

RE-IMAGINING THE LEBANON TRACK:
TOWARD A NEW U.S. POLICY

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A CENTURY FOUNDATION REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Six months after experiencing the worst internal violence since the 1975–1990 Civil War, Lebanon finds itself at the head of a unique opportunity for domestic peace-building—one that, if properly cultivated by the United States, would significantly serve the national interests of both countries.¹ The most compelling roadmap for realizing this promise, however, lies within Lebanon itself, and not, as many in Washington and now increasingly in Beirut argue, in either Damascus or Tehran.² For while it is certainly true that for Lebanon a “grand peace” or a terrible war with one or both of these states would likely overtake any internal peace-building dynamic, the prospect of either scenario coming to fruition remains distant, to say the least.

Rather than again deferring³ efforts toward a peaceful settlement in Lebanon—until the menu of more complex regional issues are hopefully resolved—the United States should move quickly in the coming months to implement a robust, multifaceted approach that breaks with the anemic and oftentimes counterproductive policies of the past three years. Crucially, this does not mean having to choose between the false choice of sacrificing Lebanon’s sovereignty to Syria or the hitherto politically unpalatable option of engaging Hizbullah. Nor would it preclude movement on the various other tracks toward peace in the region, since progress in Lebanon (available at a far lower cost than elsewhere) would actually enhance these efforts by steadily diminishing one critical locus of instability and potential violence.

This Century Foundation Report was completed and released in draft form on December 10, 2008, and therefore does not include analysis of events thereafter. The only substantive modification to the text or notes appears on page 23 with the inclusion of a figure illustrating the various constraints that Hizbullah is forced to operate under.

The more promising and politically feasible U.S. strategy, then, would continue to view Hizbullah's independent weaponry as the primary threat to U.S. interests in the country, but also would seek to broadly undermine the party's rationale (and therefore ability) for holding onto these weapons⁴—in sharp contrast to the Bush administration's practice of bringing direct counter-pressure and sometimes counter-force to bear on Hizbullah itself, as well as on its key "partners"⁵ in Syria and Iran.

As a first concern, such a policy would address those areas where a renewed conflict between Israel and Hizbullah might emerge. After recent declarations by Hizbullah secretary general Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah following the midsummer prisoner exchange, the three "bleeding wounds" (Nasrallah's term) that remain open as likely flashpoints are: (1) disputed and occupied territory in the Shebaa Farms, Kfar Shouba, and Northern Ghajar; (2) Israeli overflights in contravention of international law and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701;⁶ and, finally, (3) the coordinates for Israeli cluster bombs fired in the July 2006 war.

Of course, as Nasrallah and other Hizbullah leaders have stressed for some time, simply removing the bleeding wounds will not be enough either for Hizbullah to willingly give up its arms or for there to be enough internal political pressure to sensibly force the issue. The United States therefore must move in tandem with its efforts to close the bleeding wounds file—efforts that the United States would have to lead, given its close relationship with Israel—to make good finally on its rhetoric supporting the creation of a strong national army. This, however, requires accepting two premises that U.S. officials have publicly and privately rejected since the withdrawal of Syrian troops in April 2005 following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri: first, that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) be bolstered, but not in order to forcefully disarm Hizbullah; and, second, that the LAF credibly arrays itself in a defensive posture against Israel.

Once the building of a strong Lebanese army—shorn of bleeding wounds that might “reasonably”⁷ initiate conflict—is in process, the United States also would have to move vigorously on two longer-term fronts that, in general, it has poorly understood since the first U.S. Marines landed in Beirut almost exactly fifty years ago: first, addressing the strategic threats repeatedly outlined by Hizbullah and shared by many Lebanese vis-à-vis Israel (threats centering on water, potential cross-border violence initiated by non-state actors, and the oft-employed bogeyman of future population transfers from Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip); and, second, serving as a catalyst for precisely the kind of structural political reform now being signaled as either an inescapable eventuality or a preferable “grand bargain” by an array of Lebanese parties themselves. Here, however, the United States finally would have to break with its unstated policy of silence and connivance at times regarding the main destabilizing factor facing the country, domestically, in the years ahead: the confessional system that tends toward instability, injustice, and, ultimately, perpetual violence.⁸ Since the Lebanese have identified these problems as the de facto result of the confessional system, and have consequently laid out a general roadmap (via the Taif Accord and the Constitution) for changing the system, such a break with past U.S. policy would *not* mean projecting a U.S. vision of democracy on the Lebanese, nor would it bring an exclusive focus on Shia pluralism and enfranchisement—although the latter will be crucial by-products. Instead, it would mean that the United States would begin to support organic processes that are in the long-term interests of a stable, sovereign, and democratic country,⁹ rather than almost exclusively supporting certain parties and figures who have generally performed poorly.¹⁰

Such an approach by the United States certainly will not be easy to execute, given the transitional period that lies ahead for the incoming administration of Barack Obama, as well as the inherent difficulty in breaking with the path-dependency of not only the past eight years but also the past half-century of Lebanon policy. Most important, though, it will also mean having

to convince the Israelis that the risks implied by a new policy are on balance in their interest as well—that, at the most obvious level, giving up disputed territory and ending overflights will not mean a “win” for Hizbullah, but rather will signal the beginning of a significant downgrading of the threat from the North. Even though, at times over the past three years—and with varying levels of enthusiasm—the United States has apparently brought just such a case to the Israelis,¹¹ Washington, by its own admission, has failed to cobble together a compelling vision for exactly how the risks entailed by ending the bleeding wounds and adequately arming the LAF might realistically lead to a resolution of Hizbullah’s independent weaponry, instead of merely propping up the current government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.¹²

Without such a vision, Israeli resistance to such steps can be considered as eminently reasonable, helping, unfortunately, to further perpetuate the status quo¹³ where the United States and its allies grow progressively weaker, Hizbullah grows ever stronger, and renewed violence, either with an increasingly aggravated Israeli government¹⁴ or internally, is merely deferred to another day.

U.S. POLICY SINCE 2005: SWIFT VICTORY, STEADY COLLAPSE

When al-Hariri was tragically murdered on February 14, 2005, the United States was dealt an unprecedented opportunity to alter the Lebanese landscape dramatically in its favor. After deftly marshaling international forces, together with indigenous Lebanese movements, to pressure for Syria’s withdrawal after what amounted to a thirty-year occupation, U.S. policy soon came to be characterized by an almost exclusive focus on constantly ratcheting up direct counter-pressure and counter-force¹⁵ on the main focus of its interest in Lebanon—Hizbullah and, by relation, the strength of Syrian influence in

Lebanon and the region. Unfortunately, the result has been that at critical points over the past three years—up to and including the most overt signifier of policy failure, the May clashes—Washington and its allies have seen Hezbollah’s power and influence deepen while Syria has effectively broken its isolation and indirectly reaped the gains of a far less hostile, post-Doha power-structure in Lebanon.¹⁶ As a consequence, it has become increasingly difficult even for ardent supporters of the pro-American March 14 Alliance and U.S. officials to make the argument that U.S. interests in Lebanon have been well served by the current approach.¹⁷

Moreover, while the United States and some of its allies in Lebanon publicly tout a handful of “wins”—resisting a complete collapse of their “governing” majority (though now that majority stands at the mercy of the opposition’s veto), the still-delayed¹⁸ implementation of the United Nations-mandated special tribunal to prosecute those suspected of assassinating al-Hariri, and the exit of pro-Syrian president Emile Lahoud and the election of a president not directly associated (though certainly friendly and sympathetic) toward the Hezbollah-led opposition—it remains, at the very least, an open question as to whether even these few accomplishments could have been secured through far less costly means. Indeed, as a retrospective reading of the July War in 2006 and the May 2008 violence strongly suggests, a less-bellicose, more-nuanced U.S. approach would likely have improved Washington’s standing on a range of issues (not to mention the standing of our allies in Beirut and Tel Aviv) without the severe moral and strategic blows that were sustained during and after hostilities.

In the case of the July War, an event that essentially reversed the growing political vulnerability of Hezbollah while stymieing the March 14 Alliance’s advance,¹⁹ we now know that U.S. policymakers from the start alternatively encouraged and pressed Israel for an even more vigorous assault against Hezbollah in the hope of destroying it.²⁰ After the war, though, when the costs of combined Israeli-U.S.-March 14 Alliance “gains” could be tallied (LAF

deployment in South Lebanon, a higher risk calculus for future Hizbullah operations, and increasing hostility toward the party by non-Shiite communities), the Israeli government itself, in the form of the Winograd Report, strongly suggested that a more successful approach would have deviated significantly from the one that was advocated by U.S. officials:

The decision to respond with an immediate, intensive military strike was not based on a detailed, comprehensive and authorized military plan, based on careful study of the complex characteristics of the Lebanon arena. A meticulous examination of these characteristics would have revealed the following: the ability to achieve military gains having significant political-international weight was limited; an Israeli military strike would inevitably lead to missiles fired at the Israeli civilian north; there was not other effective military response to such missile attacks than an extensive and prolonged ground operation to capture the areas from which the missiles were fired—which would have a high “cost” and which did not enjoy broad support. These difficulties were not explicitly raised with the political leaders before the decision to strike was taken.

Consequently, in making the decision to go to war, the government did not consider the whole range of options, including that of continuing the policy of “containment,” or combining political and diplomatic moves with military strikes below the “escalation level,”²¹ or military preparations without immediate military action—so as to maintain for Israel the full range of responses to the abduction. This failure reflects weakness in strategic thinking, which derives the response to the event from a more comprehensive and encompassing picture.²²

Similarly, although the United States strongly and publicly supported the two cabinet directives pushed through by the March 14 Alliance, which led directly to the May clashes,²³ an even marginally less confrontational approach—focusing on just airport security as an issue of national sovereignty and collective security, rather than adding the obvious redline of going after

one of Hezbollah's most critical weapons (its telecom network)—would likely have prevented the violence that followed, which embarrassed and weakened the March 14 Alliance.²⁴ In both cases, however, U.S. officials apparently saw through their “consistent” policy of escalation²⁵ to the bitter end, even though they had earlier acknowledged that their domestic position was steadily worsening.²⁶ By the time Hezbollah and the opposition had asserted themselves through force of arms in Beirut, the last façade had fallen: Washington was exposed as unwilling or unable to back its hard-line approach and help its besieged March 14 Alliance allies with its own dose of counter-force (the Israelis being unable or unwilling to intervene as well).

