control of Gaza. The timing was significant. Abbas, Haniyeh and Hamas Politburo chief Khaled Meshaal, normally based in Damascus, had signed a Saudi-brokered power-sharing deal on 9 February 2007, and formed a national unity government in mid-March. In response, the build-up of the Presidential Guard was accelerated. The US had arranged the transfer of 2,000 rifles and ammunition from Egypt in late December 2006, and in late April the Israeli government transferred another 375; the US committed $59 million for training and non-lethal equipment, and covertly persuaded Arab allies to fund the purchase of further weapons. Jordan and Egypt hosted at least two battalions for training, one of which was deployed into Gaza as clashes resumed in mid-May. With half its parliamentary bloc and its cabinet ministers in the West Bank in Israeli custody since the abduction of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit by Palestinian militants on 28 June 2006, Hamas concluded that its remaining government base in Gaza was in danger and launched what in effect was a pre-emptive coup.” “Hamas Coup in Gaza: Fundamental Shift in Palestinian Politics,” IISS Strategic Comments 13, no. 5 (June 2007), http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/past-issues/volume-13-2007/volume-13-issue-5/hamas-coup-in-gaza/

284 The March 14 Alliance was named after the first day of protests in the ‘Cedar Revolution,’ which was a wave of protests in Lebanon, in 2005, in the wake of the Rafik al-Hariri’s assassination. These protests led to end of the Syrian occupation of the country. During the 2006 war the terms Cedar Revolution and March 14 Alliance were often inaccurately used to refer to the ruling Lebanese coalition. In fact one of the largest contingents in the Cedar Revolution, and the original March 14 Alliance, was the Free Patriotic Movement of Michel Aoun, who by July 2006 had moved to the parliamentary opposition and become an ally of Hizbullah. In 2011 the March 14 Alliance has changed much, with the defection of Jumblatt and the softening of the alliances anti-Syrian stance, particularly after their leader, Saad al-Hariri, visited Damascus in 2009. “Nasrallah Hails Hariri’s Visit to Damascus,” Ynetnews (20 December 2009), http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3822714,00.html.

“The Bush Administration ... pledged to strengthen the LAF [Lebanese Armed Forces] as a military counterweight to Hezbollah.”\textsuperscript{286} Prior to the war, however, the Bush administration had only requested approximately $1 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants for the 2006 financial year, with an additional $4.8 million in the 2007 financial year.\textsuperscript{287} While this was the first request by a US administration for FMF grants to Lebanon since 1984, this can be explained by the LAF’s military needs following the withdrawal of 15,000 Syrian troops the year before.\textsuperscript{288} These FMF grant requests were dwarfed in the aftermath of the war when the Bush administration “reprogrammed an estimated $42 million to provide spare parts, technical training, and new equipment to the LAF.”\textsuperscript{289}

Therefore, prior to the war the United States did not consider its Lebanese allies to have been in a situation that necessitated a major exertion of financial, military or political capital. As was seen in Palestine, however, the United States was prepared to intervene if its allies faced defeat, even if this countered the democratic will of the people. The ensuing chapters show how the interests of the United States’ Lebanese allies weighed on the Bush administration during the war, especially as Israel’s actions threatened the March 14 Alliance’s control of the Lebanese government.

\textbf{Weakening Middle Eastern Opposition}

US opposition to Iran and Hizbullah is not simply based on military or political concerns, but is necessary for the United States to secure its hegemony in the region. Unlike previous empires the United States relies on the “hegemony of consent” more than the “hegemony of coercion,” but the use and threat of coercion remains crucial.\textsuperscript{290} This is especially important for extinguishing any beacons of opposition, leading to what Ellen Meiksins Wood calls the “demonstration effect,” or what

\begin{footnotes}
\item[286] Ibid., 2.
\item[287] Ibid., 3. All monetary values in this thesis are assumed to be US dollars unless otherwise stated.
\item[288] Ibid.
\item[289] Ibid., 3-4.
\end{footnotes}
Chomsky terms the “mafia complex.” From Cuba and Vietnam, to the axis-of-evil, the logic of US imperialism requires the defeat of non-compliant states to both prevent and intimidate any emulation. This is no more important than in the Middle East, where such emulation spreads quickly due to ethnic and religious ties. This was seen in the past with pan-Arabism and Islamism, and is apparent now in the regional wave of revolts. Regardless of the intentions of Iran or Hizbullah, their very independence undermines US hegemony simply because of the example they provide.

This is no more relevant than in relation to the Palestinians, who after decades of defeat would be more resigned to the status quo, were it not for the example provided by groups such as Hizbullah. Nasrallah described the capture of Israeli soldiers in July 2006, as an attempt to relieve Israeli pressure on Gaza, a statement taken at face value by many Palestinians. Such perceived solidarity not only undermines US hegemony in the Middle East, but also hinders the efforts of US-allied Sunni Arab regimes to foster popular animosity towards Shi’ā groups. These regimes are threatened by Hizbullah’s victories, as it encourages popular dissent against their own pacifism towards Israel and close ties to the United States.

294 Rashid Khalidi, "Forward," in The War on Lebanon: A Reader, ed. Nubar Hovsepian (Northampton: Olive Branch Press, 2008), xi. Popular regional support for Nasrallah grew tremendously after the war, especially among Palestinians. A poll conducted during the war by Palestine’s An-Najah National University, found that 79.6% of Palestinians had a very good view of Hizbullah, while in Egypt, a post war poll by the Ibn Khaldun Center found that Nasrallah was ranked as the most important regional leader. Dan Murphy, "In War’s Dust, a New Arab ‘Lion’ Emerges," Christian Science Monitor, 29 August 2006. "Palestinians Hold Hezbollah in High Regard," Angus Reid Global Monitor (29 July 2006), http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/view/12694.
295 The promotion of anti-Shi’a/Iranian sentiment was clearly seen in the statements of the regions leaders. In particular the claim by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak that Shi’a were “always loyal to Iran,” and King Abdullah of Jordan’s coining of the axiom about a rising “Shiite crescent.” Michael Bröning, "The Myth of the Shia Crescent," Project Syndicate (2008), http://www.project-syndicate.org /commentary/broening1.
The United States’ misadventure in Iraq had also precipitated a crisis of legitimacy, which was undermining its grand strategy in the region.\textsuperscript{297} As Alex Callinicos rightly observes:

To withdraw US troops from Iraq would, of course, drastically undermine Washington’s plans to remodel the Middle East. Moreover, should an Islamist regime hostile to the US, and probably aligned with Iran, come to power in Iraq, the resulting shift in the regional balance of power in the region could have very dangerous consequences, perhaps, for example, encouraging Israel to launch pre-emptive strikes against Iran. At the same time, the Arab regimes most closely aligned to the USA, notably in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, would find their already shaky positions further weakened. And, more broadly, US authority on a wider scale would be reduced: having unsuccessfully talked loudly and used a big stick in Iraq, Washington would find other states less willing to toe the line on a variety of issues.\textsuperscript{298}

Therefore, in 2006 the Bush administration, and US imperialism as a whole, found itself at a critical juncture. The first priority of the administration was to gain a victory that could rekindle its regional and global strategies. The most immediate aim was to weaken Iran, directly or indirectly, and thus advance the United States’ goal to control the global oil spigot. The administration also needed to be ready to defend allies (e.g., the March 14 Alliance) and crush centres of opposition (be they in Palestine or Lebanon). Hizbullah’s provocative actions on July 12, 2006, must have seemed to many in Washington an ideal opportunity to regain momentum in their pursuit of Middle Eastern hegemony.

\textsuperscript{297} Kagan, "America’s Crisis of Legitimacy."
\textsuperscript{298} Callinicos, "Iraq: Fulcrum of World Politics."
2.3) Israel’s Medium-Term Interests

This section identifies those Israeli interests that aligned with the United States in 2006, alongside those that revealed the domestic concerns of Israel’s leaders. The United States and Israel were united in their aim to weaken Iran and other oppositional forces in the Middle East, but conflicted over the March 14 Alliance, for which Israel showed little concern. Domestically the Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert and defence minister Amir Peretz, faced pressure due to their lack of military credentials; in the context of the loss of an Israeli soldier in Gaza in June 2006, and the priority the Israeli public gives to recovering its soldiers. What these medium-term interests highlight is the level of sovereignty Israel maintains, while still aligning with the main interests of US imperialism.

Watchdog State Interests

The convergence of Israel’s interests with the United States over Iran and Hizbullah is no coincidence. Israel’s watchdog state history binds it to the interests of US imperialism and its perpetual hostility with its neighbours allows no tolerance for rival centres of power.\(^{299}\) Weakening Iran’s influence is a central concern for Israel’s leaders, who have more consistently and vehemently opposed the Islamic Republic than any US administration. While some might doubt the claimed existential threat Iran poses to Israel, there remain real Israeli concerns over Iran’s military power.\(^{300}\) According to top unnamed Israeli officials interviewed by Anthony Cordesman, a leading US military and foreign policy analyst who has held senior positions in the US government, Hizbullah is often referred to as the “Iranian Western Command.”\(^{301}\)

\(^{299}\) See section 1.3.


While this is a drastic oversimplification of Hizbullah’s relationship to Iran, it does highlight a perception that Iran has successfully exported its deterrent and offensive capabilities to Lebanon.\textsuperscript{302} Cordesman and these officials situate this discussion in the context of Iran’s supposed nuclear ambitions, portraying Lebanon as a potential launching pad for a nuclear strike on Israel. Whether real or not, one need only look at Israel’s response to the ascending power of Egypt in 1967, or its eagerness to confront Iraq in 1991, to see how it responds to challenges to its regional military supremacy.\textsuperscript{303}

Historically every Middle Eastern force opposing the United States, be they nationalists, anti-imperialists, or Islamists, have also opposed Israel. This obliges Israel to maintain a credible military threat in the region, or what is referred to as Israel’s ‘deterrent capability’. Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005 weakened this deterrent capability, a fact highlighted by Nasrallah in his popular Spider Web Theory. This theory alleges that Israel’s technological superiority masked a weak, self-indulgent society that was not willing to make sacrifices in its own defence.\textsuperscript{304} Therefore, according to the Israeli officials interviewed by Cordesman, one of the main objectives of the 2006 war was to, “restore the credibility of Israeli deterrence.”\textsuperscript{305} The leading Israeli journalist Aluf

\textsuperscript{302} In its own capacity Hizbullah had become less of a threat since 2000. The party had not deliberately attacked Israeli civilians since May 2000; all other attacks had been focused on the disputed Sheba Farms; and according to credible estimates Hizbullah was down to about 500 full-time fighters. However, it is estimated that the 4,000 to 5,000 rockets Hizbullah fired during the war represented only about a third of its arsenal. Anthony H. Cordesman, "Iran's Support of the Hezbollah in Lebanon," (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 15 July 2006). Jeremy M. Sharp, "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict," (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 15 September 2006), 10.

\textsuperscript{303} This is not to say that Israel’s only concern is with its military hegemony, as many decision makers seriously consider a nuclear-armed Iran as a grave threat to their country. In the case of Egypt and Iraq Israel had its own interests, based on its immediate security interests. Egypt in 1967 has been discussed in the previous chapter, but for discussion on Israeli and US interests in confronting the Iraqi army in 1991 see Gilbert Achcar, \textit{Eastern Cauldron: Islam, Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq in a Marxist Mirror} (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 29-30. Achcar contends that after the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq was left with a massive military apparatus in the middle of the world’s most important oil producing region, a situation that was unacceptable for the US. Therefore, the 1991 Gulf War provided the United States with an opportunity to destroy two-thirds of Iraq’s military potential and establish military bases in the region. While Israel may not have fought in the war, this was only because it was held back by the United States to secure the cooperation of Arab states.

\textsuperscript{304} Gambill, “Implications of the Israel-Hizbullah War “.

\textsuperscript{305} Cordesman, \textit{Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War}, 6. These officials are anonymous, but I believe they are credible given that they undermine Israel’s own official story on the war, while Cordesman is very sympathetic towards Israel. For discussion on his stance towards Israel see Norman Finkelstein,
Benn reiterated this point, stating, “Then-chief of staff Dan Halutz said such an incident [as occurred on July 12, 2006] would have far-reaching consequences for Israel’s deterrent capability. Halutz said Israel could not show restraint in the face of a kidnapping in the north, and it had to respond. Olmert testified that he accepted this stance.”

Israel’s relationship to the United States’ Arab allies on the other hand, has always been contradictory. Israel is torn between a search for non-hostile neighbours and competition with these same neighbours for influence in the US halls of power. In Palestine, Israel and the United States have aligned in their support for Fatah against Hamas, but in Lebanon no such alignment exists over the March 14 Alliance.

During the war Israel showed disregard for the interests of the March 14 Alliance, eliciting cautions from the Bush administration. In 2006 Israeli leaders viewed the alliance as an instrument for challenging Hizbullah, rather than as a potential ally. Interestingly, the March 14 Alliance was established around the pursuit of Hariri’s killers and opposition to Syria, goals seemingly in line with Israeli interests. There remain many in the Israeli establishment, however, who fear that if the current dictatorship in Syria were to fall, it may be replaced by an Islamist regime. This is apparent in Israel’s tentative reaction to the Syrian uprising of 2011.


Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 16.

See section 4.2.

The March 14 Alliance obviously has its own interests in avoiding Israel’s kiss of death: where-by an Arab leader is doomed to popular resentment if they are seen as supported by Israel. An important example of this was seen in 2006, when Israel abducted 20 Hamas parliamentary members to deprive it of its parliamentary majority. Israel then called on Mahmoud Abbas to use this opportunity to consolidate his power, which he refused given the unpopularity of playing a part in Israel’s endeavours. Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 16. Uri Avnery, "Kiss of Death for Abu Mazen," CounterPunch (7 January 2007), http://www.counterpunch.org/avnery01062007.html.

The Muslim Brotherhood remains the most important popular force in Syria despite years of brutal repression. The Assads have long promoted the idea that their regime is the lesser of two evils, which has some success in influencing its relations with Israel. Since 2005 the Bush administration seemed determined to overthrow the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad, despite the reservations of its Israeli ally.
Domestic Interests

During Israel’s wars in 2006 the first domestic interest of Olmert and Peretz was the need to prove their military resolve.311 Both these men lacked the military credentials so common in this ultra-militarised society: Olmert having served as an Israeli Defence Force (IDF) newspaper reporter and Peretz performing his military service as a maintenance officer.312 This lack of military stature created a political impetus for escalation after the capture of three IDF soldiers in 2006: Gilad Shalit by Hamas on June 25, and Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev on July 12. Israel’s post-war Winograd Commission posed a similar question to the IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz, asking whether the scale of the response was an impulsive reaction to the humiliation of having lost yet another soldier, which he denied.313 Another conclusion is that Israel’s reaction to Shalit’s capture in June created a public expectation that Goldwasser and Regev’s capture would be responded to in kind.

Olmert and Peretz’s lack of military standing also created a less favourable environment for a peaceful prisoner swap. This was in contrast to the previous prime minister Ariel Sharon, a famous army commander known in the Arab world as the ‘Butcher of Beirut,’ who in 2004 orchestrated a prisoner swap with Hizbullah.314

Olmert’s situation was not helped by low approval ratings of his premiership (35%), and major public opposition to his West Bank “convergence plan” (56%).

The recovery of the three soldiers was also an interest in and of itself, as the Israeli public has long seen the return of its soldiers as an imperative. Israelis have been willing to exchange large numbers of enemy prisoners and bodies for the return of several of their own soldiers, whether they are alive or not. This interest weighed more heavily on Olmert and Peretz given their weak public image. The Israeli public was deeply concerned by the capture of the soldiers and was extremely disappointed that their leaders failed to free any of them in 2006.

The weak military image of Israel’s leaders, the recentness of the Gaza captures, and the public’s concern over the soldiers’ fate, made the Israeli response in 2006 almost inevitable. This does not mean that these leaders wanted to avoid war, or that they were not using public concern to expand the war for other reasons. It reflects the fact that since the foundation of Israel its leaders have consistently chosen a path of hostility with the surrounding populations, and Israel’s citizens are left to debate the scale of its wars, rather than the need for the wars themselves. The scale of the War in Lebanon was, for its part, determined by the domestic concerns of these leaders and their medium-term interests in confronting Iran and Hizbullah.

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315 Makovsky and White, “Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah War: A Preliminary Assessment,” 11. The convergence plan was to move Jewish settlers into the West Bank and consolidate them in blocks closer to Israeli’s border.