The Doha Accords that followed the May clashes may have been grudgingly welcomed by U.S. officials—and even stretched, in Machiavellian fashion, into a kind of long-term loss for Hezbollah²⁷—but the facts on the ground continue to suggest otherwise, even beyond the obvious concessions that the March 14 Alliance was forced to make over cabinet veto power and a new electoral law. The relatively quick and clean use of force clearly demonstrated to supporters and opponents alike the party's strength and agility in breaking the agonizing months of increasingly violent, sectarian deadlock. This, of course, has had the added benefit of freeing up resources from a draining internal struggle that narrowly focused on containing (or occasionally stoking) the street conflict.²⁸ Although Sunni-Shia relations were clearly hurt, raising the spectre of a Sunni-extremist backlash in parts of the country such as Tripoli and the Bekaa, for the opposition, the permanent state of conflict, most notably in Beirut, was essentially sublimated with a result welcomed by a broad cross-section of the Lebanese body politic.²⁹

As a result, as the International Crisis Group (ICG) points out, Hezbollah emerged from the brief conflict—having broken its core pledge not to use its arms internally—emboldened by what party leaders saw as the cauterization of the March 14 Alliance's two primary sources of power: “government control and foreign support,”³⁰ with the country's sectarian divide standing as the

“only truly effective” leverage for the March 14 Alliance (the latter’s rhetoric on taking the “nonviolent” high road being regarded as a non-factor due, first, to the sub-par fighting in which March 14 Alliance partisans did evidently engage and, second, to the clumsy provocation that the two government decisions represented). Moreover, in the cabinet statement that followed Doha, Hizbullah was able to successfully secure language to its liking, especially in Paragraph 24, which recognizes not only “the right of Lebanon’s people, army and resistance to liberate the Israeli-occupied Shebaa Farms, Kfar Shouba Hills and the Lebanese section of Ghajar village,” but also for those same three actors “to defend the country using all legal and *possible* means.” [emphasis added] For Hizbullah, the national defense issue was clearly enshrined, in law, in its favor this time around:³¹ after all, with little in the way of meaningful U.S. or international support for the Lebanese army, the country faced the problem of creating an adequate defense in perpetuity, one that only the resistance could credibly purport to solve in the minds of key Lebanese allies and constituencies.

Finally, the May clashes and their aftermath failed to significantly dent the political alliances and support that Hizbullah and the opposition as a whole have maintained through more than two years of massive domestic upheaval. On its face, Hizbullah’s use of arms domestically should have greatly diminished support for both Hizbullah and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), precipitating some kind of a break between the two recent allies that U.S. policymakers had long expected and hoped for. Likewise, it should have created consternation and wedges within the Shiite community itself. Instead, given the way in which the May events were handled, and buffered as they were by three years of U.S. policy that suppressed almost any divisions within the Shiite community, neither of the hoped-for results came to fruition. Indeed, it now appears as though it is the March 14 Alliance that is fraying³²—a development feeding into what appears to be a growing consensus among key Western election observers and diplomats in Beirut that the March 14 Alliance faces

serious trouble in the upcoming elections in 2009; and that, although the vote will undoubtedly be close, the opposition has a more than even chance of winning the majority.³³

Thus, as it stands—three years after securing an (at times) excessively friendly majority—Washington faces the serious possibility of losing its main lever for promoting its interests in Lebanon. If this comes to pass, however, blame should not be laid solely at the feet of an inflexible and aggressive approach apparently pursued and encouraged by U.S. officials. For this policy has also been consistently underlined, and perhaps fatally undermined, by a derivative unwillingness (sometimes plain ambivalence) on the part of the United States to meaningfully assist Siniora in his stated effort to build a strong state able to exercise a monopoly over the means of violence.

WASHINGTON AND THE LAF: RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY

“Is it reasonable to wait for permission from the United States or Israel to arm and equip our national army in a manner that enables it to carry out its main national duties? . . . It is legitimate and even legal for our state to buy weapons for its army even from the black market, just as the resistance does. If we wait for Condoleezza Rice’s permission, we will only get Rio trucks and poor armoured vehicles. We will never get what enables our army to confront the Israeli aggression.”

—Nasrallah, September 26, 2008³⁴

When Syrian troops were forced to leave Lebanon in April 2005, Washington faced a number of hurdles in reconstituting what had once been a solid relationship with the LAF. First and foremost, the national army had been deeply scarred by decades of Syrian dominance over training and advancement; also, the Lebanese government had, for its part, largely neglected the official military institution as a budgetary priority and, partially as a result, equipment remained

largely dependent on the (even at the time) outdated hardware that the United States had delivered to the LAF in the early 1990s.³⁵ These hurdles, as well as others related to absorption capacity, end-use concerns, and the speed and flexibility of U.S. delivery mechanisms, were all eminently surmountable³⁶—that is, if Washington truly had the kind of unambiguous commitment to the LAF that it repeatedly highlighted in public statements.

Unfortunately, as Hizbullah and various opposition leaders have been quick to point out (with a degree of traction that apparently unnerves U.S. officials),³⁷ the reality of U.S. support for the LAF has been woefully inadequate for either of the two related tasks that Washington considers as its highest priorities in the country: contributing to the state-building process and enforcing U.N. Security Council resolutions.³⁸ In light of this, Washington’s escalating rhetoric concerning its “strong” and supposedly “unfettered” commitment to adequately arming the LAF has been particularly counterproductive,³⁹ with exaggerated statements by some officials only throwing into relief what has become a routine assumption, even among reliably pro-U.S. media, of a joint U.S.-Israeli “veto” on sophisticated arms transfers.

At the most basic level, that of funding support, although U.S. officials claim to have committed \$410 million to the LAF since the fiscal year that began in 2005 (that is, fiscal years 2006–2008)—supposedly representing the second largest per capita U.S. military assistance effort in the world—a closer examination reveals that Lebanon actually stands behind nearby Jordan on a per capita basis.⁴⁰ Moreover, if one considers the fiscal year 2007 supplemental request for the LAF as a unique event (\$220 million) related to the Nahr al-Barid battle, normal funding levels appear set to hover around \$60 million per year (based on the fiscal year 2008 appropriation and the fiscal year 2009 request)—that is, well below the ongoing military aid to Jordan on a per capita basis.⁴¹

But it is the all too evident state of the LAF’s fighting ability, and particularly its dangerously outdated and largely ineffective equipment, that stands

as the most obvious indicator of a joint U.S.–March 14 Alliance failure to live up to their own lofty rhetoric. As Jean Kahwagi, the new LAF commander in chief, told one newspaper in his first such interview in September 2008:

It is time for everyone to look at our conditions. That is the military of the past three years. You find them along the entire border in the open, indoors, in the alleys and on the roads, in the plains and the mountains, active night and day. Who asks about them? Who asks about their living conditions, their weapons and ammunition, their means of transport, their medical treatment and their compensation?⁴²

Linking the most basic needs of the army—including adequate numbers of troops and the ability to deliver food, mobile shelters, and spare parts—to the issue of advanced equipment, Commander Kahwagi continued:

The army includes ground, naval, and air brigades and they are all lacking in capabilities. The ground brigades need modern tanks and vehicles, and more important than that they lack anti-armour missiles, both short-range and long-range (on the basis of the experience of the Lebanese resistance especially in the July 2006 war). It is necessary to develop the missile system and the artillery, and especially the portable individual type. That lies at the heart of the defence strategy. . . . The navy brigades need launches, boats, radar, missiles, and torpedoes.⁴³

Kahwagi's comments, of course, merely underscored public statements made in 2007 by the current president and former army chief, Michel Suleiman, who strongly suggested at the height of the Nahr al-Barid battle that U.S. support had been largely illusory. "We need a lot of weapons and ammunition, conventional and modern," he said, "but we have received only a lot of promises and some ammunition, but no equipment. As if they are telling us: Die first and back-up would arrive later. That is why we are looking for sources to acquire weapons." Ahmed Fatfat, one of Washington's most ardent backers within the March 14 Alliance, responded curtly that, "The U.S.

provided money and equipment . . . maybe the army wants more but whatever they requested, they got,” adding that, in his view as minister of youth and sports, he did not “think sophisticated weaponry will be of use in such a battle which really involves street fighting.” (Ironically, Fatfat went on in the same interview to say that, “Politicians shouldn’t talk about military matters and military men shouldn’t talk about political issues.”)⁴⁴

Fatfat’s rejoinder in 2007 was more than just an exercise in self-contradictory posturing. His core charge that the army had gotten what it “requested” parroted the official U.S. position on arms transfers to Lebanon. As the deputy chief of mission (DCM) in Beirut, William Grant, put it in an interview in pro-U.S. *An-Nahar* daily in August 2008, “There is nothing until now that the Lebanese Army requested and the Americans failed to provide. The army realizes that it can ask for whatever it wants and we did not offer it a limited list to choose from . . . there are no U.S. restrictions on what the army requests.” Later, in the same interview, Grant went a step further, explaining that, “We always hear complaints from the Lebanese people that the United States helps the Lebanese Army but it does not provide it with necessary weapons and equipment. *This is totally not true.*” [emphasis added]⁴⁵

Grant’s reasoning requires some effort to unpack as literal truth, but it is possible. Despite the repeated public and private statements by LAF commanders to both Lebanese, European, and American audiences over the years⁴⁶ concerning their immediate, multifaceted need for advanced equipment, it is the Lebanese ministry of defense under the auspices of the Siniora government that makes the official “requests” to Washington. Since the ministry does not “request” the said items, Grant is literally correct in saying that they were never formally “requested”—although the specific needs on the ground had been made clear by LAF commanders.

The deeper problem of forthrightness emerges as a result of Grant’s second assertion, that the United States “did not offer it [the LAF, presumably] a limited list to choose from.” Why, if the army says it needs certain advanced

items, does the ministry not formally request them, especially given that the United States, as Grant strongly suggests, would like to give the LAF whatever its commanders deem necessary (funding permitting, of course).

The primary reason for the ministry's apparent self-restraint, according to several retired LAF generals involved in preparing equipment requests for the ministry, as well as several European defense attachés and officials also involved in the process, is that the United States has long made clear to government officials what is on the table and what is off. (U.S. officials themselves euphemistically call this "what provokes the fears of the U.S.,"⁴⁷ without apparently realizing the contradiction.) It is therefore up to the ministry⁴⁸ and Siniora not to embarrass themselves (and the United States) by formally requesting items that the United States is likely to reject.⁴⁹

That this practice remains is due to the catch-22 from which *both* the United States and its European allies find themselves unable or unwilling to extricate themselves, despite their pronouncements to the contrary. As one top Western European defense attaché in Beirut explained:

We would like an LAF strong enough to attack Hizbullah but not strong enough to attack Israel. The problem is that with Hizbullah, if you want to attack it, you practically need the same level of weaponry as if you were going to attack Israel! . . . In reality most, or all, Western countries do not want a military system that is modern and competent here; they want a security system that is much different, able to maintain order in Lebanon. . . . Of course, when we think of "order" we think of grabbing all of the armaments from Hizbullah and the other militias—hence the immobility on the issue.⁵⁰

Past and present U.S. officials themselves occasionally acknowledge this policy predicament as matter-of-factly as the European defense attaché (without attribution of course)—as do a range of other actors directly knowledgeable of U.S. policy on the issue.⁵¹ But what *is* stated publicly and on the record by U.S. officials is almost equally as compelling. Although they uniformly

reject the insinuation that Israel wields a veto over U.S. decisions—a reasonable claim, since U.S. and Israeli interests are so closely intertwined in any case—and while they generally eschew talk of avoiding a disruption of Israel’s Qualitative Military Edge (QME), several officials have been clear in their understanding of what the LAF’s primary mission should be: disarming Hizbullah.⁵² Although more often couched in the language of enforcing UN Security Council resolutions, the import is practically the same since this means disarming Hizbullah as a first concern for the United States.

Even though Washington has gradually grown more comfortable with the LAF, especially after the 2006 July War and then again after Nahr al-Barid in 2007,⁵³ meaningful support has not been forthcoming, primarily because the LAF is to this day demonstrably unwilling and unable to meet the bar that *might* prompt Washington to overcome its related concern for Israel’s QME. This sticking point was underscored for U.S. and European policymakers only a few months ago during the May clashes, when the army, hoping to avoid a split in its ranks, ended up playing a vital—though ostensibly neutral—supporting role for Hizbullah’s successful clear-and-transfer (to the army) strategy.

As such, the LAF remains effectively stuck in neutral—which means the joint U.S.–March 14 Alliance commitment to state-building continues to be undermined at critical moments. The Nahr al-Barid conflict was, of course, only one particularly glaring example, easily exploited by Hizbullah and its allies. As Commander Kahwagi explained to *As-Safir* one year later, “the army was compelled to hire giant bulldozers from civilian and commercial establishments to open up some roads or to dismantle mines,” because the LAF did not have such capability. The LAF’s helicopters, he continued, did not have bases or rockets, “thus prompting the engineering corps and the air force to devise the ‘giant bombs’ that were detonated over the gunmen’s positions in a manner reminiscent of some of the scenes of World War I.”⁵⁴

Kahwagi’s examples, also cited by Suleiman in his August 2007 statements, would continue to serve as an emblem for the hobbled international effort

to arm the LAF at its moment of dire need. According to a Western European defense attaché and a retired LAF general directly involved and knowledgeable of the issue (respectively), although the United Arab Emirates (UAE) delivered a small number of Gazelle helicopters before and during the conflict, the LAF was greatly disappointed to find them without the HOT anti-tank weapons system that would have provided the kind of pinpoint accuracy and lethality needed in the tightly populated camp environment. Although the UAE had such Gazelles available for its own use, it exercised a “self-veto” because of its understanding that either the French (who build the HOT system with the Germans) and/or the United States would step in and prevent the transfer.⁵⁵

An even more vivid example of Washington’s political vulnerability on the issue of weapons transfers would come one year later, when Nasrallah suggested in a September 2008 speech that, because of “Israeli and U.S.” intransigence, the Siniora government should simply go on to the international arms market and procure the equipment the LAF said it needed.⁵⁶ While failing to specify where the required funds for such an endeavor would be found, Nasrallah had chosen his moment well, just as a controversy had arisen over the non-transfer of U.S. Cobra attack helicopters to the LAF.

The issue was raised earlier, in late August, when U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for Asia and the near east, David Hale, swooped into Lebanon and ratcheted up expectations that Cobra helicopters were in the offing for the LAF—equipment that DCM Grant had earlier said, in more general terms, the LAF “asked” for, and which would have represented the most sophisticated U.S. transfer of weapons to date. According to the pro-March 14 Alliance Web site *Now Lebanon*, which touted Hale’s statements in a story headlined “Hale Conveys U.S. Offer of Cobra Helicopters,” the ambassador “submitted a list of U.S.-made helicopters, at the top of which came the AH-1 COBRA fighter helicopter, to the Lebanese Ministry of Defence.”⁵⁷

With expectations rising that President Michel Suleiman’s first visit to the White House on September 25, 2008, would bring a concrete announcement

on a delivery schedule, news reports in the pro-opposition *Al-Akhbar* and from the pro-March 14 Alliance LBC-TV revealed,⁵⁸ only a week before the visit, that Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman was in Israel on a mission to discuss the helicopter issue—the Israelis being opposed in principle to such transfers, according to their own spokesperson.

Suleiman’s meeting came and went, however, and nothing was announced on the issue of the Cobras. Ambassador Hale was quickly reduced to saying that Washington would provide the Lebanese army with “stronger and more effective” equipment.⁵⁹

Undoubtedly aware of the Lebanese press headlines stirring on the issue, U.S. officials began to make themselves available, without attribution, in order to walk back the expectations that they themselves had earlier raised. According to one report in *An-Nahar*, a Pentagon official promptly threw the issue onto the Siniora government by using the “what-constitutes-a-request” argument:

the U.S. administration has not yet received an official *or* detailed request from the Lebanese defence ministry for any specific kind of weapons [emphasis added]. . . . He said the delay was from Lebanon since the U.S. Defense Department had been waiting for a visit by Defense Minister Elias Murr this September “to go into the details of the needs of the Lebanese army. But this visit did not take place for Lebanese, and not American, considerations.”⁶⁰

Unsatisfied with merely ignoring previous public statements by U.S. officials suggesting that the Cobras had indeed been “asked” for and that the United States had reviewed the Cobra purchase specifically with Lebanese officials in late August, the unnamed Pentagon official went further and suggested that the whole idea of Cobras might not be a sound one after all: “The official wondered . . . whether exhausting the amounts for the assistance of the Lebanese army on a limited number of combat helicopters ‘would make the Lebanese army capable of confronting the challenges facing it.’”⁶¹

But the final expectations' drop kick was provided elsewhere in the form of the sympathetic and knowledgeable U.S. congressman Nick Rahall—who is of Lebanese descent. Squelching hopes that the United States might reverse course and commit itself not only to the limited sale of Cobras, but also perhaps to a wider array of advanced equipment, Congressman Rahall told the opposition-leaning *As-Safir* after a meeting with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, “there will be no heavy American military assistance to the Lebanese army.” He added that the meeting between Suleiman and Gates “discussed the type of equipment needed by the army and they aren’t heavy weapons but necessary equipment that allows the army to fulfill its task such as night [vision] goggles and helicopters. All the armies in the world possess such equipment.”⁶²

With U.S. policy on LAF arms transfers evidently laid bare (just as the limits of its confrontational approach had been unmasked earlier in May), it is not surprising that Hizbullah leaders have been able to repeatedly benefit from the catch-22 that reliably constrains U.S. and European policy vis-à-vis the LAF. Indeed, so confident are they in the durability of the logjam that Nasrallah’s political adviser, Hussein Khalil, recently dared the Americans to provide the LAF with modern antiaircraft guns as a bare minimum (reports having just circulated that Hizbullah possessed advanced surface-to-air missiles).⁶³

In all the apparent gloating, however, one can discern a thinly masked and evidently deep-seated concern among Hizbullah officials on the issue: for what would happen if the LAF was, in fact, credibly armed and arrayed defensively against Israel? And what would happen if the bleeding wounds were removed?

HIZBULLAH AND ITS LIMITS

In explaining Hizbullah’s rising political and military prowess, Shaykh Naim Qassem, in his 2005 book *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, explained that while the party was dedicated to (potentially violent) resistance on the basis

of its religious, ideological, and national commitments, the Resistance (Hizbullah) could have achieved its current standing only through “public support for such resistance.”⁶⁴ Qassem was therefore reiterating essentially the same point that Nasrallah had made shortly after the fall of Saddam Hussein:

We should all learn a lesson—so should the regimes in power in the Arab and Islamic countries. The lesson to be learned is that the army and security services can protect any oppressive regime, but that the army and security services of any oppressive regime will not be able to protect it if confronted by a stronger military force. What can really protect a regime are its own people and its own citizens, if they are well treated by it; if it oppresses them, none of its rallying speeches will do it any good. This is the lesson we need to learn from what is now taking place in Iraq. A country ruled by a tyrannical and oppressive regime has no future if confronted by an invading force stronger than the one it relies on for its protection.⁶⁵

Nasrallah’s “lesson” was indeed one for Hizbullah to heed as the threat of another American intervention, quite possibly directed against Syria (at the time), seemed to grow.⁶⁶ Hizbullah could wield the balance of power on the ground in Lebanon—as it increasingly has—but if its execution alienated public support, if it became oppressive, then the project of resistance would be mortally endangered. Compulsion, as Nasrallah and Qassem both make clear, is ultimately a doomed effort, especially in Lebanon. Qassem explains:

Where military power is only and exclusively employed to combat the enemy, aiming at liberating the land irrespective of geography, and when Lebanon is chained to a set of balances which would render thinking of defeating the “other” futile or a source of unity for belligerent foes, and where the military supremacy of one sect over others leads to internal strife in which all are losers, then would a serious resistance mission

gain natural legitimacy. *Any other form of military mission would be quickly exposed and lose its objectives.* [emphasis added]⁶⁷

Qassem's point is especially prescient to consider in light of the May 2008 violence. Hizbullah would "never" use its arms internally, party leaders had long promised to their supporters and to the Lebanese in general. But, because of the actions of the government, Hizbullah was "forced" to use its weapons just as it would against an Israeli invasion. In this, Hizbullah calculated (correctly)⁶⁸ that the government's actions were so obviously a direct assault on the resistance, and public support for the government had been so calcified by years of March 14 Alliance failures and miscalculations, that the risk of violent action was worth some inevitable erosion of its support—indeed, it might even be beneficial if executed in a swift and contained manner.⁶⁹

Here, of course, it is significant that Hizbullah *had* to make such calculations since, first, it had long acknowledged the "set of balances" in Lebanon that "chained" its actions—whether it liked this or not—and, second, it recognized the long-term futility of relying on force and compulsion. The practical outcome was a set of extraordinarily frank statements following the Doha Agreement that moved Hizbullah closer to the Shiite center represented by AMAL (*Afwaj al-Muqâwmat al-Lubnaniyya*, or Lebanese Resistance Detachments) and Sayyid Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah. As Qassem put it in late May:

We agree to a defense strategy that makes our national army capable of protecting Lebanon and of preventing Israel from attacking it. At that point, a solution to the weapons situation will be part of this defense strategy. Therefore, we are ready for solutions. However, for us to be weak and for our army to be incapable alone of defending Lebanon and then for someone to tell the resistance, which staged a fight and achieved liberation, that it should abandon weapons just to make us weak and then for Israel to come and impose what it wants on Lebanon—how can any mind accept this? We need to confront the Israeli danger. If the Lebanese state

tackles it in a certain way, we are ready to be part of this solution. However, if it does not, we cannot abandon our resistance and our weapons so that the state may become weak and we may become weak and then for Israel to control us and do whatever it wants.⁷⁰

Evidently concerned by the possible fallout of its violent intervention, other Hizbullah officials, including Nasrallah and Southern Commander Nabil Qaouk, quickly followed Qassem in reiterating the point that the party acknowledged the (political) necessity of finding a “solution”—sooner rather than later—to Hizbullah’s independent weaponry. “Let us burst this boil!” Nasrallah exclaimed in early July, in the clearest terms he has yet offered:

We are ready to draw up a defence strategy for Lebanon, have the prisoners released, and liberate the Shebaa Farms and the Kfar Shuba Hills in order to close the liberation file. As Lebanese, we will discuss the other file called the defence of Lebanon. The Israelis commit violations, level threats, and harbour ambitions in water. . . . This means that Lebanon remains under threat. . . . If we have another means to defend our country, if we no longer need the resistance and its weapons, and if it is better for us to send young men back to their schools, homes, and families, then we will have no problem. We have never said that our resistance is eternal or that we will keep our weapons forever. . . . Some people say that we will not accept any proposal. . . . The southern villagers have paid a high price over the past 30 years and since the establishment of the [Israeli] entity in 1948. Let us try to persuade the southerners of some defence strategy—and this is a new proposal—so that they can return to their homes. . . . We do not consider ourselves an alternative to the state or any other body. . . . Let others defend and protect the country. We have no problem with that at all.” [emphasis added]⁷¹