317 An August 16 poll in the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Alronoth, found that 70% of Israelis responded negatively to the question: Should Israel have agreed to the cease-fire without the return of the soldiers taken hostage? However, the day before in the Israeli newspaper Maariv, the question “Should Israel have agreed to the cease-fire?” found only 53% of people responding negatively, suggesting the importance of the soldiers’ freedom for Israelis. See "Israeli Polls on the War with Hizbullah," Jewish Virtual Library (2009), http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/hizpo.html.
Conclusion

In 2006 the structural interests of Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States were set to collide, while internally each actor faced its own areas of weakness. For Hizbullah this weakness arose from its middle-class basis and nature, and the resulting conservatism in its economic and political programme. The party’s representation of a largely underprivileged constituency did not seem to heavily concern the leadership when they partook, or abstained from opposing, the neoliberal attacks of Hariri or the Paris III conference. Hizbullah’s promise to oppose Lebanon’s sectarian political system also appeared hollow, given their lack of action over the issue. Hizbullah’s real concern was maintaining the support it had built during its war against the Israeli occupation and its Lebanonisation. For this the party created the issue of the Sheba Farms and focussed public attention on the fate of Lebanese prisoners held in Israel. Hizbullah’s weapons were also needed to face Israel and provide actual and perceived support for the Palestinians. At the same time Syria’s withdrawal required the party to join the Lebanese executive to secure the retention of its military wing, while Syria’s fears over the Hariri investigation also weighed on Hizbullah’s leaders.

For the United States its global and regional endeavours had focussed its attentions on Iran and its allies in the Middle East. The aim of the United States in 2006 was to: weaken Iran; crush oppositional forces in the region, particularly those attached to Iran; and to be ready to support US allies in the region if their position became unstable. Iran was the main concern among these medium-term interests, but to a large extent it was a substitute for those imperialist rivals that the United States saw as poised to challenge its power.

Israel was in sync with US interests in 2006, being a staunch foe of Iran and other forces opposing US hegemony in the Middle East. At the same time Israel was a sovereign state that had just suffered the shame of losing three soldiers to an inferior force. This is not to overlook Israel’s historic role as a watchdog state, as this is the root cause for why forces seek to capture Israeli soldiers. Given their weak
military image, the time scale of the captures, and the public pressure to regain the soldiers, Israel’s leader’s, no matter what their own personal motivation, were going to go to war.
The Diplomatic and Military Phases of the War

To help understand the causes of the 2006 War in Lebanon this chapter will analyse the course of the war itself to achieve three aims: to explain the diplomatic and military dimensions of the conflict; to illustrate manifestations of the long- and medium-term interests of the actors in the war; and to provide evidence and context for the following chapter on the actors’ short-term interests. This chapter divides the conflict into four phases of the international diplomatic pursuit (and obstruction) of a cease-fire. While there were distinct stages in the military conflict, these can largely be understood, and will be addressed, as part of the diplomatic process.

The first phase occurred between the start of the war on July 12 and ended on July 18, and was characterized by a ‘wait and see’ attitude by the major world powers. This phase saw gestures and critical statements, but no major efforts to end the conflict. The next phase, occurring between July 19 and 27, saw dissent growing internationally, with France and the United Nations (UN) starting to push for a cease-fire. This was obstructed by the United States and its allies. During these first two phases the military conflict continued at a steady, but limited pace. Israel focused on its air campaign and undertook limited ground incursions, which Hizbullah countered with localised resistance, alongside its steady rocket attacks on northern Israel.

Occurring between July 28 and August 11, the third phase of the war saw support for Israel’s open-ended conflict begin to dissipate, both internationally and domestically. The United States moved from obstructionism to compromise, and draft cease-fire resolutions began to be written. Britain, France, and the Arab League began to play a larger role in the negotiations, while militarily Israel enlarged its ground operations. The final phase began on August 11 with the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which created a cease-fire to come into effect on
August 14, and ended with the final withdrawal of Israeli forces on October 1, 2006. It was in this phase that Israel launched its large final-hour ground assault, and the competition to claim victory and reconstruct Lebanon began.

Table 3.1: The War in Numbers

Civilian

**Israeli civilian casualties:**
- 43 dead, 997 injured, and 300,000 displaced.

**Lebanese civilian casualties:**
- 1,191 dead, 4,409 injured, and 900,000 displaced.

**Israeli costs:**
- 6,000 homes were “affected.”
- $3.5 billion (2% of GDP) in direct and indirect costs.

**Lebanese costs:**
- 8,000 homes destroyed, 122,000 damaged.
- $5 billion (22% of GDP) in direct and indirect costs.

Military

**Israel’s troop strength:**
- 168,000 regular soldiers and 408,000 reservists.

**Hizbullah’s troop strength:**
- 600-1,000 fulltime soldiers, 3,000-5,000 “available” soldiers, and 10,000 reservists/village militia.

**Israeli troops deployed:**
- Limited numbers increasing to 10,000 on August 1 and 30,000 on August 11.

**Israeli military casualties:**
- 119 dead and two captured.

**Lebanese military casualties:**
- 200~500 Hizbullah “fighters,” 28 Lebanese soldiers, and smaller numbers from Amal, the LCP, and the PFLP-GC.

**Total Israeli missiles, bombs and artillery shells fired:**
- More than 177,000.

**Rockets fired into Israel:**
- 3,970-4,500 (901 of these hit Israeli communities).

**Israel Air Force activities:**
- 15,500 sorties. 7,000 targets struck in Lebanon.

**Miscellaneous losses:**
- 126 Hizbullah rocket launchers destroyed.
- 20 Israeli main battle tanks destroyed.

3.1) Wait and See

Hizbullah’s capture operation on the morning of July 12, 2006, immediately spawned a number of competing narratives over what exactly happened. These competing accounts largely reflect the interests of those telling the story, with some wishing to condemn and others wishing to champion Israel’s response. By comparing these accounts with reports from the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, I have established the following chain of events. At 9:05 a.m. local time, Hizbullah fired several rockets from Lebanon across the Blue Line (the UN border demarcation between Israel and Lebanon). These were aimed at Israeli Defence Force (IDF) positions near the coast and the Israeli town of Zarit. Simultaneously, Hizbullah fighters crossed the Blue Line near the Lebanese town of Ayta ash Shab and attacked an IDF unit patrolling the border. Two IDF soldiers were captured, two more were wounded, and three were killed. With its captives secured the Hizbullah unit retreated into Lebanon, with an IDF platoon and tank in pursuit. What lay in wait was an ambush, with an explosive device detonating under the tank, killing four, while another soldier was killed in the ensuing fire.

Competing and incomplete accounts of the sequence of rocket and aerial attacks in the first days of the war, provides another area of uncertainty. What is clear is that Hizbullah’s rocket attacks across the Blue Line in the first hours of the war were a diversionary tactic. Its full-scale rocket campaign on Israel began only after heavy Israeli air, naval, and artillery bombardment of Lebanon. The party’s rocket

320 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
322 Scott Wilson, "Israeli War Plan Had No Exit Strategy," Washington Post, 21 October 2006. The tank was a Merkava II.
campaign focused on civilian settlements and became the focus of much media attention during the war. Hizbullah’s preference, however, seem to have been for military targets, but due to the inaccuracy of its rockets it chose to target large civilian settlements. As noted by military historian Matt Matthews and former section chief of the Israeli Air Force (IAF) intelligence division Ron Tira, “with a Circular Error Probability of up to 5 percent of the range, the Katyushas [small-calibre rockets, which accounted for 90% of the rockets Hizbullah fired on Israel] had to be aimed at large targets, like villages and towns. This made civilian casualties all but inevitable.”325 I am reminded of the scene in the Battle of Algiers, where after being execrated for his café bombing campaign, Larbi Ben M’Hidi’s character retorts, “Give us your bombers, sir, and you can have our baskets.”326 Some on the left have cited the relatively low number of Israeli civilian versus military casualties, as evidence that Hizbullah tried to avoid civilian deaths.327 This, however, was the result of an extensive bomb-shelter network in northern Israel and the evacuation of over 350,000 citizens from the area.328

Diplomatically, US and British efforts to quash criticism of Israel dominated this initial phase, both in the UN and at the Group of Eight (G8) conference held in St Petersburg from July 15-17. On July 14, an emergency UN Security Council meeting called for an end to the conflict, but created no resolution due to pressure from the United States and Britain.329 It took another four weeks before the Security Council

passed Resolution 1701, calling for an end to the conflict. US president George W. Bush placed sole blame for the conflict on Hizbullah, Iran, and Syria. At the end of the G8 conference he was caught by a stray microphone impressing on British prime minister Tony Blair, “what they [the UN] need to do is to get Syria, to get Hezbollah to stop doing this shit and it’s over.” This represented US efforts to utilise the conflict for broader international condemnation of Iran and Syria.

Several leaders at the G8 conference, in particular Russian president Vladimir Putin, were far more critical of Israel’s role in the war. Putin criticised the Israeli bombing campaign, saying that the “use of force should be balanced.” This helped lead to a G8 communiqué that not only blamed Hizbullah for the violence, but also called on Israel to show restraint. Even so this document stopped short of demanding an immediate cease-fire and any direct criticism of Israel was again removed under pressure from the United States and Britain. During this time Blair began discussions at the UN over a possible peacekeeping mission to the region. On July 17, he and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan suggested sending a UN force to Southern Lebanon to end Hizbullah’s rocket attacks. This, however, was rejected by Israel, which stated that it was too soon to consider such a move.

Throughout the war the United States and Britain engaged in diplomatic obstructionism, aimed at neutralising efforts for a cease-fire. In this initial phase these states sought to ascertain how much time was necessary for Israel to achieve meaningful results against Hizbullah. While this was taking place other international voices were heard on the conflict, including conflicting statements from Middle Eastern leaders. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad stated that western supporters of Israel should be “prosecuted,” whereas Saudi Arabian leaders

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333 Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."  
334 "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week One."  
blamed “elements” within Lebanon for the violence. The following day, as fears of a broadening conflict grew, Ahmedinejad warned that any Israeli extension of the conflict into Syria would provoke a “fierce response.” On July 15, the Arab League’s secretary general Amr Moussa melodramatically stated that the Middle East peace process was dead and called on the UN Security Council to tackle the crisis.

In continental Europe more critical voices were heard in the first week of the conflict. French prime minister Dominique de Villepin called Israel’s actions “violent and aberrant.” European Union (EU) foreign ministers, meeting in Brussels, called on Israel not to resort to “disproportionate action” in Lebanon, but stronger criticism was diluted under pressure from Britain and Germany. After meeting Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said the suffering of Lebanese civilians had nothing to do with the battle against Hizbullah – and that it was “disproportionate.”

Within Lebanon, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora pleaded for international help, and described Lebanon as a “disaster zone.” Among Lebanon’s political elites, all were unanimous in their criticism of Israel, but they differed in their views on Hizbullah’s actions. Among Hizbullah’s allies, Emile Lahoud, the Lebanese president, made public statements in support of Hizbullah and insisted he would never betray them or their leader, while Amal leader Nabih Berri declared that the war was about Israel settling accounts, rather than dealing with the capture of its soldiers. Michel Aoun was more restrained in his response, but nonetheless criticised those who condemned Hizbullah for the war. Among the party’s opponents, Saad al-Hariri, the

336 Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."
337 "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week One."
338 Ibid.
339 Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."
340 In 2006 Germany was led by the more pro-US government of Angela Merkel, as opposed to the 2003 German government of Gerhard Schroder. Ibid.
342 "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week One."
leader of the March 14 Alliance, criticised Hizbullah and its regional allies, but refrained from naming these allies directly. Walid Jumblatt of the Progressive Socialist Party reinforced his role as Hizbullah’s most vociferous opponent (which he has since reversed), openly chastising Hizbullah and asking them if they would “put the interest of Lebanon above the Syrian and Iranian interests.”

Militarily this period remained at a limited scale, but contained several important events after the initial actions of July 12. The most notable event was Hizbullah’s July 14 attack on the Israeli missile ship INS Hanit. During a phone interview with a Lebanese television station, Hizbullah’s secretary general Hassan Nasrallah stated, “You wanted open warfare, and we are going into open warfare. We are ready for it, a war on every level.” At precisely that time Hizbullah fighters struck the INS Hanit with a radar-guided anti-ship missile. It was later revealed that the strike was so unexpected that the ship’s commander did not even know exactly what had happened until several hours afterwards. The attack was a major coup for Hizbullah and was immediately broadcast on the party’s television network. The following day the IDF created a free fire “special security zone” near the Blue Line, and led a major bombing campaign in Beirut’s southern suburbs (the dahiya), destroying Hizbullah’s headquarters. Other Israeli actions included the bombing of the runways at Lebanon’s main airport on the morning of July 13 and the bombing of the fuel tanks at Jiyyeh power station, the countries second largest power supplier.

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344 Raad, "European Diplomacy Fails to Produce Concrete Results."
345 Raad, "Cracks Show in 'Unified Response'."
between July 13 and 15. On July 17, Israel began ground incursions into Lebanon, but restricted these to probes near the town of Maroun al-Ras.

3.2) Disquiet among the Scramblers for the Middle East

Growing diplomatic unrest in the international community, and disagreement between France and the United States, marked the second phase of the war between July 19 and 27. France’s efforts throughout the war to create a cease-fire arose from concern over the de-stabilisation of Lebanon and Syria, in which it has political and economic interests. It also wanted to be seen as still having a major role in the Middle East. Militarily this phase saw Israel call up 3,000 reservists on July 21, but the level of fighting remained consistent with the previous phase.

France, in seeming frustration at the inaction of other western powers, circulated proposals at the UN Security Council on July 19 calling for an immediate cease-fire. John Bolton, the US ambassador to the UN, dismissed these proposals as “simplistic.” The following day, after receiving results from a UN fact-finding mission to the region, Annan called for an “immediate cessation of hostilities.” He went so far as to accuse Israel of “collective punishment,” but added that Hizbullah was holding “an entire nation [Lebanon] hostage.” Again Bolton flatly rejected

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349 The attacks on the Jiyeh power station caused an environmental disaster. 20,000 to 30,000 tonnes of oil spilled into the Mediterranean Sea, a spill comparable in size to that of the Exxon Valdez. Richard Black, “Environmental ‘Crisis’ in Lebanon” BBC News (31 July 2006), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/5233358.stm. Both the attacks on the airport and power plant are discussed in section 4.2.
353 Fickling, “Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006.”
354 Ibid.
355 Ibid.
these calls, while on July 21 US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice also dismissed Annan’s call for a cease-fire as a “false promise.” On July 22 the New York Times alleged that the United States was rushing a delivery of precision-guided bombs to Israel. International diplomatic tensions intensified on July 25, when an Israeli air strike killed four UN observers at their post in the town of Khiam, in Southern Lebanon. Annan asked Israel to conduct an investigation into what he called “apparently deliberate targeting” of the UN post by the IDF. Attempts by the Security Council to condemn the attack were dropped due to pressure from the United States.

During this phase discussions began over plans for deploying peacekeepers in Lebanon. The first such suggestion was made on July 23 by Israeli defence minister Amir Peretz, who stated that Israel would agree to the deployment of a multinational force in Southern Lebanon, suggesting it should be led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The same day Peretz was partially contradicted by his own prime minister, Ehud Olmert, who called for an EU led force to be deployed, while Saudi Arabia voiced its support simply for an “international force” in Lebanon. The following day Israel added the demand that any peace agreement must involve placing Lebanon’s border with Syria under international control, while Rice called for the Lebanese army to be deployed with UN peacekeeping forces along the Blue Line.

At this stage two important local events occurred, the first being the emergence of elite-level opposition in Israel over the handling of the war. This did not, however, translate into major public dissent. Israeli protests in 2006 never surpassed

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358 "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Two."  
360 Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."  
361 "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Two."  
362 Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."  
363 Ibid.  
2,500 people, unlike during the 1982 War in Lebanon where 10,000 strong Israeli protests had occurred within weeks of the invasion, peaking at 300,000 following the Sabra and Shatilla massacres.365

The second event occurred on July 26, when in a pre-recorded message for al-Manar television, Nasrallah stated that Hizbullah’s capture operation on July 12 had “foiled” an Israeli plan against the party.366 This was Nasrallah’s first reference to his later argument that Israel had used the capture of the IDF soldiers as a pretext for an existing plan to destroy Hizbullah.367 On the same day comments emerged in Israel that suggested its military objectives would be downgraded from destroying to weakening Hizbullah, after a serious setback in its fight for the Lebanese town of Bint Jbeil.368 On July 27 the IDF mobilised 15,000 more reservists, while at the same time, according to Amal officials interviewed by the Guardian newspaper, Hizbullah was seeking ways to bring about an immediate cease-fire.369

On July 27 a 15-nation conference was convened in Rome to address the crisis, involving Russia, the United States, and a number of members of the EU and the Arab League.370 At this conference Siniora presented his unsuccessful truce plan, the so-called Siniora Plan.371 The conference failed to achieve any tangible results, concluding that a cease-fire would be worked towards with “utmost urgency,” but that it must be “lasting and sustainable,” thus reflecting the US position.372 The following day Israel stated that the decision in Rome not to call for an immediate

367 See section 4.2.
368 Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."
cease-fire showed international support for the continuation of its offensive.\(^{373}\) Despite a US State Department spokesman calling the Israeli claim “outrageous,” and insisting that the United States was doing everything in its power to end the conflict, it was glaringly obvious that the United States was allowing Israel to continue the war.\(^{374}\)

### 3.3) The Beginning of the End

The third phase, between July 28 and August 11, saw growing diplomatic pressure result in the passing of Resolution 1701. Militarily the conflict saw an expansion of Israeli ground and air operations, which initially sparked a rise in Hizbullah rocket attacks. Israel, nonetheless, refrained from employing all of the reservists it had called up.