One may consider Nasrallah’s offer to send his fighters home as insincere. And indeed, it may well be. But whether Nasrallah wants to continue violent resistance in perpetuity or not, his logic demonstrates that Hizbullah’s deep desires—liberating Jerusalem, perhaps, or turning Lebanon into an Islamic state—are dialectically related to what the party can do under the prevailing con-

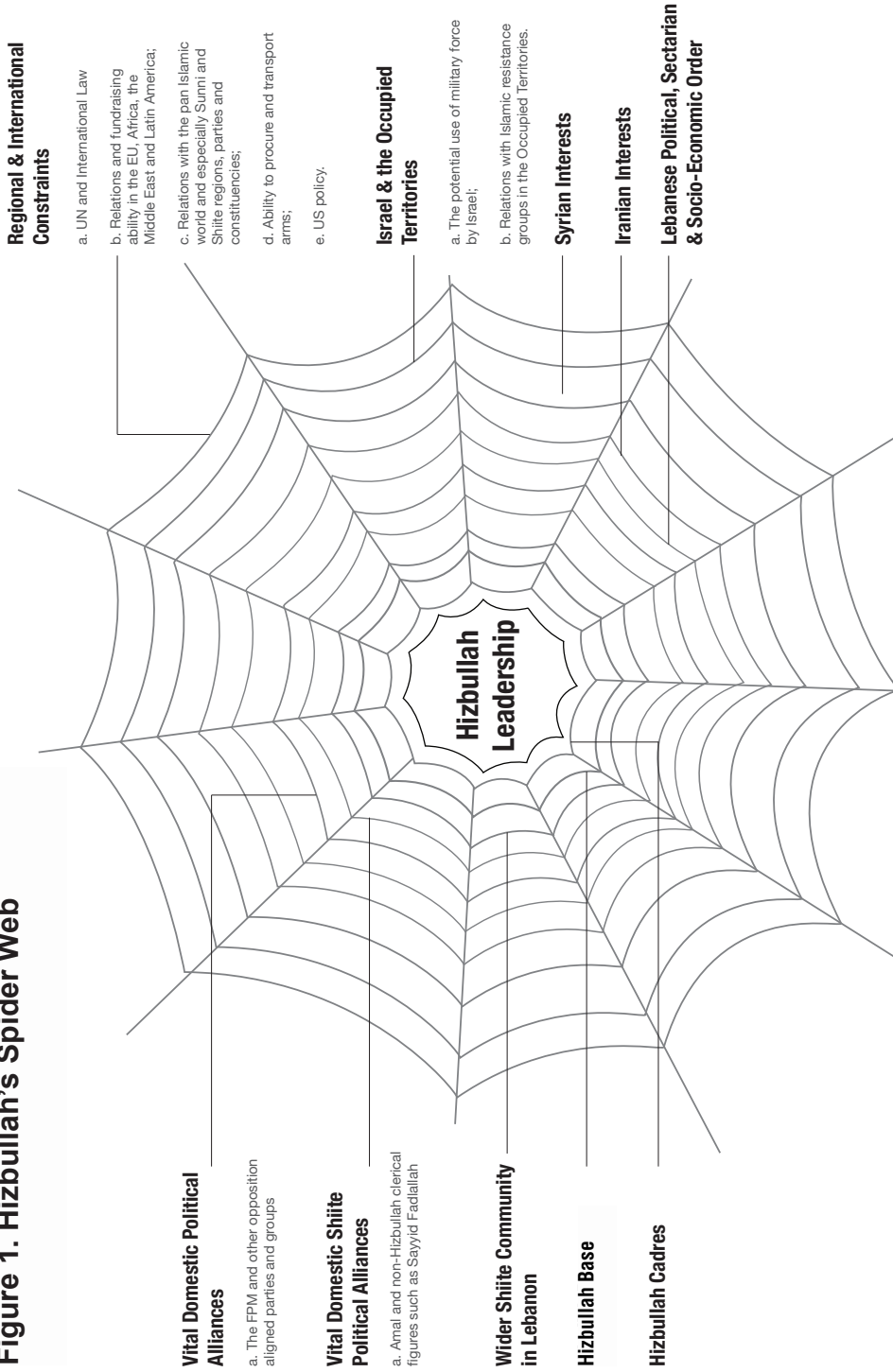
ditions of Lebanon, first, as well as those that lie beyond the country's border.⁷² It is, in short, Hizbullah's own "Spider Web," illustrated in Figure 1 (page 24) as a series of concentric circles limiting, exacerbating, and sometimes undermining the party's multifarious aspirations and interests. Israel may be "weaker than a spider's web," according to Nasrallah, but Hizbullah finds itself caught within one. Although the regional and international dimensions are certainly powerful (especially during open conflict), as one senior opposition official put it to ICG in mid-May 2008, "the problem is not to take power, but what to do with it. In a multi-confessional system such as Lebanon's, if we were to seize power by force, we would have every other community against us."⁷³

That, Hizbullah has made clear through its discourse *and* through its actions on the ground over the years, would eventually make any resistance project impossible, especially one led by the Resistance. Accordingly, Hizbullah has followed a fairly steady course in carefully calibrating resistance and broad public support for the resistance since at least the end of the civil war. As Joseph Alagha argues, Hizbullah has been forced to shift its stance on a wide range of its earlier, supposedly immutable values:

1. From anathematizing the Lebanese state and regarding the regime as an infidel, to upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, which bears a striking resemblance to the [right-wing, Christian] Lebanese Forces' slogan of the 10,425-square-kilometer Lebanon.
2. From censuring the Taif Agreement to safeguarding it.
3. From calling for the establishment of an Islamic state to working within the narrow confines of the Lebanese sectarian-confessional political and administrative system, etc.⁷⁴

Notably, all three of these shifts were accompanied by a lessening of Hizbullah's use of violence such that by the time Israel withdrew in May 2000, the party had abandoned spectacular operations executed beyond Lebanon's borders (the last such operation may have been the 1996 bombing of the Khobar

Figure 1. Hizbullah's Spider Web



Towers in Saudi Arabia, although Hizbullah denies involvement and top U.S. officials dispute the party's purported role), while key leaders seemed resigned to settling into a relatively predictable "cold war" with Israel.

After the sudden withdrawal of Syrian forces in 2005, Hizbullah went even further along this course in an attempt to protect the resistance through broader political alliances. Notable in this regard: Hizbullah joined the Quadripartite Alliance⁷⁵ with its former foes and rivals for the 2005 elections; for the first time, it joined the cabinet directly, and therefore assumed executive responsibility (at which point it repeatedly made clear the party would pursue limited border operations in order to return prisoners);⁷⁶ it began to strongly deemphasize the issue of "just" representation (one person, one vote), preferring instead to find refuge in confessional checks and balances⁷⁷; and even as party officials were labeling the March 14 Alliance as traitors in the political upheaval that followed the breakdown of the alliance, those same officials openly acknowledged the need for ruling *with* the March 14 Alliance. On this issue, Hizbullah cabinet minister Mohammad Fniesh explained: "the truth is, we can't rule without all political forces in the country [being represented]. If we had a choice, we would never choose to be in a government with them. We are doing this for national unity." As ICG pointed out, his words echoed Nasrallah's frank acknowledgment after the July War: "had we not been concerned about this homeland, had we not been aware of the religious and sectarian sensitivities, I would have stood on August 14, not to speak about a national unity government but to speak about traitors who should stand trial in Lebanon."⁷⁸ Even after Hizbullah's weapons had been used "victoriously" then, and despite great anger toward the government within the Shiite community in particular, Nasrallah was nevertheless forced to admit that there was little choice but to accept the limitations that would come along with a national unity government—even one where the majority was supported by Hizbullah's bitterest foe, the United States.

The fact that Nasrallah was able to issue such bluster at all reflected, in large part, the poor choices that Israel, the United States, and the March 14

Alliance made during and after the July War—choices that had the effect of shoring up Hizbullah’s case to its own constituency and to its allies, when both could have been gravely undermined.⁷⁹ And it also demonstrated the smart investment Hizbullah had earlier made in negotiating those alliances, especially with AMAL and the FPM.

But here, Hizbullah, by its own logic, has also exposed itself to great risk should its rhetoric be called to account. For even as these two parties and their respective constituencies continue to provide the vital public support Hizbullah needs to maneuver as an independent resistance force, both have also produced noticeably different discourses when it comes to the core issue of the LAF and national defense.⁸⁰

As a first matter, although Shiite sentiment has certainly solidified behind Hizbullah, even pro-opposition polling suggests there is a strong preference among Lebanese Shiites for the LAF to protect the country. When asked, for example: “Disregarding your feelings about Hezbollah’s internal strategy, do you consider Hezbollah’s weapons as a guarantee to protect Lebanon *until the Lebanese Army is ready?*— 97% of Shia and only 50% of the other sects agree.”⁸¹ As the pollster in this case, Abdo Saad, explains, “There is a great confidence in the army among all the sects that, if it could, it would defend the whole country. . . . If you had a strong army able to defend the nation then the Lebanese and the majority of the Shia will choose this option. If the army could play the same role as the Resistance then they will welcome it.”⁸²

Not unexpectedly, pro-March 14 Alliance polling confirms the trend, albeit with heavy Christian support (79 percent) for a government-only “defense option” (the question of whether force should be used to this end is noticeably omitted) and a majority Shiite preference (71 percent) for a mixed option now (here, though, the critical idea of who has fundamental control over decision-making is left undefined).⁸³ Either because of political calculation, or out of core conviction, AMAL leaders—together with the FPM—accordingly have asserted that they agree with approaching the issue of Hizbullah’s arms

through a two-pronged strategy: removing the bleeding wounds and arming the LAF so that Shiites, Hizbullah, and indeed all Lebanese can then invest their trust in it. While Hizbullah and its supporters rightfully may be accused of dissimulating on the issue given their ideological commitments, the preference for AMAL, the FPM, and their constituencies is to pursue this path, and to pursue it now—an element of urgency that Nasrallah has only recently begun to co-opt.

“Take Shebaa off the table, implement 1701 and support the LAF,” explains Parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri, a top adviser to AMAL leadership. “The U.S. has to assist in putting this kind of buffer zone with Israel in place first . . . then you can eliminate the obsession factors that drive Hizbullah.”⁸⁴ Underscoring the point, a few weeks prior, Berri himself had broached the subject of integration in unusually specific terms, following the mistaken shooting-down of an LAF helicopter by Hizbullah: “As for the function of the Resistance and its mechanism and its position in the defensive strategy,” he explained during a commemoration of AMAL cofounder Imam Musa al-Sadr, “there should be a committee between the army and the resistance to follow up on field issues and coordinate steps, in order to preserve sovereignty and liberate the land and rights, whether by diplomacy or resistance.” Pointing to inadequate U.S. assistance to the LAF, Berri added that, “The question should not be why is it that the Islamic Republic of Iran or this or that country are helping Lebanon with liberation. . . . The question should rather be: Why was not the Lebanese state and army provided with the capacities and power to liberate?”⁸⁵

TOWARD A NEW U.S. APPROACH

“It is not logical for these weapons to remain forever. There is bound to be an end to them. The natural key is to tackle the causes and the results will disappear. Come and

build a strong and just state, protecting the country and the citizens and their livelihoods, waters, and dignity, and you will find that the resolution of the resistance issue will not need even a negotiation table.”