The first event in this phase was the reading of a joint-statement on July 28, by the US and British leaders, following their meeting in Washington.\(^{375}\) Bush stated that he and Blair had agreed that the UN needed to set a “clear framework for cessation of hostilities” in Lebanon “on an urgent basis.”\(^{376}\) They also claimed that they would present a plan to the UN to end the conflict the following week.\(^{377}\) These statements were made on the eve of Rice’s return to the region.\(^{378}\) David Fickling, in his timeline of the conflict in the *Guardian*, looked back on these statements as being “more forthright” in their demands for an immediate solution to the conflict.\(^{379}\)

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\(^{373}\) Ibid.

\(^{374}\) Ibid.


\(^{377}\) Cooper, "Bush and Blair Push Plan to End Mideast Fighting."

\(^{378}\) According to sources cited by Seymour Hersh, Rice did not want to take this trip as she knew a cease-fire agreement would not be made. This is consistent with Bush’s memoir. Hersh, "Watching Lebanon: Washington’s Interests in Israel’s War.,” *Bush, Decision Points*, 387.

\(^{379}\) Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."
calls for urgency and for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force were nothing new, as was the lack of any call for an immediate cease-fire. These statements, nonetheless, reflected an acceptance by the United States and Britain that growing diplomatic and public pressure meant a cease-fire agreement must soon be made. As Bush later commented, “If America continued to back the Israeli offensive, we would have to veto one UN resolution after the next. Ultimately, instead of isolating Iran and Syria, we would isolate ourselves.”

On July 30 Rice began formal talks with Israel, while her talks with Siniora were cancelled after he refused to meet until a cease-fire was in place. Siniora made this call in response to an outpouring of public anger over an Israeli air strike that day on a building near the southern village of Qana. The attack left 28 civilians dead, including 16 children. This led 5,000 protesters, angered by the massacre and the continuation of the war, to storm the UN building in Beirut later that day. The attack built on existing anger over the 1996 Qana massacre, when an Israeli artillery attack killed 106 civilians in a UN compound.

While many writers have cited the 2006 Qana massacre as a turning point in the war, its effect on the diplomatic and military struggle was limited. While the massacre heightened popular opposition, and forced Arab leaders to more sternly condemn Israel, it had little immediate effect on the world’s major powers. This was seen at the EU Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Brussels on August 1, where despite France’s continuing efforts for an immediate cease-fire, Britain, Germany,
Poland, and the Czech Republic obstructed any such measures.\footnote{Oliver King, "Germany Backs Britain's Refusal to Call for Ceasefire," 
*Guardian*, 1 August 2006.} In what was described as a major snub to French president Jacques Chirac, Britain and its allies succeeded in producing a watered down Foreign Ministers’ statement.\footnote{Ibid.} This called for an “immediate cessation of hostilities” in Lebanon, to be followed by a “sustainable ceasefire.”\footnote{Council of the European Union, "Middle East - the Crisis in Lebanon," press release (1 August 2006), 2, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/90739.pdf, "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Three."} This convoluted statement gave Israel confidence on the day that it was expanding its ground operations, pushing into areas along the Litani River in Southern Lebanon.\footnote{Cordesman, *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War*, 5. "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Three."} This push occurred far later than many, including Hizbullah, had expected. As scholar Andrew Exum explains, “one of the war’s ironies is that many of Hizballah’s best and most skilled fighters never saw action, lying in wait along the Litani River with the expectation that the IDF assault would be much deeper and arrive much faster than it did.”\footnote{Exum, "Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment," 11-12.}

In seeming response to the Israeli ground push, Hizbullah increased the scale of its rocket attacks to a level that was to be maintained until the end of the war (see figure 3.1). While this was happening, Israeli commandos led a raid on August 2 into the city Baalbek, 100km inside Lebanon, capturing five alleged Hizbullah members.\footnote{Amos Harel, and Yoav Stern, "IDF Commandos Nab Five Low-Level Hezbollah Men in Baalbek Raid," *Haaretz*, 2 August 2006.} For the rest of this third phase Israel’s ground and air operations continued apace, while it refrained from fully deploying its reservists. On August 8, Israel declared that any moving vehicles south of the Litani River would be destroyed, forcing the UN to halt aid operations and effectively sealing off Southern Lebanon.\footnote{"Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Four," *BBC News* (9 August 2006), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5239142.stm.}
Figure 3.1: Hizbullah Rocket Fire

By this stage serious diplomatic movements had begun, with France and the United States finally agreeing on the wording of a draft UN resolution on August 5.393 The resolution called on Hizbullah to cease all military activity, while Israel was only required to cease “offensive” military activities and leave Lebanon once international peacekeepers were in place.394 Considering that Israel and the United States had justified the conflict as a war of self-defence, the wording of this resolution allowed the possibility for Israel to continue its war.395 Lebanon formally requested that the resolution be revised and on August 7, at an emergency Arab League meeting in Beirut, Siniora added to his truce plan the stipulation that 15,000 Lebanese troops would enter Southern Lebanon after the Israeli withdrawal.396 The elaborated plan received the support of the EU and the Arab League, including Syria and Hizbullah, while Olmert called the plan an “interesting step.”397 The Arab League advocated the plan at the UN the following day, placing greater pressure on France to push for a cease-fire, and exacerbating growing tensions between France and the United States. As a result Chirac threatened to put forward his own draft resolution, thus abandoning the joint French-US draft, unless the United States made more concessions to Arab demands.398

After yet another day of negotiation at the UN Security Council, Resolution 1701, calling for a “full cessation of hostilities,” was finally passed on August 11.399 The resolution showed the heavy influence of the United States, with: complete blame placed on Hizbullah; the planned deployment of foreign peacekeepers from states with close military and political ties to Israel; the planned deployment of these peacekeepers north, rather than south of the Blue Line; and the preservation of the

393 Ibid.
396 "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Four."
398 Benny Avni, "France Threatens to Go It Alone on Middle East," New York Sun, 10 August 2006.
draft resolution’s stipulation that Hizbullah cease all military activities, while Israel cease only its ‘offensive’ military acts.400

3.4) A Violent Peace

The final phase of the war began after the passing of Resolution 1701 and ended with the withdrawal of the last Israeli forces from Lebanon on October 1. This period was marked by a propaganda battle to claim victory and place blame and Israel’s launching of Operation Changing Direction 11, a massive eleventh hour ground invasion of Lebanon.

Nasrallah announced the day after Resolution 1701 was passed that Hizbullah would abide by the cease-fire once Israeli troops had left Lebanon.401 On August 13 the Israeli cabinet endorsed the resolution, with the stipulation that its forces would remain in Lebanon until peacekeepers were deployed.402 Resolution 1701 came into effect on August 14 and despite continuing skirmishes refugees began returning to Southern Lebanon. On August 17 the Lebanese army and token UN forces started to move into Southern Lebanon.403 On September 7 Israel lifted its air blockade, and the following day, its naval blockade of Lebanon. Israel announced on October 1 that it had withdrawn the last of its forces from Lebanon, except in the village of Ghajar.404 Ghajar is a Syrian village occupied by Israel in 1967, but in 2000 it was divided in half by the UN demarcation of the Blue Line, with the north becoming part of Lebanon and the south becoming part of the Israeli occupied Golan Heights.405 During the

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400 This will be discussed in more detail in section 4.2. Bennis, "The Lebanon War in the UN, the UN in the Lebanon War," 229. United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1701, 11 August 2006, S/RES/1701
402 "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Five."
403 Cordesman, Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War, 5.
405 Following the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the handing over of control of the area to Israel’s proxy the South Lebanon Army, Ghajar began expanding north into Lebanese territory.
2006 war Israel occupied the Lebanese half of the village, which it remains in control of at the time of writing.\textsuperscript{406}

While the cease-fire was coming into effect both sides redoubled their efforts on the propaganda front. Olmert stated that the cease-fire had eliminated Hizbullah’s “state within a state,” while Hizbullah distributed leaflets congratulating Lebanon on its “big victory,” and Nasrallah broadcast claims of a “strategic and historic victory.”\textsuperscript{407} By late August, however, Nasrallah had toned down his message. In an interview with Lebanon’s \textit{New Television} on August 27, he claimed that had he known there was a “1 percent chance” that Israel would have responded in the way that it did in 2006, then he would not have ordered the capture operation.\textsuperscript{408}

Further afield the leaders of the United States and Iran intensified their rhetorical battle, each blaming the other for fuelling the conflict.\textsuperscript{409} This external dimension to the conflict was highlighted in the competition to rebuild Lebanon after the war. As soon as the guns had quietened Hizbullah began clearing the rubble from the dahiya and Southern Lebanon and distributing its promise of $8,000-10,000 to any family that had lost their home in the conflict.\textsuperscript{410} While the group was silent about the source of these funds it was widely assumed that Iran was the main contributor.\textsuperscript{411} At the same time the Lebanese government announced similar plans for reconstruction and compensation with the help of over $1 billion in donations, including a $230 million pledge from the United States.\textsuperscript{412}

For the people of Lebanon, and the soldiers on either side, the final phase of the conflict was the most devastating. On August 11, in anticipation of the passing of Resolution 1701 several hours later, Olmert initiated Operation Changing Direction

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item "Israel Builds Fence around Village of Ghajar," \textit{Daily Star (Beirut)}, 21 March 2011.
\item "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Five.,” "Nasrallah Declares Unprecedented 'Victory' over Jewish State," \textit{Daily Star (Beirut)}, 15 August 2006.
\item "Day-by-Day: Lebanon Crisis - Week Five."
\item Osama Habib, "Hizbullah Begins Monumental Task of Rebuilding Southern Suburbs," \textit{Daily Star (Beirut)}, 18 August 2006.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The operation lasted until the cease-fire came into effect on August 14, and saw 30,000 active and reservist Israeli soldiers attempt to gain control over the areas of Southern Lebanon south and east of the Litani River.

It was during this operation that one of the most important and revealing military events of the war took place, the Battle of Wadi Salouqi (a deep north-south valley that bisects Southern Lebanon). This battle occurred between August 11 and 13, and dramatically exposed the IDF’s underestimation of both Hizbullah’s tactics, and the variety and sophistication of its arsenal. Two Israeli tank squadrons, along with infantry, had been waiting for almost a week to cross the valley and seize the strategically positioned town of Ghandourieha, from which to then sweep west across Southern Lebanon. After a partial crossing the tank-column had been ordered to retreat from the valley and for unknown reasons wait 48 hours before it reattempted the crossing. By this time Hizbullah had set its ambush. In the ensuing carnage Hizbullah anti-tank missiles struck eleven IDF tanks, leaving eight crewmen dead, alongside another four infantrymen. Together these casualties comprised over a tenth of all IDF deaths in the war. The Israeli soldiers, nonetheless, fought their way through and captured Ghandourieha, only to be told to halt their actions. They were then left to wait for the cease-fire to come into effect and retreat back to Israel.

The battle is a “microcosm” of the mistakes of Operation Changing Direction 11 and echoes Israel’s failure in the war as a whole. The real aim of this operation remains unclear, but it was likely a combination of the following aims: inflicting military casualties on Hizbullah; regaining domestic and international credibility; demonstrating to its neighbours that Israel was not afraid to use large ground forces and suffer casualties; and establishing a stronger bargaining position in post-war

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417 Exum, "Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment," 11. The exact number of Hizbullah deaths in this battle is unknown, but Israeli official sources claim it was as high as 80. Katz, "Wadi Saluki Battle - Microcosm of War’s Mistakes."
418 Katz, "Wadi Saluki Battle - Microcosm of War’s Mistakes."
419 Ibid.
diplomatic wrangling. Nonetheless, both this operation and the war ended for both sides in carnage. However, while Israel was eventually forced to retreat, Hizbullah emerged from its bunkers militarily and politically emboldened.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this thesis is to explain the causes of the 2006 war, but this only gains meaning if one understands the nature and human toll of the conflict. This chapter has provided such an understanding. The first aim of this chapter was to illustrate the diplomatic and military progression of the war. The international diplomatic conflict was dominated by the United States who, along with its allies, sought to control the duration of the conflict. This diplomatic struggle exposed continuing imperialist rivalry between the United States and France. It also highlighted the exaggerated power some idealist theories afford to international institutions, such as the UN, which in 2006 struggled to end the war in the face of US power. Militarily the conflict was led by a seemingly confused Israel, while Hizbullah simply tried to survive the war. The diplomatic and military dimensions of the conflict revealed the long- and medium-term interests of each of the actors. To fully understand how these interests manifested themselves, however, one will first need to be clear about the intentions of these actors in the initiation and course of the conflict. By using the information and context established in this chapter, chapter 4 will now address the short-term causes of this 33-day war.
The long- and medium-term causes of the war found their expression in the period leading up to and during the conflict: in the immediate intentions of the three primary actors. In order to understand these short-term intentions and interests, five questions need to be addressed:

1. Was Hizbullah trying to incite a full-scale war?

2. What were Israel’s war aims and the tactics used to achieve them?

3. Was Israel actively seeking a pretext with which to justify a war on Hizbullah?

4. Did the United States push Israel into the war?

5. And, how complicit was the United States in the war?

This chapter acknowledges that five years after the war vital evidence, which is likely to seep into the public record with time, remains locked in classified documents and the recollections of those involved. While my opinion on the above questions will be made clear, I will in most cases provide an analysis of both sides of these debates. To do so produces a more robust understanding of what happened in 2006 and allows my work to continue to be part of the debate over the war, and the actors involved, as new information comes to light.

My first conclusion is that Hizbullah launched its capture operation on July 12 with the intention of provoking a full-scale war. Hizbullah’s choice of location for the operation and its disregard of clear signals that Israel would retaliate in force, form the core of this argument. Theoretically this reinforces my conceptualisation of a middle-class party that is not content with the civilian road and whose weapons remain at the centre of its activities. The counter argument, which will be explained,
is that Hizbullah miscalculated Israel’s response and had simply wanted to capture Israeli soldiers to exchange for Lebanese prisoners held in Israel.

Israel’s war aims were vague and oscillated much throughout the conflict, but the most important can be identified as follows: rescuing Israel’s soldiers; limiting Hizbullah’s rocket attacks; “destroying,” and then as the war progressed “weakening” the party; and by the wars end, gaining leverage over the implementation of the cease-fire agreement. To address Israel’s war aims, and also to gain broader insights into its methods for confronting oppositional forces, this chapter will solely analyse the final of these war aims (gaining leverage over the cease-fire), as well as identifying three tactics Israel employed in the conflict. These tactics were: attacks on “symbolic” targets and a full air, land, and sea blockade of Lebanon, in order to pressure the non-Shi’a Lebanese communities; the use of Effects-Based Operations (EBO); and the collective punishment of Lebanon’s Shi’a population. Israel’s war aims converged with the interests of the United States, although its tactics, particularly that of applying pressure on non-Shi’a Lebanese, conflicted with the United States and revealed a level of Israeli autonomy.

Israel’s war aims and tactics reveal its long-standing goal of militarily and politically weakening Hizbullah. The next two questions deal with the forethought that went into Israel’s pursuit of this aim; namely, that Israel was searching for a pretext and/or that the United States pushed Israel into war. These were common accusations levelled against Israel and the United States by many in the Middle East and among the left internationally. Currently there is little evidence to back up these claims, bar the anonymous sources provided in Seymour Hersh’s influential article Watching Lebanon: Washington’s Interests in Israel’s War, which appeared in the New Yorker magazine on August 21, 2006. Nonetheless, I do provide a précis of these arguments so that growth in the documentary record can be incorporated into future research on the war and Watchdog State theory. The final question is whether the United States was a crucial participant in the war. For this the answer is yes, as

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420 Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."
422 Hersh, "Watching Lebanon: Washington’s Interests in Israel’s War."
shown in the United States’ diplomatic control over the length of the war and its rushing of a weapons order to Israel during the conflict.\footnote{See section 4.2.}

**4.1) Was Hizbullah Trying to Incite a Full-Scale War?**

On July 12, 2006, Hizbullah launched its capture operation, Operation Faithful Promise, near the Lebanese town of Ayta ash Shab.\footnote{"Al-Manar: Press Conference with Hasan Nasrallah," *Understanding the Present Crisis* (12 July 2006), http://web.archive.org/web/20061230184520/http://www.upc.org.uk/hasann12jul06.html.} It was not an operation carried out at the behest of Iran or Syria, nor was it part of Hizbullah’s ultimate goal to “kill the world's Jews,” as some have suggested.\footnote{Alan Dershowitz, "Hezbollah’s Goal: "Going after [the Jews] Worldwide"", “*Huffington Post*” (10 August 2006), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-dershowitz/hezbollahs-goal-going-aft_b_26983.html.} It was driven primarily by the internal political concerns of Hizbullah and can be explained in two possible ways: that the party anticipated Israel’s response and wanted to incite a full-scale war; or that it miscalculated Israel’s response, expecting limited reprisals after which the exchange of prisoners could take place.