—Nasrallah, “Divine Victory” Speech, September 2006⁸⁶

The United States now faces essentially four policy options to address the dominant issue of Hizbullah’s arms—excluding, of course, the still unlikely pathways of a broad peace or a broad war with either Syria or Iran. Perhaps the least attractive domestic option involves the use of direct counterforce in Lebanon. As the Israeli experience in the July War demonstrated,⁸⁷ such a move, executed by either the Americans and/or the Israelis, would undoubtedly entail large sacrifices in men and materiel, given the necessity of committing sizable ground forces across Lebanon, and would likely mire either actor in a long and dangerously unstable theatre of conflict, which could lead to a costly region-wide conflagration. Moreover, yet another, perhaps even more brutal war would only further damage already diminished U.S. prestige in the Arab and Muslim world, as well as far beyond—quite apart from whether or not the United States was “successful.”

A second option for policymakers essentially would be to stay the course of the past three years, slowly and marginally equipping and training the LAF (especially for special operations/anti-terrorism operations), bringing occasional counter-pressure to bear on Hizbullah and its allies and hoping all along that the Israelis might lend a hand to the March 14 Alliance by moving on one or all of the bleeding wounds. As the narrative above suggests, however, such a strategy has not been successful to date, and now bears the added disincentive of operating in an environment where the political clock is ticking down to a possible transfer of power in 2009.

While there has been some discussion of a third alternative possibly favored by the Israelis—the return of Syrian domination—the political impossibility of sanctioning this, from the perspective of Washington, is perhaps

matched only by the impossibility of the fourth option of “engaging” Hizbullah. Both options stand as seemingly impregnable redlines for a range of policy-makers at all levels of the bureaucracy and elected leadership, as evidenced by strong public statements in this regard. Moreover, an immediate strategy of engagement, in the absence of concrete U.S.-led measures preparing the political field, would face a long road that—given the visceral opposition in the United States—would be immensely difficult for the bureaucracy and the elected leadership to see through.

The more attractive course of action, however, would take a different tack than all of the above. Recognizing the political, ideological, and institutional limitations Hizbullah faces in Lebanon, U.S. policymakers should instead seek to undermine the rationale upon which Hizbullah’s independent weaponry is based—steadily constraining the party’s ability to exercise violence by wedging it from both its vital political alliances as well as from its soft supporters across the confessional spectrum.

REMOVING THE BLEEDING WOUNDS

“These fools do not learn from their past mistakes. . . . When they withdrew from Lebanon, they continued to occupy the Shebaa Farms and kept our brothers in custody. Had they released them when they left Lebanon, there would not now be a ‘prisoner issue’ between Lebanon and the enemy. They opened the door for us.”

—Nasrallah, January 2004⁸⁸

Prisoners. Two months after the July 2008 prisoner swap, Nasrallah “officially” closed the file on living Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails. In doing so, he effectively removed one of the four bleeding wounds from the ledger of Israeli offenses considered actionable by Hizbullah. This is not to say, however, that the whole file is closed for Hizbullah. As Sayyid Nasrallah explained in a speech during Eid al-Adha in late September, the party considers the issue of “martyrs” bodies and people missing in Israel still open. Crucially, though,

while explaining the inherent difficulty of resolving the issue (one mirrored on the Israeli side by missing lieutenant colonel Ron Arad), Sayyid Nasrallah asserted that the remaining file could and should be transferred to the Lebanese government—as an official state “responsibility.” Indicating that, at this point, the state could play an effective role—in contrast to its apparent inability over the years to secure the release of living prisoners—Nasrallah explained, “I am not dumping things on the Lebanese government . . . we hope that the government will take this burden off of our backs and assume responsibility for it.”⁸⁹

His warning that Hizbullah would reengage in the matter in an unspecified manner should be taken seriously by the Lebanese government and the United States. Both should therefore take visible, concrete action on the issue—with the Lebanese government forming an official investigatory body, ideally linked to the issue of missing Lebanese in Syrian jails, that would regularly publish findings and report on ameliorative steps taken. The United States, for its part, should propose using the pre-existing structure of the UNIFIL-led Tripartite Committee (TC) grouping the LAF, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) as a mechanism for permanent, scientific exchanges of information between the two opposing sides. In doing so, the United States and the Lebanese government would enhance transparency on the issue, affirm their commitment to the missing in all countries as an integrated matter, and further bolster the promising conflict-mitigation mechanism embodied in the TC.

Disputed and Occupied Territory. With a deal reportedly imminent for an Israeli pull-out from occupied Northern Ghajar, and with ever-stronger U.S. statements on the need for an Israeli pull-out from Shebaa Farms,⁹⁰ momentum finally appears to have shifted at the Israeli, U.S., and international levels for an end to the “liberation file.” Indeed, after an extensive mapping effort, the United Nations may be prepared to declare Shebaa as Lebanese—thus reversing the earlier U.N. decision in 2000, which declared the territory as Syrian

and therefore not subject to UNSCR 425 covering the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.⁹¹ The matter of Kfar Shouba Hills, which lie directly adjacent to Shebaa Farms, may also be resolved geographically as a part of that U.N. mapping effort.⁹²

In order to address the key Israeli concern of water in Shebaa,⁹³ the United States should work to move the technical withdrawal and transfer matters to the TC, but with the added functionality of having the committee serve as a further conflict mitigation mechanism for any water disputes (see “Mitigating Long-Term Threats to Lebanon,” below).

The paramount Israeli concern, though, rests on the idea that handing over any territory to Hizbullah would be regarded as a Hizbullah victory. As a result, although Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert actually declared his willingness to withdraw fully from Shebaa in June 2006,⁹⁴ the official Israeli position has long been that such a withdrawal can be accomplished only after a border delineation of Shebaa by Syria (this has also been the U.S.-stated preference, since the Siniora government’s seven-point plan suggested temporary U.N. trusteeship over the area in July 2006). Although Syria remains, not surprisingly, wholly unwilling to ease the issue forward by doing what the Israelis and the United States want, the latter two parties nevertheless should pursue a unilateral withdrawal from the three disputed/occupied areas by handing the territory directly, via the TC, to the government of Lebanon. Such a move would carry three immediate benefits: first, ending the liberation file would no longer merely be a Hizbullah victory (although Hizbullah will of course claim it as such), since it would now be yoked to a larger strategy of effectively sublimating Hizbullah’s arms through political means; second, the territory would be handed over to the state of Lebanon as a result of the government’s international alliances;⁹⁵ and, finally, the issue of border demarcation for official U.N. recognition would be thrown into the Syrian court. Israel, the United States, and the Siniora government thus would have effectively removed the issue from their collective ledger—as Nasrallah has long suggested they do.⁹⁶

Overflights. Since the closing of the “living prisoner” file, the issue of Israeli overflights has moved front and center as the likeliest candidate for sparking renewed hostilities, perhaps even ahead of disputed/occupied territory, given UNIFIL’s presence there. With media reports on both sides of the border suggesting that Hizbullah may attempt to strike an Israeli aircraft while over Lebanese airspace, closure on the issue is of immediate priority. As such, the United States should move on two fronts simultaneously to address Israeli and Lebanese concerns. First, the United States should acknowledge unambiguously that Israeli overflights contravene international law and UNSCR 1701, but that cross-border smuggling of arms in violation of the same resolution is a legitimate concern for all parties. Recognizing that overflights are also a tool for bringing political pressure to bear on this subject,⁹⁷ as opposed to merely being a (somewhat unsuccessful) intelligence-gathering exercise,⁹⁸ the United States should take the lead in crafting a bargain: a tiered cessation of Israeli overflights, beginning immediately (and unilaterally) with human flights and eventually covering drone flights as well, in exchange for implementation of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team (LIBAT)⁹⁹ recommendations on Lebanon-Syria border security.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, Syria recently has called for enhanced border security between the two countries, given its apparent concerns over extremist infiltration and smuggling.¹⁰¹ This presents an opportunity for mitigating one party’s longstanding opposition (or at least inaction) on the issue. But the core issue, of course, is tied to internal domestic support for Hizbullah’s armed status. As such, the tiered cessation of all Israeli overflights should be accomplished over time as the LAF is built up and as Hizbullah’s independent armed status is progressively sublimated within the state/LAF structure. Although drone flights might be eliminated completely at an earlier date as a result of enhanced U.S. and Israeli satellite reconnaissance cooperation,¹⁰² the United States also should explore concurrently the possibility of using UNSCR 1701 to substitute U.N.-mandated overflights for the purposes of investigating cross-border

smuggling (the core stated Israeli concern) as well as violations south of the Litani River.

Land Mine/Cluster Bomb Maps. The final bleeding wound that remains open should be the easiest to resolve. Sadly, it has not been, with the result being that, on average, one Lebanese is killed every month.¹⁰³ As part of UNSCR 1701, in September 2006 Israel reportedly “handed over to United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) maps of the areas mined by the IDF north and south of the Litani River before its withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 [belying its own statements over the years that the matter had been closed]. UNIFIL in turn passed them on to the Lebanese Army. Israel clarified that the maps included all landmines put on Lebanese soil by the IDF since 1982.” While the decades-long issue of Israeli-planted mines left over in Lebanon apparently has now been closed, the problem has turned to Israel’s continuing refusal to provide adequate details for cluster bombs fired during the July War. According to the United Nations, two years on from the conflict: “there [has been] no progress in terms of receiving from Israel precise technical strike data on the number, type and location of munitions fired during the 2006 conflict. In the absence of such technical strike data from Israel, the level of contamination remained uncertain. . . . This issue has been raised in the tripartite forum and bilaterally on a number of occasions by the UNIFIL Force Commander.” As a result, the “biggest obstacle” to clearing Lebanon of cluster munitions remains, according to UN de-mining staff.¹⁰⁴

The primary reason for Israel’s continued intransigence on the issue apparently stems from an overriding concern that the absence of strike data will confirm suspicions that Israel haphazardly fired munitions in haste into southern Lebanon in the closing hours of the July War in the hope of exhausting old stocks that would then be replaced by newer stocks potentially subsidized by the United States.¹⁰⁵ Despite this concern, both the United States and Israel would benefit from closing the issue, all the more so since both countries already have received

substantial negative publicity over the issue, publicity that will continue so long as innocent Lebanese civilians are killed with such regularity.