I conclude that Hizbullah intended to incite a full-scale conflict with Israel, a move that has since strengthened its hegemony among Lebanese Shi’a and its position vis-à-vis the Lebanese government. While not a widely held view, it is credible in light of the following evidence: the scale of the Israeli response to Hamas’ capture operation several weeks before; the clear Israeli threats made prior to the war, which Hizbullah must have given credence, due to their proven expertise on Israeli political thinking; and Hizbullah’s decision to attack across the Israeli border, rather than into the disputed Sheba Farms.\footnote{Nasrallah is widely regarded as an expert on Israeli political affairs. See Roei Nahmias, "Nasrallah's Desperate Speech," *Ynetnews* (20 January 2008), http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3496365,00.html.} These contentions will be elaborated upon, along with two arguments for the opposing ‘miscalculation argument,’ namely: that
not a single important political voice in Lebanon, Israel or the United States has disagreed with the miscalculation argument, even when in their direct interest; and that the limited scale of Hizbullah’s rocket attacks in the first hours of the war suggest that it expected a limited confrontation. These miscalculation arguments will be addressed first, followed by the case that Hizbullah intentionally incited the war.

Absence of Opposing Voices

Apart from the marginal Israeli Marxist politician Dov Khenin, I am yet to find another political figure in Israel, Lebanon, or the United States, who has even suggested that Hizbullah intentionally incited the 2006 War in Lebanon.427 Is there not a single piece of useful evidence collected by the vast intelligence and research departments of these states that can indict Hizbullah for such a cynically destructive act?428 Certainly it was in some people’s self-interest to promote the miscalculation argument, such as Hizbullah’s secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, and possibly even Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert and defence minister Amir Peretz, as it would show that their staunch resolve took Hizbullah by surprise.429 However, if any

427 Dov Khenin, despite being a member of the Israeli Knesset, is on the fringes of the Israeli establishment. Khenin is a member in the Israeli Communist Party (Maki) and is in the Knesset as part of the Hadash party, which currently holds only four of the 120 seats. For Khenin’s views see Thomas O’Dwyer, "Did Hizbollah Miscalculate? The View from Israel," OpenDemocracy.net (14 July 2006), http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate_97/hizbollah_3739.js.

428 The official narrative of President George W. Bush’s administration was that Hizbullah started it, although this was to be expected. In the US Congressional Research Service’s review of the war, the miscalculation argument is accepted at face value: “Most notably, Israeli officials took Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah’s admission that he would not have authorized the July 12 action as confirmation that Hezbollah has been weakened and that Israel’s deterrence has been strengthened.” Sharp, "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict," 11.

429 Nasrallah’s most well known statement on the miscalculation argument is that he did not see “a 1 percent probability that the capturing operation would have led to a war on this scale” and that if “there was a 1 percent chance, we would not have carried out the capturing operation.” Nasrallah, "Interview with New TV (August 27, 2006)," 393-94. This is in line with Nasrallah’s statements prior to the war on his Spider Web theory, where he claimed that Israel would “count to one thousand” before it would open its important northern territories to rocket attacks. According to an interview with Interior Minister Ahmad Fatfat, Hizbullah expressed this opinion to Prime Minister Siniora hours after the capture operation. Fatfat, who is a strong opponent of Hizbullah, takes Nasrallah’s statement at face value, along with similar assurances by Hizbullah’s deputy leader that Israel’s response would be limited. For discussion of the Spider Web theory and Nasrallah’s quotation see section 2.3 and
among the political elite in these countries had seriously believed or had any evidence that Hizbullah wished to incite a full-scale war, it is difficult to explain why it was not stated or at least leaked to analysts or the press. In fact apart from the Middle Eastern scholar William Harris, I am yet to discover any voices that disagree with the miscalculation argument in the literature on the 2006 war. While I still contend that Hizbullah sought to initiate a full-scale war, this unanimous support for the miscalculation argument remains pertinent.

Rocket Attacks

As explained in the previous chapter, Hizbullah’s initial rocket attacks on northern Israel were diversionary rather than full scale, with the party firing limited numbers of rockets at Israeli Defence Force (IDF) positions. It was not until Israel retaliated with large-scale air, naval, and artillery attacks on Lebanon that Hizbullah began its full-scale rocket campaign. As Stephen Zunes has argued, “Hizballah did not fire rockets into Israel until after Israel began bombing Lebanese civilian areas on July 12 and did not extend the rocket attacks beyond border regions into Haifa until well after Israel launched attacks on Beirut.”

Zunes’ argument is in line with Hizbullah’s own claims that its rocket attacks were retaliatory, as well as Nasrallah’s speech on July 14, where he exclaimed, “You


430 Harris, “Crisis in the Levant: Lebanon at Risk,” 38. All other academics, journalists, and politicians I have read either state or infer that Hizbullah miscalculated Israel’s response. The view is held across the political spectrum, for example from the left (Gilbert Achcar), centre (Augustus Richard Norton), and right (Eyal Zisser). Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 36. Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 136. Eyal Zisser, “Nasrallah’s Defeat in the 2006 War: Assessing Hezbollah’s Influence,” Middle East Quarterly 16, no. 1 (2009).


wanted open warfare, and we are going into open warfare.”433 These actions could be explained as an attempt by Hizbullah to shroud its true intentions, but more convincingly they reflect an expectation that the conflict would not escalate too far. If the party had wanted a full-scale response then attacking Israeli towns to begin with would seem the obvious tactic. Scholar Khair el-Din Haseeb contributes an additional argument to this debate, namely, “It is clear from Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah’s press conference on 12 July 2006, the day of the two soldiers’ kidnapping, that his intention was to exchange them for Lebanese prisoners through indirect negotiations. Had he expected Israel’s ensuing reaction, he would not have held an open news conference that same night.”434 This argument by itself is difficult to judge, but in conjunction with the nature of the initial rocket attacks and the unanimous support for the miscalculation argument, provides another evidential piece in this puzzle. It is not, however, enough to outweigh the contention that Hizbullah wished to start a full-scale war.

The Gaza Context

The concurrence of the July 12 capture operation with the ongoing war in Gaza suggests that Hizbullah sought to incite war. On June 25, 2006, Hamas forces captured the Israeli soldier Gilad Shilat, sparking a full-scale Israeli response three days later. The scale and immediacy of the retaliation could have been avoided; a view shared by Gilbert Achcar who argues, “Israel could have tried to obtain the release of the soldier by giving Palestinian officials time to work things out.”435 Instead Israel escalated the conflict, a move that was in line with its ongoing collective punishment of the people of Gaza for their decision to elect Hamas earlier that year.436 The Israeli operation killed hundreds of Palestinians and yet was codenamed Operation Summer Rains, one among a long list of Orwellian Israeli

433 “Israel/Lebanon under Fire: Hizbullah’s Attacks on Northern Israel.”
435 Achcar and Chomsky, Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy, 225.
436 Ibid.
military code names. Conspicuously absent from the coverage of this war was the fact that one day before Hamas’ operation the IDF had kidnapped two Gazan civilians, brothers Osama and Mustafa Muamar. Israel claimed that the brothers were members of Hamas, which Hamas denied, and since the initial reporting on their kidnapping there has been no information on their whereabouts in the English language press.

A mere 17 days after Hamas’ action, Hizbullah launched its own capture operation. Having seen the scale of the Israeli response in Gaza, why did Hizbullah not foresee that a similar Israeli response was, as Achcar argues, “to be expected”? One retort to this argument has been to contend that Hizbullah captured the IDF soldiers to relieve pressure on Hamas and the Palestinians. While the events in Gaza may have placed expectations on Hizbullah, the decision to capture Israeli soldiers had been made well in advance, with four such attempts by the party since November 2005. Nasrallah himself stated that the July 12 operation had been in preparation for five months and that “In terms of context and time, this operation is certainly large support for our brothers in Palestine…. But this happened within the

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437 Other notable examples include: ‘The War of Independence’ in 1948, where over 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their own land; ‘Operation Gift’ in 1968, in which Israeli commandoes destroyed 13 civilian Middle East Airlines planes; the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, ‘Operation Peace for Galilee,’ where among other atrocities at least 800 civilians were slaughtered by Christian Phalangists, with Israeli complicity, in the Beirut refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila; and ‘Operation Rainbow’ in 2004, notable for the international outcry following an incident in which Israeli soldiers fired tank shells at unarmed Palestinian protestors, killing ten.


439 “Israel Captures Pair in Gaza Raid,” “Israeli Troops Arrest Two in Gaza Raid.”

440 Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 32.

441 Achcar and Chomsky, Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy, 241.

normal context of a decision made before the Gaza incidents. This should be made clear in order not to mix what is local with what is regional.”

Another attempt to defend the miscalculation argument is made by Middle Eastern scholar Yezid Sayigh. Sayigh contends that for a range of reasons Hizbullah had developed an exaggerated sense of its abilities and regional support, believing that Israel was “heavily engaged” in Gaza and would not open a second front. Even if one assumes that Sayigh means heavily ‘politically’ engaged, as militarily Israel was far from over-stretched, it is difficult to accept that Hizbullah was this naive. Israel had just demonstrated its current penchant for escalation and its leaders faced pressure to respond in Lebanon as they had in Gaza. Sayigh’s view flies in the face of Hizbullah’s previously justifiable proclamations that it was in tune with Israeli political thinking. The Israeli academic, Shaul Mishal, provides another defence of the miscalculation argument:

I think he [Nasrallah] made a big miscalculation because his judgment was based on the past. Israel in the last few years under (Prime Minister Ehud) Barak and then (Prime Minister Ariel) Sharon built this illusion that it would hesitate before doing anything really drastic and would try to minimise the disadvantages of the existing military order with Lebanon – namely Hizbollah. I think this far-reaching reaction now has taken him [Nasrallah] by surprise.

Mishal’s opinion seems more credible than Sayigh’s, but again it ignores that Olmert had just shown in Gaza that he would not hesitate to go to war. Andrew Exum, a Middle Eastern expert writing for the pro-Israeli think tank the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, argues, “Had Hizballah made a more careful reading of Israeli domestic politics in the summer of 2006 and similarly studied the Israeli response to the recent kidnapping of an IDF soldier in Gaza, it might have reached a different conclusion. But fateful for all parties in the coming conflict, it did not.”

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443 "Al-Manar: Press Conference with Hasan Nasrallah."
445 See section 2.2.
446 Nahmias, "Nasrallah's Desperate Speech."
447 O'Dwyer, "Did Hizbollah Miscalculate? The View from Israel."
How could Hizbullah not have studied the Israeli response in Gaza? Even with his pro-Israeli/anti-Hizbullah point of view, Exum’s opinion of Hizbullah’s incompetence is implausible. He is not alone, however, as nearly all accounts of the war contend that Hizbullah miscalculated Israel’s response, thus downplaying Hizbullah’s past adroitness at anticipating the behaviour of the Israeli state.

**Israel’s Warnings**

Israel was aware that since November 2005 Hizbullah had been attempting to capture its soldiers, so in the months prior to the war it sent clear warnings to the party that any more provocations would be met with a heavy response.\(^{449}\) The clearest of these was Olmert’s statement on Israeli television, following a large-scale border incident on May 28, 2006, where he declared, “Let there be no doubt that we will deal a very painful blow to whomever tries to disrupt life along our northern border…. They will receive an unequivocal and very aggressive response without hesitation if they don't stop.”\(^{450}\) Lee Smith of the Hudson Institute considers this a very serious warning, and Exum’s previous comment seems to be in reference to this statement by Olmert.\(^{451}\) According to Ze’ev Schiff, the dean of Israel’s military correspondents, Israel had contacted American and French diplomats two months before the war in order to directly impress its intentions on Hizbullah.\(^{452}\) The warning stated, “if Hezbollah would attempt to kidnap IDF soldiers again, Israel’s response would include a large-scale military operation.”\(^{453}\) Schiff comments that it is unclear whether France or the United States found a way to relay this message to

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\(^{449}\) Schiff, "Kidnap of Soldiers in July Was Hezbollah's Fifth Attempt."


\(^{453}\) Schiff, "Kidnap of Soldiers in July Was Hezbollah's Fifth Attempt." See also section 4.1.
Hizbullah, although they certainly would have been able to, if not directly then through France’s close connections with Syria.

Israel’s awareness that Hizbullah was attempting to capture IDF soldiers led its northern border to be placed on a high state of alert during the months of March, May, June, and July of 2006. Nasrallah acknowledges this fact, stating that “official and international contacts” had informed him that the high state of alert was due to Israel’s “fear” that Hizbullah “may abduct or apprehend an Israeli soldier.” Olmert himself has claimed that he was aware a capture operation was likely to occur in 2006. In leaked testimony to the Winograd Commission, an Israeli commission of inquiry into the 2006 war, Olmert alleges that as early as March 2006 he had determined that Israel would respond to any successful Hizbullah capture operation with “a broad military operation.” Even though this testimony appears to have been leaked by Olmert’s own staff in order to prove his preparedness, the Winograd Commission does not deny the validity of this particular claim. This is despite the commission’s conclusion that Olmert failed to produce a comprehensive and practised military operational plan for this eventuality.

Israel was aided in its awareness of Hizbullah’s intentions by the party’s own statements in the months preceding the war. The party declared that it was about to capture Israeli soldiers and fulfil its “True Promise” to release the three Lebanese

455 Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 32.
457 Benn, "Report: Interim Findings of War Won't Deal with Personal Failures."
459 Olmert claims that he requested a range of plans from his army commanders at a meeting on March 5, 2006. He claims that he later selected “a moderate plan that included air attacks accompanied by a limited ground operation,” which was to follow any capture of IDF soldiers by Hizbullah. While the Winograd Commission found that Olmert had, indeed, made this request, it had not been clear and explicit, and in the end he neither saw nor approved any plans before the war. Benn, "Report: Interim Findings of War Won't Deal with Personal Failures.", Benn, "A Very, Very Painful Response."
prisoners held in Israel.\textsuperscript{460} On April 24, 2006, at a Beirut rally marking the 28\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Samir al-Quntar’s detention, Nasrallah pledged to act for his release, saying it would be “very very very soon.”\textsuperscript{461} This differed from previous statements that never gave such an immediate timeframe for action.\textsuperscript{462} Nasrallah’s statements could either have been intended to forewarn Israel, so that it would not over-react to the capture operation, or to apply pressure on Israel’s leaders, so they would feel obliged to respond with a full-scale assault. Alternatively, it could have simply been domestic posturing to rally support. Either way it seems that both sides were perpetually on alert in 2006.

Israel’s awareness of the impending operation sparked a series of warnings that Hizbullah should have heeded. These were not bellicose ramblings from Tel Aviv, but were clear declarations of intent. Smith, Exum, and Schiff all conclude that Hizbullah did not take these warnings seriously, which was a miscalculation. However, given the clarity of these warnings, I see them as evidence that Hizbullah was aware of how Israel would respond to a successful capture operation.

**The Location of the Capture**

The final and strongest piece of evidence that Hizbullah intended to incite a full-scale war is the location of its capture operation. Since 2000, Israel and Hizbullah had established certain “rules of the game” for the ongoing border conflict, to the extent that officials on both sides would often cite these rules to justify attacks during this period.\textsuperscript{463} These rules were an extension of the informal 1996 Grapes of Wrath

\textsuperscript{460} See chap. 2, n. 29.
\textsuperscript{461} Achcar and Warschawski, *The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences*, 31.
\textsuperscript{463} Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 92.
Understanding, which established the rules of the game during the final years of the Israeli occupation. The main feature of the 1996 understanding was that Israel and its proxy the South Lebanon Army would not target civilians, in exchange for Hizbullah not attacking Israel and instead focussing its operations on the Israeli Security Zone in Lebanon.\footnote{The Israeli Security Zone was the area of Lebanon occupied by Israel from 1985-2000. Daniel Sobelman, "New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbollah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon," (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2004).} After the occupation ended in 2000, Hizbullah and Israel’s *modus vivendi* became a grudging acceptance that Hizbullah would restrict its attacks on Israeli forces to within or near the Sheba Farms and Israel would respond to any Hizbullah provocations with militarily and geographically limited reprisals.\footnote{Ibid. These conclusions are also based on my own study of UN reports for the period of January 17, 2000, to July 18, 2006; namely, the semi-annual reports of the UN secretary general on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 425, 426, and 1559.}465 There also existed a general principle of “an eye for an eye,” where for example in 2001, the Israeli bombing of a Syrian radar post in Lebanon elicited Hizbullah’s destruction of an Israeli radar post in the Sheba Farms.\footnote{Ibid., 70.} From 2000 to 2006, Hizbullah’s periodic attacks took place almost exclusively in this area.\footnote{Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 92.}466 This was driven by Hizbullah’s domestic justification that it needed its weapons to liberate the Sheba Farms. While Palestinian groups within Lebanon often fired on IDF positions in Israel proper, it was not until July 12, 2006, that Hizbullah did the same.

Nevertheless, this operation was not completely out of the blue. To simply say that Hizbullah’s operation sparked the war isolates the event from the perpetual conflict between Israel and Hizbullah. This is not to deny the provocative nature of Hizbullah’s actions, but instead aims to refute certain justifications of Israel’s response. One such justification comes from the otherwise left-wing comedian and political commentator, Bill Maher, who proposed the following erroneous analogy, “What would we [the United States] do if say, Canada was taken over by a terrorist organisation and started shelling Montana.”\footnote{This comment was made by the otherwise left-wing US comedian Bill Maher, "Bill Maher Talks About Lebanon - Israel Conflict," (2006), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dL0zbWm6ba4.}468 The difference is that Canada and the United States had not effectively been at war for over two decades, and that the existence of either state was not an enduring source of provocation to the other.
Since Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign affairs claims that there were 19 incidents where Hizbollah killed or wounded Israeli civilians or soldiers. These attacks generally involved the use of planted explosive devices, or rocket, mortar, and small arms fire across the border. Israel’s activities during this period included attacks of a larger number, but similar scale to Hizbollah’s, including infrequent shootings of Lebanese farmers (who strayed across the Blue Line in and around the Sheba Farms) and Palestinian protesters (on the Lebanese side of the Israeli border fence). Israel also kidnapped a number of Lebanese shepherds and fisherman, and carried out assassinations in Lebanon, while its refusal to hand over minefield maps from the occupation period caused many more casualties. At the same time Lebanon was harassed by “persistent and provocative Israeli air [and sea] incursions,” with Israeli jets regularly breaking the sound barrier over Beirut. While not exactly a full-blown war, this period was one of continuous hostility.

From 2000 to 2006, skirmishes between Hizbullah and Israel occurred roughly five to six times a year, generally lasting several hours and confined to the Sheba Farms (with the exception of short-range Israeli aerial attacks on Lebanon). One can get a sense of the scale of these attacks from an incident documented by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) between March 30 and April 13, 2002. Lasting 14 days it was a relatively long skirmish, but the daily level of fire was consistent with other incidents during this period. According to UNIFIL, Hizbullah

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469 "Hizbullah Attacks Along Israel's Northern Border May 2000 - June 2006," Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006), http://www.mfa.gov.il/NR/exeres/9EE216D7-82EF-4274-B80D-6BBD1803E8A7,frameless.htm?NRMODE=Published. It is possible that several of these attacks were misattributed to Hizbullah and were in fact committed by Palestinian groups in Lebanon. See Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 92.

470 These incidents are frequently recorded in the reports of the UN secretary general (see chap. 4, n. 465). See also George Monbiot, "Israel Responded to an Unprovoked Attack by Hizbullah, Right? Wrong," Guardian, 8 August 2006. The Blue Line is the UN demarcation line between Israel and Lebanon created in 2000.


473 The semi-annual reports of the UN secretary general on UNIFIL often failed to report the exact number of incidents in each period (instead referring to ‘a number of incidents’).
fired 1,246 mortar rounds, 152 anti-tank missiles, 28 rockets (all small calibre katyushas), 11 surface-to-air missiles, and hundreds of rounds of small arms fire.\textsuperscript{474} The IDF retaliated with 1,108 artillery and mortar rounds, 142 aerial bombs, 118 tank rounds, 17 missiles, and hundreds of rounds of small arms fire.\textsuperscript{475} Compare this to the war in 2006, which while twice as long, saw Hizbullah fire 3,970 rockets, and Israel carry out around 15,500 aerial sorties and fire more than 100,000 artillery rounds.\textsuperscript{476}

In the period from Israel’s withdrawal in May 2000 to the July 2006 war, Hizbullah never breached the rules of the game, but there were two major escalations.\textsuperscript{477} The first was on October 7, 2000, when Hizbullah captured (and possibly killed at the time) three Israeli soldiers on patrol near the Sheba Farms.\textsuperscript{478} Their bodies were later exchanged in 2004 for Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. Israel’s response was limited, but it was at this point that the Israeli Air Force (IAF) resumed its flights over Lebanese territory.\textsuperscript{479} On November 21, 2005, Hizbullah again attempted such an operation. In this instance Hizbullah launched a wave of heavy mortar and rocket fire on IDF posts near the border and then entered the southern part of the village of Ghajar with a large number of troops.\textsuperscript{480} The operation failed to capture any Israeli soldiers and led to a nine-hour exchange of heavy fire, including Israeli aerial bombardment along the border inside Lebanon.\textsuperscript{481} Nonetheless, both sides decided on a limited response, with Hizbullah sending a


\textsuperscript{475} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{479} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{480} Ghajar lies around two kilometres west of the Sheba Farms area and is divided by the Blue Line. \textit{Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (for the Period from 22 July 2005 to 20 January 2006)},

\textsuperscript{481} Ibid.
message to Israel, through the United Nations (UN), asking for calm.\textsuperscript{482} Israeli officials justified the limited response on the grounds that Hizbullah had failed and no Israelis had died, while upcoming elections rendered any escalation at risk of being seen as a diversionary political move.\textsuperscript{483}

Hizbullah’s attack on July 12, 2006, was not only the largest and most successful attack since the Israeli withdrawal, which in itself was likely to cause a broader Israeli response, but completely broke the existing rules of the game given its location. This allegedly led one Hizbullah-allied politician to comment that although the attack was the right thing to have done, it was done in the wrong place.\textsuperscript{484} When combined with the capture operation’s timing, vis-à-vis the War in Gaza, it is difficult to believe that Hizbullah did not expect a full-scale response. This immensely cynical act is not beyond Hizbullah, with Nasrallah indicating on August 16 that the immense damage done in the war was of small account.\textsuperscript{485}

A mitigating factor is the relative lack of security on the Israeli border near Ayta ash Shab, compared to the Sheba Farms, a fact that led Hizbullah to plan a similar operation at this site two months prior.\textsuperscript{486} The IDF was dealing with this security lapse and planned to install a camera there the week after the capture operation.\textsuperscript{487} As Exum has observed, given the IDF’s constant state of alert in the Sheba Farms area, and Hizbullah’s previous failure to capture soldiers there, “Hizballah likely saw that the ‘blind spot’ near Ayta ash Shab represented exactly the chink in Israel’s armor for which it was looking.”\textsuperscript{488} This tactical consideration does not, however, eliminate the fact that Hizbullah must have known that an attack at this location would be extremely provocative.

The argument that Hizbullah miscalculated Israel’s response has its merits and deserves to be understood in order to maintain the robustness of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{482} Amos Harel, "11 Israelis Injured, at Least 4 Hezbollah Gunmen Killed in Failed Kidnap Attempt " \textit{Haaretz}, 22 November 2005.
\textsuperscript{483} Ibid. Gambill, "Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War ".
\textsuperscript{484} Exum, "Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment," 8.
\textsuperscript{485} Harris, "Crisis in the Levant: Lebanon at Risk," 38.
\textsuperscript{486} The IDF was made aware of this plan and managed to stave off the attack by massing troops at this point of the border. See Schiff, "Kidnap of Soldiers in July Was Hezbollah's Fifth Attempt."
\textsuperscript{487} Exum, "Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment," 8.
\textsuperscript{488} Ibid.
Nonetheless, my contention that Hizbullah expected and, therefore, wanted a full-scale war with Israel is the most compelling given the available evidence. According to Khenin, the only political figure supporting my view, “I’m sure this is really what he [Nasrallah] wanted. He’s a really clever politician and I think he wanted this escalation. It makes a case in his eyes for the continued existence of Hizbullah as a great political and military force in the region.” The implications of this are important for understanding the lengths to which Hizbullah is willing to go to maintain its influence and support in Lebanon. It also highlights the middle-class basis and nature of the party, and the limitations this places on its activities. My interest in this subject extends beyond Hizbullah and the war, to those on the left who in their opposition to Israel and US imperialism glossed over the more unsettling realities about the Party of God. Hizbullah is a middle-class organisation that is not beyond risking the lives of its supporters to secure its goals. The Party of God is not a replacement for a true working-class revolutionary party that could transform the Middle East. In a battle between Hizbullah, Israel, and US imperialism, the left’s support, in whatever limited form this can currently take, should unconditionally be with Hizbullah. This does not mean, however, that one should abandon a critical assessment of the party.

489 O’Dwyer, "Did Hizbollah Miscalculate? The View from Israel."
490 See introduction chap., n. 31.
4.2) Israeli and US Intentions

While Hizbullah’s capture operation on July 12 was the most important initial act in this conflict, it was Israel’s response that escalated the conflict into a full-scale war. To understand Israel’s actions this section will address a set of questions regarding not only Israeli, but also US intentions. These questions are: what were Israel’s war aims and the tactics for achieving them; was Israel actively seeking a pretext with which to justify a war on Hizbullah; did the United States push Israel to war; and, how complicit was the United States in the war?\footnote{Few scholars have addressed these particular questions due to the limited amount of primary sources available, and, I believe, because of an often-uncritical acceptance of official Israeli and US accounts of the war. These questions were more commonly posed by journalists; resulting in this section using a larger number of journalistic, compared to academic sources.} For the first question I can identify four aims and three tactics, which will be addressed immediately. I conclude for the next two questions that there is as yet insufficient evidence to incriminate Israel for looking for a pretext, nor the United State’s for pushing Israel to war. On the final question one can determine that the United State’s allowed Israel to continue the war for as long as it saw necessary, and despite some reservations did little to curb Israeli excesses.

What Were Israel’s War Aims and Tactics for Achieving Them?

In 2006 the Israeli leadership of Olmert, Peretz, and Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, were never clear on their military and political war aims, a failure that elicited a torrent of criticism from Israeli elites.\footnote{Achcar and Warschawski, \textit{The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences}, 56.} This elite level debate, focussing on the war’s failure rather than its human costs, culminated in the lambasting of these leaders by
the Winograd Commission, a commission appointed by Olmert himself.\textsuperscript{493} Four aims can, however, be deduced from the statements and actions of the Israeli leadership.\textsuperscript{494}

The first of these aims was to rescue the captured soldiers, which after a poorly managed operation in the first hours of the conflict was deemed unrealistic.\textsuperscript{495} Another aim was to limit Hizbullah’s rocket attacks, a goal Israel never achieved. The third aim was “destroying” Hizbullah, which as the war progressed was soon downgraded to “weakening” the party.\textsuperscript{496} As Israel’s pursuit of these three aims is not contested, and these aims provide few insights into the long- and medium-term interests of Israel, I will not devote any more attention to them. This section will instead focus on Israel’s fourth aim of gaining leverage over the implementation of the cease-fire, along with three tactics it employed during the war. This section begins by analysing Israel’s tactic of pressuring the non-Shi’a Lebanese communities and then proceeds to identify Halutz’s EBO-based military strategy. Halutz’s strategy to a large extent explains Israel’s inability to achieve its war aims and is pertinent for later discussion on the ‘pretext argument’. I conclude with an examination of Israel’s attempt to influence the cease-fire and its tactic of collectively punishing Lebanese Shi’a. Hizbullah for its part simply aimed to survive the 2006 war, and in the process score as many real and symbolic victories as it could.

After the failure of the initial rescue operation, Halutz, according to military-historian Matt Matthews, convinced Olmert and Peretz that they should attack symbolic targets across Lebanon.\textsuperscript{497} In the first days of the war this saw the bombing of the runways at Lebanon’s main airport and the fuel tanks at the Jiyyeh power station south of Beirut.\textsuperscript{498} These attacks, along with the blockade, were aimed at non-


\textsuperscript{494} Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 55-59.

\textsuperscript{495} See Matthews, "We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War."

\textsuperscript{496} Fickling, "Diplomatic Timeline: Lebanon and Israel, July 2006."

\textsuperscript{497} Matthews, "We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War," 37. See also section 3.1.

\textsuperscript{498} For more details on these attacks see section 3.1. The attack on Beirut’s airport struck its runways rather than the new terminal. Israel’s bombing of the Jiyyeh power station, while knocking out
Shi’a Lebanese and their representatives in government, but for reasons that are not readily apparent. Achcar contends that the aim was to force the Lebanese government to compel Hizbullah to hand over the soldiers.\footnote{Achcar and Warschawski, \textit{The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences}, 56-57.} There was, however, no way that the Lebanese government could force Hizbullah to do anything, but such a deluded belief was not without precedence, having been unsuccessfully attempted in 1993 and 1996.\footnote{The reason the Lebanese army does not confront Hizbullah it due to the party’s military strength and the fact that as much as 70\% of the Lebanese army’s rank-and-file are Shi’a, and are more likely to desert than attack Hizbullah. Jeffrey Stinson, “Lebanese Forces May Play Bigger Role in War,” \textit{USAToday.com} (1 October 2006), http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2006-08-01-lebanon-forces_x.htm. While this Israeli tactic failed in Operation Accountability, in July 1993, and Operation Grapes of Wrath, in April 1996, it had been used successfully in the past against the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Lebanon. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Israel routinely retaliated against PLO attacks from Southern Lebanon by disproportionately bombing both Palestine and Shi’a areas. Coupled with the PLO’s own arrogant behaviour in Southern Lebanon, this tactic led many Shi’a to welcome the Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982. William Harris, \textit{The New Face of Lebanon: History’s Revenge} (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2006), 87.} Olmert’s statement at the beginning of the war that he did not want any force but the Lebanese army to deploy in Southern Lebanon seems to indicate such an overestimation of the Lebanese state’s ability to confront Hizbullah.\footnote{Achcar and Warschawski, \textit{The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences}, 39.} For Shimon Naveh, former chief of the IDF’s Operational Theory Research Institute, such a belief was deluded, stating, “No one really believed that the Lebanese government was in position to really pressure Hezbollah. The idea was that Hezbollah would give up and then everybody would go home happy.”\footnote{Matthews, “We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War,” 37.}

Israeli scholar Uri Bar-Joseph and Middle Eastern analyst Gary Gambill provide more realistic explanations for Israel’s attacks on symbolic targets. For Bar-Joseph, Halutz’s “method … was to bomb Lebanese infrastructure, which he believed would lead to internal Lebanese and/or global pressure that would put an end to the military freedom of action enjoyed by Hezbollah.”\footnote{Uri Bar-Joseph, "Their Most Humiliating Hour," \textit{Haaretz}, 27 April 2007.} In Gambill’s opinion, Israel’s actions were “based on the recognition that no military outcome would be decisive
unless Hezbollah faced an effective arms embargo or domestic constraints in refitting its paramilitary apparatus after the war.\textsuperscript{504}

According to Olmert’s leaked testimony to the Winograd Commission, he was told by US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice in the first days of the war to cease the attacks on symbolic targets.\textsuperscript{505} Olmert was asked not to undermine Lebanese prime minister Fouad Siniora, and “he understood this to mean that Lebanese infrastructure should not be destroyed, even though the IDF had originally planned otherwise.”\textsuperscript{506} US president George W. Bush’s public statements at the beginning of the war reinforced this point, along with comments in his memoir that he “started to worry that Israel’s offensive might topple Prime Minister Siniora’s democratic government.”\textsuperscript{507} Despite US reservations, Halutz continued attacking some symbolic targets, hoping that in conjunction with the blockade non-Shi’a Lebanese and their leaders could be spurred to militarily, or at least politically challenge Hizbullah.