ENHANCING THE LAF

At the center of the ongoing national dialogue among Lebanese parties is the issue of creating a strong, credible national defense plan, that is, one that is trusted and bought into by all parties. Although suggestions have already been made by leading opposition and pro-government figures for eventually integrating or beginning the integration process of Hizbullah's arms, the discussions likely will go no further than that if there is not also a clear and credible process for enhancing the capabilities of the only state-sanctioned body that could conceivably head such an integration. This means, in short, that the LAF must be supported by friendly states to boost troop numbers, training/support, and procurement of weapons systems.

For the United States to back such a multifaceted effort strongly would mean, as a first step, restoring Washington's credibility on the issue by frankly and publicly acknowledging that it has not, as officials and some commentators routinely suggest, "fully backed the LAF."¹⁰⁶ Second, the United States would have to give up on its stated aim of building the LAF to disarm Hizbullah forcefully. Indeed, although splits within the LAF are routinely cited as a major impediment to risking meaningful support, the core impetus for a possible split currently rests on the way in which Israel, the United States, and some of their allies want to use the LAF; that is, by pitting a majority Shiite army against the single most popular Shiite party in the country. By accepting an LAF arrayed credibly, but defensively against Israel (as its current mission statement calls for), the potential of force cleavage would be greatly mitigated.¹⁰⁷

Of course, a critical third step would be necessary: reversing the traditional paradigm whereby a peace treaty with Israel *precedes* substantial military support for its immediate neighbors (the respective governments

then making the argument to elites and popular bases as to indigenous defense capabilities). The Lebanon track would have to be treated as an exceptional case in this regard, given the benefits of the overall U.S. approach as well as the unique characteristics of Lebanon's position vis-à-vis Israel. As in the case of both Jordan and Egypt—which currently hold peace treaties with Israel—historical, state-led involvement in hostilities against Israel, underlined by large territorial issues and wide popular agreement on the use of violence, all strongly militated against a priori U.S. military support. None of these conditions obtains in the case of Lebanon. Moreover, as suggested above, Lebanon's specific form of confessional democracy—and Hizbullah's difficulty in exercising both internal and external violence through it, *whether in a minority or a majority (coalition) position*—means the likelihood of the state using the LAF offensively against Israel would be effectively low, all the more so given the removal of the bleeding wounds.

If one accepts this—that Lebanon should be treated as an exceptional case in calibrating Israel's QME—the question then becomes how to enhance the LAF. Here, Lebanese commanders and politicians on all sides have long made the case that advanced capabilities—especially air defense, airborne capabilities, intelligence gathering, and tank defense—are actually both a tactical and a political need.¹⁰⁸ Although several of these systems would be immensely useful even if one considers *only* anti-terrorism and internal security operations as the LAF's core mission,¹⁰⁹ advanced capabilities on these fronts would be particularly important in signaling the desire, willingness, and the ability of the LAF to provide meaningful defense in case of hostilities with Israel. Should Hizbullah's significant armament come under the command and control apparatus of the LAF, and therefore the democratically elected government, even an LAF well below parity with the IDF would, with Hizbullah's contribution, provide a strong deterrent in the minds of the Lebanese *and* as a fact on the ground, given the evidently elevated cost-benefit calculation that helped prevent a massive Israeli ground invasion during the July War.

In order to meet this key objective, the United States actually should *not* play its historical role as virtually the only player on military assistance in Lebanon. A wiser strategy would be to encourage President Suleiman to call an international support conference—similar to the Paris conferences that have focused on debt relief—grouping states friendly with Lebanon and the United States. Key among these states should be the UAE, Qatar, and France, who already have contributed to the LAF’s capabilities and/or have contributed to political reconciliation.¹¹⁰ In this case, the primary U.S. role would be to encourage wide participation and signal that it would not attempt to block agreed upon arms transfers or troop increases.

Washington’s added role should be to prepare the ground for any conference by announcing a timetable for specific advanced capabilities paid for via the approximately \$350 million appropriated by Congress (as of September 2008) through the Foreign Military Financing and Department of Defense Section 1206 programs.¹¹¹ Although much of what LAF commanders have said they want for defense likely would not disrupt Israel’s QME substantially—even in the case of a limited number of main battle tanks, given the IDF’s overwhelming superiority—air defense capability would, of course, significantly change that calculus. Without the gradual introduction of a credible air defense system to protect population centers, any effort to position the LAF at the head of a national defense plan would be far more difficult to consummate, despite the fact that Hizbullah itself has demonstrated an extremely limited capacity for air defense. Given the likelihood of strong domestic opposition, the United States therefore should focus on meeting some of the LAF’s immediate weapons system needs, but remain neutral on *other* pro-U.S. states supplying air defense capabilities.¹¹² U.S. officials should work concurrently to ensure that, while the Lebanese are provided with a concrete horizon for integrated air defense, perhaps focusing only in the last period on fixed-wing aircraft posing an offensive threat to Israel, the gradual implementation of such a capability would be conditioned on overall movement toward the supremacy of the LAF and the democratically elected government.

Of course, even if this conditionality takes some time to meet, by making a strong, public commitment on other advanced capabilities—especially for frontline troops engaged in critical anti-terrorism tasks—the United States would be able to provide immediate relief to the Siniora government ahead of the 2009 elections and would ensure that the LAF begins to receive substantial deliveries within the next six months to two years.

Finally, the United States also should encourage contributing countries and the Siniora government to tie any comprehensive aid package to reform measures affecting the state-LAF interaction as well as the quality of the LAF itself, including the further sectarian diversification and modernization of the officer corps (where Shiites have been historically underrepresented); the building up of Special Forces capabilities, the implementation of continuous budgeting, transparency, and accountability in the donation/transfer process; and, crucially, a strong Lebanese government commitment to enforcing all previous UNSCRs. This final point would, of course, be the most sensitive to implement. As such, U.S. policymakers, the Siniora government, and contributing states would have to calculate carefully whether the convening of such a conference *necessarily* should be preceded by a clear Hizbullah statement laying out a tiered transfer of coordination, command authority, and then full integration (as, for example, the delivery of air defense). Given the political capital accumulated through the removal of the bleeding wounds and the stated international commitment to building up the strength of the LAF, such a move, while probably not a necessary precondition for overall success, could serve as a timely instrument for publicly testing Hizbullah's commitment to its stated rhetoric, gauging the party's political vulnerability on the issues at hand, and allaying the likely security concerns of Israel.

MITIGATING LONG-TERM THREATS TO LEBANON

Whether or not Hizbullah moves expeditiously to accept the supremacy of the LAF, the United States can and should work to lessen the long-term

threats to Lebanon identified by Nasrallah and generally shared across the opposition (and beyond). This means, however, that U.S. policymakers finally would acknowledge the rational basis of Lebanese arguments about the multitude of dangers perceived to be emanating from Israel—even if such concerns are sometimes pushed to irrational extremes.

In this, Hizbullah has long made clear that there are three main threats reinforced, it says, by the extensive history of Israeli interventions in Lebanon as well as by Israel's tendency to ignore international law (two points that the party argues were only bolstered by Israel's disproportionate and ill-considered reaction to the July 12 capturing operation).

Water. As Nasrallah consistently reminds his audiences, Lebanon is a water-rich country compared to Israel (which has a poor track record of fair water use, especially in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip).¹¹³ Some 25 percent of the River Jordan's headwaters—Israel's main freshwater source—stem from southern Lebanon's Wazzani and Hasbani rivers alone. In 2002, Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon went so far as to declare, unambiguously, that a small pipe installed on the Wazzani for Lebanese use had become a *casus belli* for Israel.¹¹⁴ Coming from Sharon, who led Israel's bloody invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the remark was a vivid reminder to all Lebanese of just how vulnerable Lebanon remained, even after the occupation, when it came to its apparently bellicose southern neighbor.¹¹⁵ Nasrallah said recently,

I think you have heard the news about the Ozone [layer] . . . a tragedy will befall the whole world. A large percentage of plants and animals will vanish. There will be a water problem, and we have water, and their argument is very strong . . . that our water goes to the sea [that is, essentially is wasted]. Will we have a state that can protect Lebanon's waters at the coming stage at a time when it cannot protect the Al-Wazzani spring? This is a big question.¹¹⁶

Non-state Actors. Who will deter Israel, Hizbullah asks, if al-Qaeda or some other non-Lebanese or religious fanatics fire rockets or conduct operations across Lebanon's border with Israel? Since 2005, there have indeed been several rockets launched at Israel that were not tied to Hizbullah, but which could provide a *casus belli* for Israel against Lebanon, if Israel so desires. Underscoring the point, Nasrallah points to Shlomo Argov. Although Americans and Europeans may not remember him, many Lebanese undoubtedly do. In June 1982, the assassination attempt on the Israeli ambassador to London provided Prime Minister Menachem Begin with his *casus belli* to occupy Lebanon all the way to Beirut—even though the attack was perpetrated by a bitter rival of Yasser Arafat and the PLO (then ensconced in Lebanon), and despite the fact that the PLO had gone to great pains to keep the border region quiet for several months. As Nasrallah argues further:

Even if Hizbullah did nothing, even if the Palestinians in Lebanon didn't attack Israel, and even if the borders remained quiet, who can guarantee that, after failing to achieve an acceptable settlement with Syria, the Israelis wouldn't get one of their agents to blow up a bomb in northern Israel as a pretext to attack Lebanon once more?¹¹⁷

Mass Transfer. Nasrallah pushes widespread fear of the estimated 250,000–400,000 Palestinian refugees still living in misery, for the most part in Lebanon, one step further by raising the specter of another mass movement of persons. Although the discussion of “transfer” in Israel (the proposal to expel Palestinians from Israel and/or the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) may not figure prominently in most of the foreign media, for Nasrallah (an avid reader of the Hebrew press and the history of Zionism), the implications are clear: a Palestinian-Israeli peace deal will prove impossible to reach, and at some point Israel will be forced to confront its demographic and security “time-bomb” by expelling Palestinians. At that point, Lebanon—not Jordan or Egypt with their

peace agreements, or Syria with its strong deterrent capabilities—will be the final stop for the new refugees. Speaking in 2002, Nasrallah wondered:

If we ask what [Arabs] want from Hizbullah at this moment, they would say that Hizbullah should open a front from the sea to Mt. Hermon. The resistance needs to launch an all-out attack, and Hizbullah should employ its missiles and Katyushas in order to smite northern Palestine. . . . The worst-case scenario would be mass transfer. We must preserve all our weapons in the event of such a danger.¹¹⁸

As Israeli analyst Daniel Sobelman has remarked,

according to Nasrallah, the “strategic” weapon in his organization’s possession—thousands of rockets, including long-range missiles—is designated for repelling strategic threats against Lebanon, including the mass deportation of Palestinians to Lebanon, which would present a concrete challenge to Lebanon’s internal stability and national security.¹¹⁹

For many Lebanese, and not just Christians, Nasrallah’s rationale is powerful, especially given comments by top Israeli leaders over the years in support of some kind of a transfer or outright expulsion policy.¹²⁰ Indeed, according to some recent polling—as Hizbullah leaders are quick to point out—roughly 40 percent of Israelis say they want the government to force Arab citizens to leave the country, and close to 60 percent support policies to more benignly “encourage” them to emigrate.¹²¹