For Israel’s broader military strategy, the conclusion I have drawn, both from the reports of the Winograd Commission and other studies, is that Israel engaged in operations based on EBO concepts without employing a formally devised or practised military operational plan.\textsuperscript{508} The widespread lack of understanding in the IDF of the aims or even the language of EBO testifies to this.\textsuperscript{509} EBO concepts emerged in the United States in the 1990s in the context of rapidly developing precision missile and information technologies.\textsuperscript{510} In the words of Matthews, “EBO theory held that the target of these attacks ought not to be traditional front-line ground or air forces but, instead, should be key command and control, logistics, radars, transportation, and related capabilities whose destruction will render the

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\item \textsuperscript{504} Gambill, “Implications of the Israel-Hezbollah War”.
\item \textsuperscript{505} With the exception of Olmert’s testimony, the Winograd Commission did not release the materials used in its investigation to outside sources. Benn, "Report: Interim Findings of War Won't Deal with Personal Failures."
\item \textsuperscript{506} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{508} Benn, "Report: Interim Findings of War Won't Deal with Personal Failures.", Benn, "A Very, Very Painful Response.", Matthews, "We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War."
\item \textsuperscript{509} Matthews, "We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War," 63.
\item \textsuperscript{510} Ibid., 23.
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enemy incapable of employing his military forces and unable to accomplish his military objectives.”  

Halutz, therefore, tasked the IDF to target Hizbollah’s military and political leadership, rather than directly confront the party’s forces in Southern Lebanon. As Naveh states, Halutz’s “idea was that . . . we hit all these targets [and] Hezbollah will collapse as a military organization.”

The problem, however, was that Israel had severely underestimated Hizbollah’s preparedness for this very tactic. Since 2000, Hizbollah had established an elaborate network of bunkers throughout Southern Lebanon, with fortified command bunkers reaching depths of 40 metres and some even having air-conditioning. These preparations, which some have suggested were inspired by the leadership’s study of the Vietnamese resistance, were coupled with a decentralised structure that “gave its small-unit leaders a high degree of autonomy by both design and necessity.” In 2006 Hizbollah was neither a guerrilla army nor a conventional army, but a quasi-conventional army, or as Nasrallah declared, “It was something in between. This is the new model.” At no point in the war was Israel able to create the required ‘effects’ to cripple Hizbollah. This is illustrated by three embarrassing Israeli failures in the war: the IDF never managed to secure the border region, particularly the towns of Maroun al-Ras and Bint Jbeil, despite having approximately 10,000 troops in the area by the third week of the war; Hizbollah maintained a constant rate of rocket fire throughout the war; and despite repeated attempts the IDF never managed to silence Hizbollah’s al-Manar satellite television network.

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511 Ibid.
512 Ibid., 37.
Halutz stuck resolutely to his EBO-based strategy despite growing criticism within Israel.\(^{517}\) As early as July 14, Israeli military intelligence told senior political and military leaders that the strategy would show “diminishing returns within days,” and would “neither win the release of the two Israeli soldiers in Hezbollah’s hands nor reduce the militia’s rocket attacks on Israel to fewer than 100 a day.”\(^{518}\) Halutz did make some alterations to his strategy, however, allowing battalion and brigade size ground raids to begin, most significantly against the village of Maroun al-Ras on July 17 and the town of Bint Jbeil on July 26.\(^{519}\) Both of these assaults ended with costly and incomplete victories for the IDF. As one disgruntled IDF officer commented, “You either activate MEY MAROM [and] occupy the entire rocket launch area, or you don’t—but there is absolutely no sense in raids.”\(^{520}\) Halutz and Olmert sudden decision on July 21 to call up 3,000 Israeli reservists, led many to assume that these forces would immediately be used in a major ground offensive, but this was not the intention.\(^{521}\)

Halutz’s insistence on the supremacy of air power led on July 28 to Mossad, Israel’s intelligence agency, leaking a statement to the press that Hizbullah “had not suffered a significant degradation in its military capabilities, and that the organization might be able to carry on the conflict for several months.”\(^{522}\) It was not until August 11, the day UN Security Council Resolution 1701 was passed and three

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\(^{518}\) Wilson, "Israeli War Plan Had No Exit Strategy."


\(^{520}\) Ibid., 47. MEY MAROM (Sky Water) was part of an Israeli plan, identified by Matthews, which was devised a “few years prior” to the war. It consisted of an initial 48-72 hour bombing campaign, named SOVERET HAKERACH (Ice Breaker), and a ground invasion, named MEY MAROM (Sky Water), designed to push Hizbullah north of Lebanon’s Litani River. According to Tira the plan was to simultaneously enact SOVERET HAKERACH and call up reserve forces, and then decide whether to employ them in MEY MAROM once the 48-72 hours was up. Matthews also identifies an operation to immediately rescue the captured soldiers from Lebanon, code named HANNIBAL, which was initiated at around 9:30 a.m. on July 12. At around 12:00 p.m. the same day he claims that another operation, named FOURTH DIMENSION, was initiated, activating air strikes on 69 bridges in Southern Lebanon in an attempt to prevent the captors’ escape. Matthews, "We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War." Gil Merom, "The Second Lebanon War: Democratic Lessons Imperfectly Applied " Democracy and Security 4, no. 1 (January 2008).


days before the cease-fire was to come into effect, that Halutz finally launched a large-scale ground operation: Operation Changing Direction 11. This did not mean that Halutz had abandoned his strategy, as while the IDF was now fighting with divisions the operations were still in effect raids.\textsuperscript{523} As Ron Tira contends, “at no point was an order given to systemically and comprehensively deal with the rockets or Hezbollah.”\textsuperscript{524}

Olmert allegedly admitted that the decision to launch the ground operation on August 11 was done in order to “influence UN Security Council deliberations so that the draft resolution 1701, calling for a cease-fire, would be amended in Israel’s favor.”\textsuperscript{525} Through this resolution Israel hoped that its war goals could be achieved, and on paper they were. As shown earlier, Resolution 1701 placed sole blame for the conflict on Hizbollah, calling for “the immediate cessation by Hizbollah of all attacks and the immediate cessation by Israel of all offensive military operations.”\textsuperscript{526} UNIFIL was expanded to a maximum force of 15,000 and deployed alongside the Lebanese army throughout Southern Lebanon. The new UNIFIL force was far from impartial, as it was overwhelmingly composed of North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces (as Israel and the United States had demanded) and the two largest contingents came from Germany and Italy (which have firm military ties to Israel).\textsuperscript{527}

The formulation of Resolution 1701 came very close to a chapter seven mandate, which France and the United States had originally wanted, and allowed UNIFIL to assist the Lebanese army in the “establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani

\textsuperscript{523} Matthews, "We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War," 52.
\textsuperscript{524} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{525} Benn, "Report: Interim Findings of War Won't Deal with Personal Failures."
\textsuperscript{527} Israel originally denigrated UNIFIL and stated that it only wanted the Lebanese army deployed, but later accepted UNIFIL’s involvement when its size and mandate was expanded. Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 39. The other big contingent is from France, which was actively working with the United States against Hizbullah in the years preceding the war. In the words of Gilbert Achcar, “France has collaborated closely with Washington on the Lebanese issue since 2004. Germany, which took upon itself the task of monitoring Lebanon’s territorial waters, provides Israel with submarines, while Chancellor Angela Merkel has declared that the mission of the German fleet is to protect Israel. Italy is tied with Israel by an accord on military cooperation concluded by the government of Silvio Berlusconi in 2003 and ratified by the Italian parliament in 2005 with support from Democratici di Sinistra led by the current [May 2006-May 2008] Italian foreign minister, Massimo D’Alema.” Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 46-47, Olivier Guitta, “The French Connection,” Weekly Standard, 7 August 2006.
River of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the government of Lebanon."\(^{528}\) The problem for UNIFIL and Israel, however, was that Hizbullah had not been seriously damaged, militarily or politically. While Hizbullah removed its visible armed presence from south of the Litani River, UNIFIL and the Lebanese army have not been willing to pursue the weapon stocks that inevitably remain there, nor stop Hizbullah from rearming and rebuilding. Today it is widely believed that the party has replenished its weapon stocks and rebuilt its bunker systems north, and probably also south, of the Litani River.\(^{529}\) While Hizbullah protested against the unfairness of the resolution, it accepted it, knowing that it could have been worse and that UNIFIL and the Lebanese government feared the party too much to try and disarm it.\(^{530}\) As Nasrallah wryly stated on the subject on August 12, 2006, "We will not be an obstacle to any decision taken by the Lebanese government."\(^{531}\)

Israel also intended to achieve its war aims through the collective punishment of Lebanese Shi’a in the hope that they would turn against Hizbullah. This was a tactic that Israel successfully employed in the late 1970s: fomenting Shi’a hostility towards the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in Southern Lebanon.\(^{532}\) According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, both Israel and Hizbullah intentionally attacked civilians in the 2006 war.\(^{533}\) As previously shown the inaccuracy of Hizbullah’s rockets influenced its choice to target civilians, however,

\(^{528}\) Resolution 1701

\(^{530}\) Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 48.


\(^{532}\) Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 38.

for the technologically advanced IDF this was not the case. In the words of Human Rights Watch there was:

A systematic failure by the IDF to distinguish between combatants and civilians. Since the start of the conflict, Israeli forces have consistently launched artillery and air attacks with limited or dubious military gain but excessive civilian cost. In dozens of attacks, Israeli forces struck an area with no apparent military target. In some cases, the timing and intensity of the attack, the absence of a military target, as well as return strikes on rescuers, suggest that Israeli forces deliberately targeted civilians.

Unlike its attack on non-Shi’a Lebanese, which were confined to symbolic targets and the blockade, Israel struck Shi’a housing, industry, infrastructure, and land. Israel attempted to deflect criticism for these attacks by accusing Hizbullah of preventing civilians from fleeing combat areas and using them as human shields. According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch these claims remain unsubstantiated. The clearest demonstration of this collective punishment was Israel’s attacks on Shi’a industrial sites. According to Amnesty International, at least 31 major factories, all in Shi’a areas, were completely or partially destroyed, along with thousands of medium- and small-size enterprises. The factories included, “Liban Lait in Ba’albek, the country’s largest dairy farm; the Maliban glass works in Ta’nayel, Beqa’a; the Safieddin plant in Bazouriye, south Lebanon, that manufactured medical supplies; the Fine tissue paper mill in Kafr Jara, near Sidon; Musawi Building Supplies near Ba’albek; and the Dalal Steel Industries factory in Ta’nayel, Beqa’a, that made prefabricated houses.” As Jim Quilty observed in Beirut’s Daily Star newspaper:

534 See section 3.1.
536 Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hizbullah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 39.
537 "Israel/Lebanon: Out of All Proportion - Civilians Bear the Brunt of the War."
538 "Fatal Strikes: Israel’s Indiscriminate Attacks against Civilians in Lebanon," 3.
540 "Israel/Lebanon: Out of All Proportion - Civilians Bear the Brunt of the War," 50.
Israel claims to be destroying Hizbullah infrastructure with its air attacks, but the targeting of Lebanese industry betrays a more cynical reasoning: Since Hizbullah fighters are difficult to find, the Israeli military is systematically punishing the Shiite community that provides much of Hizbullah’s constituency. Maliban [glass works] was destroyed because it employed Shiites.541

The persecution of Shi’a extended beyond their workplaces, with roughly 8,000 homes targeted and destroyed by the IDF and another 122,000 damaged as a result.542 While it is difficult to ascertain the precise sectarian makeup of the civilian casualties in Lebanon, one can assume that the overwhelming majority were Shi’a. In figures 4.1 and 4.2, one can see the concentration of attacks on the Shi’a areas of Southern Lebanon, Beirut’s southern suburbs (the dahiya), and the city of Baalbek. In the dahiya alone around 250 multi-storey buildings, containing at least 4,000 apartments, were destroyed.543 Amnesty International claims that many civilian buildings were targeted simply for having an association with Hizbullah.544

541 Jim Quilty, "Israeli Strikes Deal Major Blow to Bekaa’s Working Class," Daily Star (Beirut), 5 August 2006.
543 "Israel/Lebanon: Out of All Proportion - Civilians Bear the Brunt of the War," 26.
544 Ibid.
Figure 4.1: Israeli Air Strikes, July 12 to August 13

Figure 4.2: Geographical Concentrations of Lebanon's Sects

On July 24, 2006, a high-ranking IAF officer stated in an off-record briefing with reporters, that Halutz ordered the IDF to destroy ten 12-storey buildings in the dahiya for every rocket that hit the Israeli city of Haifa. The IDF attempted to quell the ensuing media storm by claiming the officer had been misquoted, which they later retracted, instead arguing that the officer was wrong. A similar claim was made in 2008 by Gadi Eisenkot, the current head of the IDF’s Northern Command, when commenting on potential hostilities with Hizbullah, “What happened in the Dahiya quarter of Beirut in 2006 will happen in every village from which Israel is fired on… We will apply disproportionate force on it (village) and cause great damage and destruction there. From our standpoint, these are not civilian villages, they are military bases … This is not a recommendation. This is a plan. And it has been approved.” Both of these claims are consistent with reports compiled by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Israel’s attack on the Lebanese Shi’a was consolidated in the last 72 hours of the war when the UN estimates 90 percent of all Israeli cluster bombs used in the conflict were deployed. Cluster bombs were used in roughly 1,000 Israeli strikes releasing 4-4.6 million sub-munitions over 48 square kilometres of Southern Lebanon. With an average failure rate of 25 percent predominately Shi’a areas in the south were left strewn with as many as one million unexploded bomblets. Despite repeated pleas from the UN and the Lebanese government for maps of where the munitions were dropped, Israel refused to hand these over until May 2009. By then 224 civilians had been killed or injured by cluster sub-munitions, along with 14 killed and 43

546 Ibid.
injured in de-mining/clearance accidents.\textsuperscript{552} As an IDF commander of one of the Multiple Launch Rocket System units responsible for the attacks has stated, given the weapons inaccuracy he was ordered to “flood” the area with them, concluding, “In Lebanon, we covered entire villages with cluster bombs, what we did there was crazy and monstrous.”\textsuperscript{553} This disturbing event concluded this perturbed conflict, with civilians in the end paying the price.

The conclusions to be drawn on Israel’s war aims and tactics are two fold. Firstly, Israel’s military failure in the war stemmed from EBO: that is, Halutz’s overconfidence in it, the IDF’s lack of knowledge about it, and Hizbullah’s preparedness for it. The second conclusion is that Israel’s war was not about two captured soldiers, but was an attempt to militarily and politically weaken the Party of God. Both of these conclusions are essential to address the following question: was Israel searching for a pretext for war?

\textbf{Was Israel Searching for a Pretext for War?}

In the words of Haseeb, Israel’s assault on Lebanon in July 2006 “would have occurred regardless of the kidnapping.”\textsuperscript{554} This is an argument shared by Nasrallah, for obvious reasons, who in a pre-recorded message on al-Manar television on July 26, 2006, stated, “When the arrest took place, and without knowing it, the resistance foiled a more dangerous plan and a worse war scenario on Lebanon, on the Lebanese

\textsuperscript{553} Meron Rapoport, "When Rockets and Phosphorous Cluster," \textit{Haaretz}, 30 September 2006.
resistance, and on the people of Lebanon.” 555 Hersh and Hizbullah’s deputy secretary-general Naim Qassem claim that Israel had been caught off-guard in July, as they were expecting Hizbullah to provide them with a pretext in September or October 2006. Qassem asserts that Hizbullah discovered two days into the fighting that Israel and the United States had been planning for a war, but “Israel was not ready.” 556 Hersh’s claim is that Israel had not expected Hizbullah’s operation to occur so soon after Shalit’s capture in Gaza.557 This view was common among left-wing authors on the war, and among Lebanese: in one opinion poll after the war where 78 percent of Lebanese responded in the affirmative to the question, “Do you believe that the war would have happened whether Hizbollah captured the Israeli soldiers or not?” 558

The precise question this section addresses is: was Israel waiting for the right conditions to launch a war it had already decided was going to happen? 559 This is what I term the ‘pretext argument’. This, I contend, is different from what we already know, which is that Olmert had determined by March 2006 that a successful Hizbullah capture operation would result in war. I conclude that there were many within Israel who were eager to ‘deal’ with Hizbullah and were, therefore, pleased

555 Hersh, "Watching Lebanon: Washington’s Interests in Israel’s War."
558 This poll was conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan. "CSS Poll Shows 84% of Lebanese Agree War Attempt to Impose Middle East Order," Jordan Times, 12 October 2006, quoted in "Briefing: Lebanese Public Opinion," Mideast Monitor 1, no. 3 (2006), http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0609/0609_6.htm. Two examples of this argument by left-wing authors are: Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 35. Tanya Reinhart, "Israel’s "New Middle East"," Znet (26 July 2006), http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/3498.
559 For other examples of the pretext argument see the following quotations by Gilbert Achcar and Israeli academic Tanya Reinhart: "These statements, and many others, confirm without beating around the bush that the 2006 aggression against Lebanon had been designed long in advance, but waiting for political conditions that could secure for Israel resolute international support-including support by the United States free from any political embarrassment as well as support expressed through Israeli public opinion." “The speed at which everything happened (along with many other pieces of information) indicates that Israel has been waiting for a long time for ‘the international conditions to ripen’ for the massive war on Lebanon it has been planning. In fact, one does not need to speculate on this, since right from the start, Israeli and U.S. official sources have been pretty open in this regard.” Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 35. Reinhart, "Israel’s "New Middle East"."
with the provocation the party provided. Nonetheless, I will show that there is insufficient evidence to prove the pretext argument. Two attempts to disprove the pretext argument are also identified in this section, namely that Israel was unprepared and that Israel had been warning Hizbullah.