To address these three strategic threats, and to move concurrently from a cessation of hostilities to a permanent ceasefire, the United States should, as a first step, help to build strong institutional and international frameworks for conflict mitigation. As suggested above, the most promising mechanism lies with the U.N.-led Tripartite Commission (TC)—the successor to the innovative Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group (ILMG) established in the wake of the April 1996 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. Before the Israeli withdrawal

in May 2000, the ILMG—comprised of representatives from Israel, the United States, Lebanon, Syria, and France—would convene at the Lebanon-Israel border every time there was an incident in order to determine what happened, decide who was responsible, and prescribe steps that should be taken to calm the situation. In reviewing the 103 separate such decisions made public, Israeli analyst Adir Waldman notes, “over the course of its existence the group became increasingly able to determine that a particular action constituted a violation of the April Agreement and to apportion culpability for the incident.”¹²² Although both of the main warring parties often complained (Hizbullah via Lebanon and Syria), and even though Israel pulled out on one occasion, the parties always returned to the table because the ILMG represented an effective mechanism for rationalizing conflict by mediating the “rules of the game.” This rationalization was vital for Hizbullah too—which came to describe the post-withdrawal conflict as a “cold war”—in order to maintain the support of the local population that sometimes had to bear violations initiated by either side. As Brigadier General David Tzur (head of ILMG Israeli delegation) put it in regard to the Israeli view, “Back then [April 1996], the optimists said we would not last eight months. . . . But the MG has done what it was meant to do and proves itself with every new incident which has the potential of causing a deterioration in the area.”¹²³

Unfortunately, after the Israeli pullout, the ILMG was quickly disbanded—leaving no formal mechanism for any kind of a transparent, balanced mediation, despite the continued presence of UNIFIL troops. In the wake of the July War, however, the ILMG was revived in somewhat different form and under different circumstances. Since Israel had almost fully withdrawn from southern Lebanon, the terms of reference were now UNSCR 1701 and not the 1996 April Understanding, and only Israel, Lebanon, and UNIFIL were legally involved in the conflict (the April Understanding having been constituted as a document outside of the United Nation’s purview).¹²⁴ As the U.N. secretary General reported in 2008,

The regular tripartite meetings with senior representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces, chaired by the UNIFIL Force Commander, continued to be an essential confidence-building mechanism between the parties. The two sides demonstrate a strong commitment to that forum, which aims to enhance liaison and coordination and to address key security and military operational issues, including violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and the findings of UNIFIL investigations into incidents.¹²⁵

Given this, the United States should encourage an immediate expansion of the competencies and functionality of the TC, beyond even the issue of missing persons, to more complicated water disputes and border incidents (the latter of which are already under its purview). As a first step in this regard, the United States should encourage the same publication procedures followed by the ILMG for all matters covered. Although both the Lebanese and Israeli sides have expressed their preference to work in secrecy under current conditions, the benefits of the system would be greatly enhanced by agreed upon procedures for expeditiously publicizing the results of TC meetings (for example, a determination that Hizbullah was likely not the source of a specific rocket attack or that Israeli forces had detained a Lebanese shepherd on the Israeli side of the Blue Line). By increasing the transparency of the TC and helping to further mitigate conflict before it solidifies in the public sphere, the body would be knighted as the sole, credible arbiter of disputes along the border—a change that should lessen confidentiality concerns.¹²⁶

On the key issue of water, the United States first should encourage the TC to transfer authority over the existing Wazzani River pumping station, currently on Lebanese territory, from the Israelis to the Lebanese government. Such a move would serve as the foundational step for moving any water disputes that arise (at the pumping station and elsewhere) into the framework of the TC, given that such disputes are likely to undermine UNSCR 1701. Unfortunately, even though an ad hoc arrangement led by the United States in 2002 helped to avoid war over the Wazzani, nothing institutional or permanent came of the effort,

despite the fact that stopgap mediation had narrowly saved the day. The United States should encourage the TC to arbitrate water disputes actively as per the relevant international conventions—the Rio Declaration of 1996 and the U.N. Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 1997—with the United Nations serving as either the tie-breaking vote or as the body charged with forwarding complaints to international arbitration.

In any event, the United States should finally begin to devote substantial USAID-Lebanon resources to the critical issue of water, something that it has not done to date.¹²⁷ In Lebanon, that would mean focusing Washington's considerable financial support (and presumably the TC's close oversight) on the more than thirty damming, conveyance, and irrigation projects envisioned by the Lebanese government's current decennial plan—especially those in southern Lebanon—as a means of mitigating Lebanese concerns about current and future water shortages.¹²⁸

Finally, as far as the specter of population transfer is concerned, the United States should move the issue beyond a potential LAF deterrent and address the issue head on by making it clear that extremist solutions put forward by some elements of the Israeli government and body politic—no matter how unlikely they may be—are not only unacceptable as a matter of principle, but also would entail harsh, targeted sanctions by Washington. Following the 2007 Executive Order targeting alleged enemies of Lebanese democracy (especially the FPM), the United States should consider sanctioning any individual or party that endorses transfer policies as undermining the prospects of a Lebanese consensus and providing fodder to Hizbullah. This would of course mean an end to the all too frequent, high-profile meetings between U.S. representatives and such individuals.¹²⁹

PURSuing POLITICAL REFORM

Although fraught with peril, a strong U.S. commitment to activating the process of structural political reform called for by the Taif Agreement and the

Lebanese Constitution would help in realizing several long-term U.S. interests. First and foremost, it would begin to address what the Lebanese themselves have identified as the root cause of persistent instability in the country: “political confessionalism.” Second, it would essentially call Hizbullah’s “bluff”¹³⁰ by promoting fairer representation for the Shia community in particular¹³¹ as well as the principle of merit, “equitable rights and obligations amongst citizens,”¹³² in general. This would have the added benefit of promoting meaningful pluralism within the Shia community in the long run as well as within and among other sects,¹³³ just as it would promote the legitimacy and hence the “buy-in” of all Lebanese in their own unique form of democracy. Third, the United States would be able to begin investing in long-term processes that are in its interests rather than in parties and figures whose popular support and performance have all too often been fleeting and/or unsatisfactory.¹³⁴

An ideal course of action in this regard would be to use U.S. leverage in activating the roadmap laid out by the Lebanese at the end of the civil war. As the Lebanese constitution envisions,¹³⁵ the first step would be for President Suleiman to convene a mixed political-expert committee that would then recommend a concrete transitional plan¹³⁶—one major goal being the creation of a bicameral legislature with a lower house deconfessionalized and a senate, based on confessional proportionality, holding a strong, blocking minority position on major “national issues.”¹³⁷

Of course, as is often cited, vested interests on all sides of the political divide in Lebanon have various reasons for reproducing some form of the confessional system (evidenced most recently in the ratification of the 1960 electoral law, which largely discards the limited but still reformist recommendations of the Butros Commission).¹³⁸ Ironically, this could help the United States neutralize the short-term political risks since a strong, public push by Washington for reforms called for by Taif and the Lebanese Constitution would also likely unsettle the FPM and Hizbullah on one side, as well as the March 14 Alliance on the other.¹³⁹

Still, a strategy that manages to threaten the interests of both poles clearly would fall short. A grand bargain involving Hizbullah's arms, tied to an overall U.S. vision and leadership on the matter, might provide the political space for just such an opening. As one key adviser to Prime Minister Siniora sees it: "We are ready to discuss everything—a Shiite head of the army and a Shiite prime minister. What is your request? To be confident that the state and the army are your own, so you do not need to have a separate state and a separate army." The adviser is steadfast in his belief, however, that such a discussion could occur only one or two years in the future, that is, away from the shock of the May events. "If we do this right now," he explains, "it will be a part of the attack on Beirut."¹⁴⁰

Here too the issue remains somewhat deferred. The critical point is that instead of the previous discourse, which sees deconfessionalization as a far off project, there appears to be a growing realization that a further re-drawing of the power sharing system will have to be accomplished soon if future instability is to be avoided. The adviser explains further that, "We can make these changes and we will simply have to make these changes so that Shiites are a main party in the state and therefore not a force to threaten the state."¹⁴¹

Interestingly, this is a view reflected in recent interviews with various opposition members as well. According to Hizbullah's Ali Fayyad, "in the next period after the elections, there will be a new Lebanese debate in addition to the question of the resistance . . . there will be a serious, new discussion about the form of the state." Without commenting directly on the bargain that such a discussion might strike, he adds,

In that discussion, the resistance will still be the main issue, but we will have to also face issues like why our system is not stable. I think that we will all discover that the Lebanese political system is not strong enough to absorb the Lebanese complexities. So if we want to go ahead to reform our problems we have to move in the framework of the Taif Accord—it established the mechanism of political reform right there.¹⁴²

When probed on the subject, General Aoun likewise explains that the immediate concern is to stabilize the system “and then we should get out of it. . . . When I focus on the Christians and their concerns,” he adds, in reference to his greatly toned down rhetoric on the subject of secularism in Lebanon, “I want them to feel on par with the others and not frustrated, because in that case they simply withdraw from public life and take up a defensive [posture]. The Christians must first feel some security and then we can take them to a place based on equality.” Already, he notes, “important steps have been taken towards secularism. . . . For the first time you have large, mixed constituencies in two political groups. This means that people are for a choice that goes beyond their specific religion. It means in this second period coming, it will be easier to talk about secularism.”¹⁴³

For Prime Minister Siniora, too, there is a clear need to “move ahead with sincerity” in the effort to end political confessionalism.

All groups know that this will be in the interests of all the confessional groups and, for sure, in the interests of the country as a whole. No one, however, can tell you now that we are in 2008 and in 2010 it will happen. . . . But over the years, after the Taif Agreement, there has been a change, particularly among the Muslims and throughout all the major factions, whereby the commitment to Lebanon as a sovereign, independent state—definitely an Arab state—has been enhanced.¹⁴⁴

This, he stresses, “has given the Christians additional assurances and that is significant because the road to ending political confessionalism cannot be imposed—by anyone.”

EXPANDING U.S. ENGAGEMENT

Although U.S. officials increasingly have been signaling a new enthusiasm for promoting Shiite pluralism, the effort to date has largely floundered. The most visible evidence for this was provided midsummer when U.S.

ambassador Michele Sison traveled to the mainly Shiite Nabatiyeh district in southern Lebanon. After being essentially run out of town, even Sison's host joined townspeople in disavowing her brief presence to local newspapers.¹⁴⁵ In a different but related vein, U.S. officials eagerly point to (and allegedly fund) marginal "free" Shiite figures who have accumulated little in the way of popular support.¹⁴⁶ The practice has gone so far as to prompt some U.S. officials and analysts to cite Ibrahim Shamseddine's appointment as cabinet minister as evidence of a renewed "Shiite strategy" by the March 14 Alliance—or worse, that Shamseddine's credentials somehow validate him as a representative of his sect (and therefore a legitimate defense against any future "Shiite withdrawal" from the government), despite his thin support on the ground.