The official Israeli line during the war, as expressed by David Siegel, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington, was that Israel “did not plan the campaign. That decision was forced on us.”\(^{560}\) As it is impossible for Israel to prove that it was NOT waiting for a pretext, the burden of proof falls on the advocates of the pretext argument, a task at which they have yet to succeed. The failure of these advocates, including Nasrallah, stems from an over-reliance on anonymous sources cited in articles by Hersh, and Matthew Kalman of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.\(^{561}\) This is because these sources are unverifiable, and in the case of Kalman’s article merely reveal that Israel had prepared contingency military operational plans.\(^{562}\) Numerous attempts to use these plans as proof of the pretext argument fail, because all states, particularly one in Israel’s situation, create such plans for potential hostilities.\(^{563}\)

Israel’s ‘situation,’ however, is a result of the inevitable hostilities it created through

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560 Hersh, "Watching Lebanon: Washington’s Interests in Israel’s War."
562 The war plan identified by Kalman bears much resemblance to the initial strategy employed by Halutz, although the timing of the introduction of ground forces differs. In the three-week campaign identified by Kalman, “The first week concentrated on destroying Hezbollah’s heavier long-range missiles, bombing its command-and-control centers, and disrupting transportation and communication arteries. In the second week, the focus shifted to attacks on individual sites of rocket launchers or weapons stores. In the third week, ground forces in large numbers would be introduced, but only in order to knock out targets discovered during reconnaissance missions as the campaign unfolded. There was no plan, according to this scenario, to reoccupy southern Lebanon on a long-term basis.” Kalman, "Israel Set War Plan More Than a Year Ago: Strategy Was Put in Motion as Hezbollah Began Increasing Its Military Strength."
563 Kalman stated in July 2006 that “More than a year ago, a senior Israeli army officer began giving PowerPoint presentations, on an off-the-record basis, to U.S. and other diplomats, journalists and think tanks, setting out the plan for the current operation in revealing detail. Under the ground rules of the briefings, the officer could not be identified.” Ibid.
its very founding, so the claim that wars are forced upon an innocent Israel is never the complete truth.

Not all of the evidence in Hersh’s and Kalman’s articles is based on unnamed sources though. Hersh quotes Shabtai Shavit, a national-security adviser to the Knesset and head of Mossad from 1989 to 1996, who claimed, “Hezbollah is armed to the teeth and trained in the most advanced technology of guerrilla warfare. It was just a matter of time. We had to address it.”564 While this shows that many in Israel were eager to confront Hizbullah, this is different from saying that the Israeli leadership wanted to start a war over any provocation. In an interview during the war with London’s Times newspaper, Olmert stated:

I heard that there were some voices that said that Israel should have attacked Lebanon before, during the last five years since we pulled out because of what we have seen created - a big infrastructure created by Hezbollah. I have to be very honest with you. I was only part of the time a member of the cabinet. But just for the sake of argument, could you imagine Sharon initiating an attack on Lebanon any time in these five years that could have won the slightest possible support from anyone?... But let’s be honest, had he done anything at that time, particularly without such a provocation that I encountered this time, what would have been the reaction of the world? What would have been the reaction even of the public opinion of Israel?565

Achcar has used this statement as evidence for the pretext argument, but the statement seems to be an acknowledgment of the threat posed by Hizbullah, rather than proof that Olmert was looking for a pretext in 2006.566 In response to a Haaretz reporter asking if anyone had advocated a preventative strike against Hizbullah, Yossi Kuperwasser, former head of Israeli Military Intelligence’s research division, reiterated Olmert’s view that:

564 Hersh, “Watching Lebanon: Washington’s Interests in Israel’s War.”
566 Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 34.
No, no one said that, because it’s clear that it’s impossible to do it. To do something like that you have to adopt an approach for which the Americans were unable to mobilize world support. An approach based on a preventative strike. When the United States went into Iraq to carry out a preventive move, it did not succeed in obtaining international backing. So do you want Israel to do that? Let’s be serious.567

The speed at which Israel went to war has also been cited as evidence for the pretext argument. Israel initiated the full-scale war by mid-afternoon on July 12, several hours after the capture operation (compared to three days in Gaza).568 Musing on this fact in an interview, Uzi Arad, who served for more than two decades in Mossad, claimed, “For the life of me, I’ve never seen a decision to go to war taken so speedily.”569 Rather than proving the pretext argument, the speed of Israel’s response reflects Olmert’s claimed decision in March 2006 that a successful capture operation would result in war.

Attempts to directly counter the pretext argument have largely been absent from English language sources, presumably because the argument has been confined to the anti-war left. An exception is the claim that Israel’s chaotic and haphazard conduct of the war shows it was not searching for a pretext.570 As shown in the previous section, Israel’s poor performance was the result of Halutz’s overconfidence in EBO and the IDF’s lack of preparedness for this. In the case of the IDF’s rescue operation in the first hours of the war, its failure came down to poor communication and apprehensiveness, rather than a lack of planning.571 Contingency operations codenamed HANNIBAL and FOURTH DIMENSION did exist, but were poorly implemented and as Matthews argues, “revealed a stunning ineptitude on the part of the soldiers and leadership within the IDF.”572 My own contention is that if Olmert had been waiting for a pretext to damage Hizbullah, he would not have been so

568 Matthews, "We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War," 36.
569 Hersh, "Watching Lebanon: Washington’s Interests in Israel’s War."
570 Based on discussions with William Harris.
572 Ibid., 36. HANNIBAL and FOURTH DIMENSION were operations implemented only for specific tasks at the war’s outset, and did not represent a military operational plan for the whole war.
explicit in his warnings prior to July 2006. While not conclusive, as these warnings could have been for domestic posturing or to prepare the Israeli public for war, it seems that Olmert was trying to ward off future Hizbullah attacks, thus avoiding a pretext for war.

My conclusion is that Israel had certainly settled on the option of war well in advance, even if poorly planned, and that it was in the state’s interest to attack Hizbullah. However, given my stipulation that the burden of proof lies with those condemning Israel, the pretext argument remains unfounded.

Did the United States Push Israel to War?

Most advocates of the pretext argument also contend that the 2006 war was planned with the full knowledge of the Bush administration. Some of these advocates extend this argument to conclude that it was the United States that pushed Israel to war. According to Zunes, “Israel’s war on Lebanon during the summer of 2006 was done largely at the behest of Washington.... While the Israeli government was certainly willing to launch the attacks for its own reasons, there is little question that the United States played a critical role in Israel’s initial decision to go to war.”

The problem with this claim is that as yet there is no strong evidence for it. Zunes, and the journalist Jonathan Cook, cite Kalman’s article as evidence for this argument. In particular, Kalman’s claim that Israeli officials had been in the United States giving PowerPoint presentations on its war plans for more than a year. One should not be surprised that Israel keeps its ally informed of its military planning, given the symbiotic relationship between the two militaries and the United State’s inevitable diplomatic involvement in Israel’s wars. Kalman’s article does not,

573 See section 4.1.
however, prove that these presentations represented anything more than contingency plans. Several of Hersh’s unnamed sources are also cited for this argument, however, the bulk of his named sources assert that Israel had enough reasons of its own to initiate the war. 576 Among them is Yossi Melman of Haaretz, who states, “The neocons in Washington may be happy, but Israel did not need to be pushed, because Israel has been wanting to get rid of Hezbollah…. By provoking Israel, Hezbollah provided that opportunity.” Shavit also makes this point, stating, “We do what we think is best for us, and if it happens to meet America’s requirements, that’s just part of a relationship between two friends.” 577

What the claims of Cook and Zunes reveal is an understandable cynicism about the Bush administration’s involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. What they fail to do is acknowledge the level of autonomy Israel still maintains within its role as a watchdog state. Nevertheless, the convergence of Israeli and US interests, that led many to assume that the United States had a hand in starting the war, is no mere coincidence. It is the culmination of the century old Zionist project and its alliance, and dependence, on foreign imperialism.

**How Complicit Was the United States in the War?**

The case that the United States effectively determined the duration of the conflict through its blocking of cease-fire agreements, has already been made in chapter 3. This fact is reinforced in Bush’s memoir where he openly admits that he “wanted to buy time for Israel to weaken Hezbollah’s forces.” 578 As the war progressed, however, many came to see the United States as the main driver of the conflict. As Achcar contends, this became the dominant view in the Israeli anti-war movement and much of the Israeli press. 579 On July 22 a 2,500 strong Jewish and

576 Hersh, “Watching Lebanon: Washington’s Interests in Israel’s War.”
577 Ibid.
578 Bush, Decision Points, 387.
579 Achcar and Warschawski, The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Consequences, 90.
Arab anti-war rally took place in Tel Aviv. As reported by *Haaretz*, the rally had a theme “unfamiliar from previous demonstrations here,” as it was a “distinctly anti-American protest.” The rally was full of slogans condemning Bush, and alongside common Israeli anti-war chants rang the cry, “We will not die and will not kill in the service of the United States.” For Uri Avnery, the founder of Israel’s Gush Shalom peace movement, the United States was clearly in control, for as he states, “Condoleezza Rice was back and forth, dictating when to start, when to stop, what to do, what not to do. America is fully complicit.” This view was echoed in the press by mainstream Israeli figures such as Schiff, *Haaretz*’s chief US correspondent Shmuel Rosner, and senior Israeli diplomat Daniel Levy; as seen in the following quotations:

> U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is the figure leading the strategy of changing the situation in Lebanon, not Prime Minister Ehud Olmert or Defense Minister Amir Peretz.

> Is it a problem - to be a tool like this - an Israeli official was asked yesterday. Does Israel really want to be the deadly messenger of the American interest? First of all, he replied, there also is an Israeli interest here - so that a real dilemma doesn't exist; and second, it is better that Israel be made use of in this way, which ensures that it isn't only Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's enchanting smile that is motivating the American support for Israel that it will also need in the future.

Israel was actually in need of an early exit strategy, had its diplomatic options narrowed by American weakness and marginalization in the region, and found itself ratcheting up aerial and ground operations in ways that largely worked to Hezbollah's advantage.

Such views can be explained simply as attempts to shift blame onto the United States, and as yet cannot be confirmed by the available evidence. Nonetheless, these

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580 Galili, "Anti-War Tel Aviv Rally Draws Jewish, Israeli Arab Crowd ".
581 Ibid.
584 Rosner, "America's Deadly Messenger."
figures were on the right track when they identified US complicity. This was made clear on July 21 in an article by David Cloud and Helene Cooper, in which it was revealed that the Bush administration was in the process of rushing precision guided missiles to Israel.\footnote{Cloud, "U.S. Speeds up Bomb Delivery for the Israelis."} While this report is based on unidentified sources, it is reasonably credible given that US officials did not deny it, and it appeared, unlike Hersh’s independent report, as a regular news article in the \textit{New York Times}.\footnote{Abraham Rabinovich, "US Helped Plan Offensive, Says New Yorker Magazine," \textit{Australian}, 14 August 2006.} According to the article Israel had requested these weapons a week earlier, when it became clear it was running out of its existing stocks.\footnote{Matthews, "We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War," 45.} While these weapons were part of an arms sale package approved in 2005, the decision to rush the order within days of the request was described as “unusual.”\footnote{Cloud, "U.S. Speeds up Bomb Delivery for the Israelis."} Cloud and Cooper concluded, “Its disclosure threatens to anger Arab governments and others because of the appearance that the United States is actively aiding the Israeli bombing campaign in a way that could be compared to Iran’s efforts to arm and resupply Hezbollah.”\footnote{Ibid.} Noam Chomsky was more straightforward in his conclusion, “so it’s a US-Israeli invasion.”\footnote{Barsamian, "Lebanon and the Crisis in the Middle East, Interview with Noam Chomsky," 19.}

Despite the United States’ lack of direct involvement in the war’s initiation, it was complicit during the conflict. This is despite its best efforts to portray itself as a neutral arbiter in the war; a distortion that motivated many of the left-wing authors and journalists cited in this chapter.
Conclusion

Hizbullah launched its capture operation on July 12, 2006, with the intention of inciting a full-scale war. This was the logical culmination of the party’s middle-class limitations as it provided a solution to its medium-term concerns over maintaining popular support, legitimising the retention of its army, securing influence in the Lebanese government, and to a lesser extent aiding its Syrian ally. By re-igniting its hostilities with Israel, Hizbullah rallied the Lebanese Shi’a community and quietened domestic opponents of its armed wing. The war also encouraged non-Shi’a to see the war as a war on Lebanon and Hizbullah’s army as the ‘defenders’ of their country. In a Machiavellian sense Hizbullah was, therefore, correct to ignite the war of 2006, a conclusion that bodes ill for Lebanon.

Israel’s response to Hizbullah’s provocation was predictable, launching a full-scale war that devastated much of Lebanon. Israel failed to achieve its war aims due to the limitations of Halutz’s EBO-based strategy and the states underestimation of its opponent. Such hubris is a common trait of colonial-settler states and should not be overlooked when analysing Israel’s relationship to its Arab and Muslim neighbours. Such over-confidence extended to its tactics, with Israel’s oft tried, but less than often-successful manipulation of sectarian divisions and use of collective punishment. When these tactics failed, Israel looked to foreign imperialist peacekeepers to achieve its goals, but this could only have worked if Israel had managed to weaken Hizbullah, which it had not. Criticism of Israel does not, however, extend to the pretext argument for which there is currently inadequate evidence. More broadly Israel’s interests were consistent with those of the United States, although disagreement over the March 14 Alliance highlights a level of Israeli independence that needs to be emphasised within Watchdog State theory. Nonetheless, this autonomy was limited to a tactic, rather than the war itself, and exists within the confines of Israel’s paranoid isolation in the region. Therefore, Israel can never stray too far from the interests of its imperial patron.
Such a bond does not mean that the United States controls Israel, for as was seen in 2006 there is no evidence that the United States pushed Israel to war. Nonetheless, when the war began the United States fulfilled its role as defined by Watchdog State theory: re-supplying Israel with arms and blocking international attempts to censure Israel and end the war. Israel, however, failed to fulfil its role in this relationship.

The United States intervened in 2006 in the hope that through Israel its medium-term interests in weakening Hizbullah and Iran could be achieved, thus recuperating its long-term strategy to secure the global oil spigot. Of course had the United States not been concerned about the global oil spigot, or the rise of China, it would still have intervened in this war due to the importance of the Middle East. Exactly how it would have intervened though, is quite a different matter. In 2006 the United States response was shaped by the Bush administration’s faltering lunge for control of Iraq and hegemony over Middle Eastern oil supplies. The administration saw the events of July 12, 2006, as a way to redeem themselves; so it armed and deflected criticism from its Israeli ally as it confronted their common opponent. The United States hoped that Hizbullah could be silenced and an arm of Iranian influence in the region could be weakened. This hope turned to frustration, with Bush eventually deciding that little could be gained from “striking further blows against Hezbollah,” and so he brought the conflict to an end.\textsuperscript{592}

\textsuperscript{592} Bush, \textit{Decision Points}, 387.
Conclusion

The 2006 War in Lebanon stemmed from the long- and medium-term interests of Hizbullah, and its Israeli and US opponents. Hizbullah’s inability to display its military prowess moved it to capture Israeli soldiers, a path its middle-class basis and nature pushed it towards. Such reliance on its arms put it in direct conflict with Israel and the United States, who view any rival centre of power in the Middle East as a challenge to their regional dominance. This is especially true when linked to the more powerful Iranian state. This competing regional configuration was an obstacle to the United States’ aim of gaining hegemony in the Middle East, which only heightened its interventionist role in the region. Israeli leaders faced additional pressure, due to the expectations and limitations placed on them as the heads of an ultra-militarised, colonial-settler state. The war was precipitated by the capture of Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev on July 12, 2006, but the causes had been in existence long before then.

In this thesis I set out to do what the major works on the 2006 War in Lebanon have not: create an explicit theoretical foundation for a Marxist analysis of the conflict. For Hizbullah this entailed combining existing historical work on the party, with general Marxist accounts of Islamism. The first historical conclusion is that it was the ability of the party’s army to defeat the Israeli occupation, and provide protection and stature for Lebanon’s Shi’a, which cemented its hegemony among this community. Its representation of the successful Iranian revolution aided the party’s popularity, but this was due more to prestige than any attachment to Ruhallah Khomeini’s ideology. Since this time, Hizbullah has become more independent from Iran and Syria, while the process of Lebanonisation has made it more dependent on popular support.

One way of maintaining this popular support would be to directly address the economic and political concerns of Lebanon’s Shi’a. However, as shown in
Hizbullah’s electoral and political platforms, the party’s economic programme is largely conservative and the party acquiesced to neo-liberal attacks on the Lebanese people. Politically the party has done little to alter Lebanon’s confessional political system, as it is one of the greatest beneficiaries of the sectarian solidarity this system encourages. Instead the party is more interested in gaining a larger piece of the economic and political pie for Lebanon’s Shi’a middle class. It is this class, comprised of the petty bourgeoisie and the new middle class, which forms the class basis and shapes the class nature of Hizbullah. An alternative approach is an inter-sectarian, working-class led movement that could fundamentally change Lebanon’s economic and political systems, but this is something Hizbullah’s middle-class leading stratum is unwilling to tolerate. Therefore, it has been my contention that Hizbullah’s weapons remain at the forefront of its activities as it seeks to maintain popular support and legitimise its army. Its support for Syria and Iran, and its engagement with the Lebanese government, should be viewed as means to secure its domestic popularity and power.

A more concrete conclusion is that Hizbullah started the war. This conclusion is not drawn in the puerile sense of the various statements on the matter by Israeli government spokespersons, but rather acknowledges that the balance of evidence suggests that the party sought to inflame an ongoing, low intensity conflict. This finding challenges the optimistic view that during its Lebanonisation, Hizbullah had qualitatively moved away from using its weapons as the central component in its activities. Even if my argument that Hizbullah sought to incite a war is mistaken and new evidence arises to back the miscalculation argument, this does not change the fact that on July 12 the party resorted to a military, rather than civilian solution to deal with its domestic concerns.

Global Oil Spigot theory was used in this thesis to identify the broader concerns that shaped the foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration. This theory suggests that the United States’ willingness to antagonise much of the world for 33 days in 2006, was shaped by its failing attempt to gain hegemony over the Middle East. Therefore, the Bush administration was intent on weakening Iranian influence in the region, crushing other centres of opposition, and backing its allies: all goals
they saw as achievable in Lebanon. As I contended, it was neither liberal imperialists on an idealist crusade, nor fractional or sub-fractional groupings of US capital, that determined the United States’ grand strategy. My findings suggest that the territorial logic of US imperialism dominated US intervention in 2006, while realist imperialists played a leading role in the administration’s response to the War in Lebanon.

For the United States, the most obvious conclusion is that rather than being a neutral arbiter trying to secure peace, it was a crucial participant in the war. Actually it did want peace, but only the kind that involved a ‘lasting and sustainable’ ceasefire, where Hizbullah was crippled and Israel was free to maintain its dominance in the region. By using its influence and allies in the United Nations (UN), the European Union, the Group of Eight, and other forums, the United States was able to hold off attempts to end the war, while it waited to see if its Israeli ally could defeat their common opponent. It does not seem, however, to have pushed Israel into the war itself.

Watchdog State theory denies two conceptualisations of the US-Israeli relationship: that it is a normal, if relatively close bilateral relationship, or that a pro-Israel lobby is dominant. The high level of US support for Israel in 2006 and the stated self-interest of the Bush administration in the war reinforce this conceptualisation. Watchdog State theory identifies that Israel’s founding and current existence is predicated on a relationship with foreign imperialism. In its current form Israel is the most privileged ally of the United States, being provided with unprecedented economic and military support, as well as vital protection from international condemnation. In its turn Israel provides a stable ally and an immediate threat to any forms of opposition to US dominance in the Middle East. If this does not work, however, Israel has the potential to act as “America’s military base” in the region.\footnote{Brzezinski, "Hegemonic Quicksand," 8.}

This thesis has sought to show that Israel fulfils the role of US watchdog in the Middle East through both voluntary and structural motivations. It is voluntary in the sense that Israeli leaders wish to foster this relationship, while as the weaker partner,
they are at times obliged to bow to US interests. The structural side of this relationship is that Israel and the United States interests converge because of the shared hostility they have towards rival centres of power in the Middle East. The result of these two factors is that Israel has some independence, but this is dependent on the condition of US power. This was clearly illustrated in Israel’s disagreement with the United States over the March 14 Alliance. When the Israeli leadership was warned by the United States not to undermine these allies, it only reduced its attacks on symbolic targets, rather than ceasing them. Nonetheless, when the United States wanted the war to end Israel acquiesced.

The importance of the structural side of the relationship is that it can explain Israel’s ability to serve US interests while not being directly under US control. The United States did not need to encourage Israel to fight Hizbullah, because Israel’s founding as a colonial-settler state predisposed it to be the enemy of the surrounding populations. Therefore, just as US imperialism in the Middle East causes hostility and a need to confront all oppositional forces, all of Israel’s leaders have chosen the same fate.594

For Israel two other important conclusions have been made. The first is that it was not seeking a pretext to initiate a war against Hizbullah in 2006, and the second is that it lost the war. This loss has been the primary concern for the majority of English language publications on the war, with Israeli generals, the Winograd commission, and some of Israel’s staunchest foreign supporters concurring that Israel lost.595 Of the long-, medium-, and short-term interests identified in this thesis, Israel realised very few, while its opponent achieved accomplishments that built its

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594 This refers not only to the first leaders of Israel, but to its latter leaders who continue to choose expansionism over security, safe in the knowledge of US support. This is an argument articulated most prominently by Noam Chomsky. Noam Chomsky and Alan Dershowitz, "Israel and Palestine after Disengagement: Noam Chomsky Debates with Alan Dershowitz," Chomsky.info (29 November 2005), http://www.chomsky.info/debates/20051129.htm.

595 For Israel’s supporters see Charles Krauthammer, "Israel's Lost Moment," The Washington Post, 4 August 2006, Inbar, "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War." Amos Harel, "IDF General Urges Army Chief to Quit His Post over 'Failure' of War," Haaretz, 4 October 2006. For the Winograd Commission see Martin van Creveld, "Israel’s War with Hezbollah Was Not a Failure," Jewish Daily Forward, 1 February 2008.
support base domestically and regionally. Israel failed to seriously cripple Hizbullah, despite some damage inflicted on the party’s professional military ranks and advanced missile capabilities. Israel’s leaders paid for this failure, with Peretz losing the position of defence minister and leader of the Labour Party in 2007 and Olmert facing mass opposition and only tenuously completing his term as prime minister. Israel did manage to restore some of its deterrence capability in the war, but only in the sense that it could act like a ‘rabid dog’ unleashing havoc on Lebanon, rather than actually defeating Hizbullah.

Implications and Future Research

The structurally conflicting interests that brought Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States to war in 2006 remain present and active. In Lebanon, the Party of God gained much political momentum from the war, and after the May 2008 clashes achieved veto power over the government. Thus Hizbullah has secured its position as the single most powerful organization in the country, commanding an army that defies the Lebanese state, a political alliance that has just taken control of the Lebanese cabinet, and a monopoly over the largest confessional group in the country. Such power is an aggravation to Israel and the United States, but it is not a power that is completely secure. Since the war the deployment of peacekeepers and the Lebanese army south of the Litani River has forced Hizbullah to hide its visible armed presence in the area and abandon the battle for the Sheba Farms. This does not

596 This was true for Hizbullah in the immediate aftermath of the war, but the events of May 2008 and Hizbullah’s uncertain response to the current Middle Eastern uprisings threaten these past gains.
597 Zisser, “Nasrallah’s Defeat in the 2006 War: Assessing Hezbollah’s Influence.” In terms of Hizbullah’s rocket capabilities, it is widely believed that the party has replenished its stocks.
598 See chap. 2, n. 249.
mean that the party has given up this struggle, and it has already rebuilt its bunker and rocket positions north, and probably also south of the river. 599

For Israel and the United States, the defeat of 2006 highlighted the limits of their current power, as well as the danger this poses to the rest of the Middle East. Israel’s military inefficacy came down to poor leadership and an armed force that had lost its edge after years spent policing occupied Palestine. By extension this represents a degradation of US power in the region, given its reliance on Israel’s ability to militarily threaten non-compliant force in the Middle East. As Bush stated in his memoir after the war, “Israeli’s shaky military performance cost them international credibility.” 600 For the United States, the 2006 war was yet another illustration of its own hegemonic and military limitations. Unable to secure the occupation of Iraq, the Bush administration hoped to at least challenge the rise of Iran. For this goal, however, the administration faced serious opposition at home and abroad, making its pursuit of control over the global oil spigot even less realistic. This not only exposed the United States to challenges from rival world powers, but emboldened centres of opposition to its power in the Middle East.

The popular revolts sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 only heightened the volatility of these unresolved issues. In 2011 Hizbullah’s alliance took control of the Lebanese cabinet, but this state of affairs remains precarious. The cause of this insecurity is the Syrian uprising, which has left Lebanese politicians holding their breath, and exposed the insincerity of Hizbullah’s vocal support for the regional uprisings. Hassan Nasrallah, the party’s secretary general, called “on all Syrians to preserve their country as well as the ruling regime,” while at the same time refugees were arriving in Lebanon with traumatic stories of the government crackdown. 601 This hypocrisy is undermining the party’s domestic and regional credibility. Such support for foreign regimes is a necessity for all sectarian parties in

600 Bush, Decision Points, 387.
601 Natacha Yazbeck, "Hezbollah Urges Syrians to Back Assad Regime," AFP (25 May 2011), http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jFv4_d9yBq5WmgGkDd0_VttkWPTg?docId=CNG.6d368e1b8c6c3ad77e8681f96fb6d5ee.301.
Lebanon, as they seek elite-level power within the current system. The alternative is a non-sectarian, working-class led movement that can rest economic and political power from Lebanon’s dominant classes, and build security for itself by joining other such movements throughout the region. For the middle-class Party of God, this mass democratic approach is not something they can support.

While control of the Lebanese cabinet marks a major achievement in Hizbullah’s history, it also means that the party cannot avoid responsibility for government (in)action. The party will be expected to deal with the economic and political concerns of Lebanon’s Shi’a, alongside its own need to maintain popular support and legitimise its army. If Hizbullah is unable to address these concerns then as in 2000 with the Sheba Farms, and 2006 with the War in Lebanon, it may see a new military conflict with Israel as its only option. However, this time it will not just be Hizbullah and Lebanese Shi’a facing Israeli retaliation, but the whole of Lebanese society will find itself in the firing line. The situation in Syria makes this the current period even tenser. If things across the border deteriorate further, Hizbullah may not only find itself losing credibility, but may even face the loss of allies, both in Beirut and Damascus.

The departure of the Bush administration has softened US foreign policy in the Middle East, but attention still rests squarely on Iran, and by extension Hizbullah. One only needs to read post-war publications from US universities, policy think tanks, and military colleges to see that the war in 2006 remains fresh in policy makers’ minds. The revolts in the Middle East and North Africa have been met by a duplicitous US response: striking Libya, while remaining silent over Saudi and Bahraini repression. The United States certainly wants to constrain these uprisings and direct them towards its own interests, but the experiences of 2006, and 2003, have cast a shadow of doubt over its ability to do so.

Israel’s leaders have been placed in an uncomfortable situation by the events of 2011, as while they are happy to see rival regimes challenged, they also fear what

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602 A search in Google Scholar reveals over 5,000 hits for the search term ‘israel hezbollah war 2006,’ and over 2,500 when the term ‘lesson’ is added.
may replace them. This is no truer than in Syria where loathing for the Assad regime is countered by apprehension over Syria’s Muslim Brotherhood. Domestically, Israel has seen the rise of the political right since the war, whose government now focuses on squeezing the legitimate government in Gaza and expanding its settler-colonisation of the West Bank. Nonetheless, its eyes remain fixed on Iran and Hizbullah, frequently hurling threats against both parties. The embarrassment of a defeat at the hands of Hizbullah is not something that the Israeli state can leave unresolved for long, both for its own regional power and its credibility as a watchdog state.

In this work I have attempted to honestly acknowledge the limitations of the research and approach taken. Clearly, there are a number of areas where future research is necessary. The first is empirical analysis of the class basis of Hizbullah in English. Such work could form part of a broader historical materialist account of Islamism in the Twenty-First century, following on from the important research carried out after the 1979 Iranian revolution. A starting point would be full translations of existing foreign-language works, particularly in Arabic and French. Future research is needed into the class backgrounds of Hizbullah’s founders and current cadre, as well as a clearer understanding of its external funding, particularly from Lebanese Shi’a in the Gulf States and Africa. To achieve this there will be obvious difficulties arising from the secretiveness of the party. Research into the changing class and economic situation of Lebanese Shi’a, may be an area where information is more readily available. An understanding of the recent effects of

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606 Moaddel, Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution. Achcar’s article, Eleven Theses on the Current Resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism, was originally written in 1981.

607 For example Shararah, Dawlat Hizb Allah: Lubnan Mujtamaan Islamiyan.
urbanisation, education, and unequal regional development, would help to update past assumptions about the position of this community in Lebanon.

For the United States more research is required into the policy documents and personal writings, both from the Bush and Barack Obama administrations. As argued, prior to the invasion of Iraq there was bipartisan acknowledgment of the threats to the US position globally. This was shared both by Republican Party neo-conservatives (e.g., Zalamy Khalilzad and Paul Wolfowitz) and realist imperialists (e.g., Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld), as well as Democratic Party aligned figures like Zbigniew Brzezinski. The correlation between the views of such figures is an important area of research for understanding the internal policy dynamics, class cohesion, and priorities of US imperialism. Such bipartisan cohesion undermines the idealist view of a neo-conservative aberration in US foreign policy during the Bush years, and allows the lessons of 2003 and 2006 to continue to be applied.

Of importance in the debate among contemporary Marxist theorists of imperialism is research into the relative influence of the state (what David Harvey terms the territorial logic) and business (the capitalist logic). Alex Callinicos, Harvey, and others reject the simplistic view that the capitalist logic completely dominates modern imperialism. Their work, and this thesis, suggests that further Marxist research is required, focusing on the complexities of class (fractional and subfraction interests within the US capitalist class), state (relative and changing influence of different agencies and branches of government), and other political and ideological influences over US foreign policy and military intervention in the Middle East.

With respect to future research on Israel, there are several potential areas of study. The first is to keep incorporating the expanding documentary record into the analysis of Watchdog State theory, to see if it continues to adequately explain the relationship between Israel and United States. In particular, to see whether the same enthusiasm and acknowledgment of this relationship still exists, both in Israel and the United States. Another area of important research is into US aid to Israel, something that needs to be more clearly quantified, taking into account less direct forms of assistance.
This research is of importance for the future and for the present, as the current wave of revolts in the Middle East and North Africa necessitates an accurate understanding of the forces shaping this region. The instability caused by these revolts is upsetting the precarious balance that has held Hizbullah, Israel, and the United States back from war for almost five years. The current situation is even more worrying as it raises the stakes for these actors, with: Hizbullah losing certainty in its power and its allies (something it thought secure in early 2011); Israel losing the predictability that its old neighbours provided; and the United States losing even more of its control over the region. While the current uprising has the potential to transform the Middle East and the world for the better, it is, nonetheless, occurring in a highly volatile region. Whether these revolts will lead to war, mass revolution, or the status quo, one cannot tell, but knowledge of the existing fault lines places us in a firmer position to predict and react to what may come.
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Appendixes
Appendix A: Hizbullah’s Organisational Structure

Source: Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh. *In the Path of Hizbullah*. 1st ed. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 46. Hamzeh’s composite figure is based on various activities reported by the newspaper *Al-Ahd* between 1988 and 2002, and on interviews.
Appendix B: Notes to Table 3.1


† These are Lebanese Government Statistics. Ibid. Among the casualties 30% of the dead were aged under 13 and 15% of the injured were permanently disabled. Sabine Dolan, “The Humanitarian Challenge in Lebanon,” UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_35274.html.


** “Strength of Israel, Lebanon and Hezbollah.” This is made up of 125,000 in the army, 35,000 in the air force, and 8,000 in the navy. By comparison Lebanese troop strength is: 72,100 including conscripts, including 1,100 in the air force and 1,000 in the navy. However, most are more police officers rather than soldiers. Another comparison is defence budgets. In 2006 Israel’s was $7.69 billion, while Lebanon’s was $0.66 billion.


‡‡ Cordesman and Lefteris Pitarakis, “Israel Captures Guerrillas in Hezbollah Hospital Raid,” USA Today, 1 August 2006.

§§ From Cordesman and Antony Best et al., International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2008). I use the term ‘fighters’ as it is not clear whether Hizbullah’s dead were soldiers or reservists. LCP is the Lebanese Communist Party and the PFLP-GC the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command.


*** The tanks destroyed were all Merkava Mark II, III, or IV: Six by mines and fourteen by anti-tank guided missiles.