While it is probably true that Hizbullah's ideological and religious positionings are at one end of Lebanon's Shiite continuum, it does not therefore follow that the primary intra-sectarian split is between "pro-Western, anti-Hezbollah" secularists in the community and Hizbullah. Indeed, even when it comes to the supposedly "secular" AMAL movement, with which the United States has rightly maintained links, the balance is heavily tilted away from the pole that U.S. officials appear desperate to court.¹⁴⁷

De-listing Sayyid Fadlallah. Given this reality on the ground—a reality only strengthened by U.S. policy that has sublimated the historic splits within the community¹⁴⁸—a more successful approach to reengaging Lebanese Shiites would have to focus on the main religious (and to a secondary extent political) authority in the country, Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah. As it currently stands, however, Fadlallah is listed as a terrorist by the U.S. State Department, thus preventing any meaningful dialogue—although he has expressed his openness to meeting U.S. officials without precondition, in contrast to Hizbullah, which views such an engagement as hopeless.¹⁴⁹

In approaching the delicate domestic political issue of de-listing Fadlallah, U.S. officials should first consider that, although Fadlallah is blamed

by Washington for allegedly blessing the 1983 suicide truck bombing of the U.S. Marine Corps complex in Beirut, he consistently has denied his involvement and has publicly condemned what he considers to be terrorist attacks, such as those on September 11.¹⁵⁰ Second, in sharp contrast to his image in the West as the spiritual leader of the party, Fadlallah has, since at least the early 1990s, staked out a religious and ideological position sometimes diametrically opposed to that of Iran's ruling establishment (especially on the core issue, for Hizbullah, of *Wilayet al-Faqih*).¹⁵¹ Amid worsening relations between the party and Fadlallah after the Israeli withdrawal, he even went so far as to accuse clerics in Qom of trying to issue a *fatwa* for his execution in 2001.¹⁵² Third, Fadlallah stands as the primary historical figure behind Hizbullah's rationalization¹⁵³ and, perhaps more important, the most influential voice currently articulating a modernist (and, many Lebanese Shiites feel, progressive) vision of Shiism in Lebanon and far beyond.¹⁵⁴

Key to immediate U.S. interests, Fadlallah, like Nabih Berri, was insistent early on that a clear and reasonable path to resolving the issue of Hizbullah's independent weaponry exists—in subtle contrast to Hizbullah's discourse that had long avoided a sense of urgency or concreteness on the resistance/state relationship. In one important postwar sermon, at a point when Hizbullah was mostly reluctant to broach the issue of national defense and was highly skeptical of UNSCR 1701, Fadlallah explained:

Lebanon's emergence from the aggressive Israeli war is supposed to lead to a solution, not a crisis. The national priorities in such a case are clear; namely, the implementation of Resolution 1701 in order to stop the Israeli air violations; restore the Shebaa Farms; secure the release of the prisoners; end the role of the Lebanese arena that is open to all conflicts; allow for the launch of a programme for financial, economic, and political reform to guarantee the success of Paris 3 Conference; pay attention to reconstruction; activate the economy; and launch a dialogue to find solutions to the remaining points, that is, the crisis of rule, the

defence strategy, and the implementation of what was consensually agreed on.¹⁵⁵

Given his long history of political pragmatism, Fadlallah's statement above should be taken on its face by U.S. policymakers as a fruitful place to begin a public dialogue at once critical of Hizbullah's desire for an independent armed status in perpetuity, but at the same time self-critical in regard to Washington's approach to Lebanon and Lebanon's Shiites.

Rapprochement with the Free Patriotic Movement. One of the most glaring indicators of the failure and shortsightedness of U.S. Lebanon policy after 2005 has been Washington's lack of accommodation and often hostile approach to General Aoun. Despite war, civil unrest, economic upheaval, and an array of pressure tactics by a number of states, the object of U.S. anger and frustration, the February 2006 FPM-Hizbullah Understanding,¹⁵⁶ has survived—just as Aoun, though somewhat diminished, has retained his status as the single most popular Christian leader in the country.¹⁵⁷ These facts, in addition to the vital “Christian cover” that Hizbullah evidently has gained from the understanding, should serve as an indicator to Washington that, at the very least, something went terribly wrong in its approach.¹⁵⁸

Unfortunately, the message has apparently not registered. Aoun and his supporters remain under the threat of possible legal action in the United States and elsewhere,¹⁵⁹ while U.S. officials and representatives persist in the historically inaccurate and unproductive view that Aoun, and his duped constituency, are mere pawns in the larger schemes of Syria and Iran.¹⁶⁰ With some Western election observers expressing great concern—in particular, that the Christian battleground districts could lean toward the FPM—the United States would do well to heed the lesson of the August 2007 by-election¹⁶¹ and move toward a rapprochement with General Aoun and the FPM. This would not mean hedging electoral bets, however. After all, the United States has little wiggle room in supporting its March 14 Alliance allies in

2009.¹⁶² Instead, the United States should use the opening to signal that it is indeed serious about engaging an array of leaders and their constituencies in a process that ends Hezbollah's independent weaponry and creates political stability. Aoun and his constituency will, of course, be vital in this mission, given not only the party's historical commitment to secularism and independence, but also since, as ICG puts it,

it is equally clear that while Hezbollah needs Aoun's support given rising confessional tensions, Aoun would like to prove that his alliance has paid dividends. As a result, the Aounists have the opportunity to use their leverage to persuade the Shiite movement to accept a governmental program that would constrain the use of its weapons to strictly defensive purposes.¹⁶³

Recognizing this as a first step, and in light of the fact that the threat of a "second government" has receded, the White House should revoke its 2007 Executive Order on the subject. U.S. officials should then encourage the FPM to play a leading role in crafting and supporting a specific plan of action for Hezbollah's peaceful integration into the democratic fabric of the country.

THE RISKS AHEAD

Of all the steps suggested, undoubtedly the most difficult for Washington, its allies, and especially the Israelis to implement will be enhancing the capabilities of the LAF—that is, in the absence of a peace treaty and with Hezbollah's full sublimation as the ultimate goal.

The point is that, as it currently stands, only Hezbollah is seeing its military power grow exponentially—and with no end in sight. With the potential flashpoints for conflict ostensibly removed, and with the limiting factors of Lebanese democracy even more firmly in place, a credibly armed

LAF would, at a minimum, entail far less risk for all parties than staying the current path.

More than this, by substituting the rising threat of one increasingly emboldened, non-state actor with a deterrent force legally, morally, and politically accountable to a truly democratic state,¹⁶⁴ the prospects for a de facto peace between Lebanon and Israel would be greatly enhanced, serving as a potentially powerful example in the region.

Some recent analyses have suggested, however, that ongoing U.S. support for the LAF might be downgraded in advance of a possible March 14 Alliance loss in next year's elections. Indeed, should the Hizbullah-led opposition win the majority, all support may very well end.¹⁶⁵

Considering the above, such an outright reversal would be immensely counter-productive.

First, demonstrating a strong, enduring U.S. commitment to the LAF and to ending the bleeding wounds in advance of the elections would lend critical support to the March 14 Alliance at precisely the moment when it faces what may be its last chance to prove the utility of a pro-Western, pro-U.S. stance.

Second, even if the opposition were to win the majority, its edge likely will be razor-thin—thus severely constraining its maneuverability on a range of issues, especially military power—and probably would be accompanied by a national unity government, in which case the March 14 Alliance would have “blocking third” powers at a minimum.¹⁶⁶ More importantly, even in an opposition-led government, the United States still would have valuable allies for accomplishing its overarching goal: peacefully ending Hizbullah's independent arsenal. Indeed, the process of subsuming Hizbullah's arms into the state likely would be even more credible with a government where AMAL and the FPM are lead actors. Maintaining a firm and thoroughgoing U.S. commitment to state-building and conflict mitigation would encourage both actors to pursue the course that they themselves have laid out as being in their interests and in the interests of Lebanon.

Finally, a strong U.S. effort now would help deter any opposition-led government from turning toward U.S. competitors and foes in the region for support in building up the strength of the state. Chief among these adversaries, of course, are China, Russia, and Iran. All three are in the process of strengthening their existing presence in the eastern Mediterranean (Russia via Syria, and Iran through Hizbullah), with even China now engaging in a multimillion-dollar aid program that reportedly includes training for the LAF.¹⁶⁷ During the Nahr al-Barid battle, both Russia and Iran offered large amounts of hardware to the LAF (albeit without training and support) that the Siniora government refused.¹⁶⁸

Should U.S. support for the LAF dwindle, however, and should the United States withdraw itself from the subsidiary processes of state-building because of a changeover in the majority, Washington might very well see the LAF—and Lebanon—turn not toward the black market, as headlines suggested after Nasrallah's speech in September 2008, but to the East.¹⁶⁹

More troubling than all this, however, the United States would find itself in the position of again confirming the accusation that it believes in stability, sovereignty, and democracy only when its favored partners are in charge—and that it simply does not have the intellectual capacity or stomach to imagine that U.S. interests could still be served through alternative means and, sometimes, with different actors.

NOTES

1. The Bush administration has largely been consistent in defining U.S. interests as rooted in Lebanon's stability, sovereignty, and democratic character. After the Syrian withdrawal in April 2005, and in the months following the 2006 July War, these interests increasingly came to be viewed as hinging, first and foremost, on Hizbullah's status as the only armed party in the country. Although pressuring Damascus via Lebanon remained a high priority, this particular interest, too, was largely mediated through the lens of Hizbullah, and secondarily, its domestic allies. By March 2008, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman would unambiguously call Hizbullah's weapons the "biggest challenge" in Lebanon—a subtle upgrade from Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch's comment in October 2006 that the issue "will be one of the greatest challenges to moving forward." Of course, U.S. interests in Lebanon have also come to be defined as tightly bound to the interests of Israel—a fact on the ground that has given further impetus to the overriding U.S. focus on Hizbullah's weapons. It remains for another, more expansive paper to examine whether this identification has been beneficial for any of the actors invested in Lebanon, and whether a different set of policies, even from those suggested below, might be more desirable. For Feltman, see "The Lebanon Crisis," The Brookings Institution, Saban Center for Middle East Policy Lecture and Discussion, Washington, D.C., March 19, 2008, p. 23, available online at http://www.brookings.edu/events/2008/0319_lebanon.aspx; for Welch, see "U.S. Policy toward Lebanon," Address to the Business Council for International Understanding, New York City, October 17, 2006, available online at <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/2006/74653.htm>.

2. Support for such a view can be found at both ends of the spectrum in the United States, although the supposed primacy of the Syria and Iran tracks is notably promoted by many centrist analysts in Washington, including, most recently, the Saban Center's Bilal Saab. In one fall 2008 journal piece entitled, "Rethinking Hezbollah's Disarmament," Saab argues that domestic solutions are essentially unworkable without Iran (although he sensibly argues for some policies that would nevertheless lessen Hizbullah's strength and support in the meantime). "The process of transforming Hezbollah into a normal political party has two separate stages," he asserts. "The first requires Iran's cooperation: instructing Hezbollah to end its armed struggle against Israel. Once Hezbollah's weapons are rendered obsolete, Lebanese politicians will finally be able to enter into negotiations with the party on the nature of its full integration into the state apparatus and on the future political representation of its constituency, the Lebanese Shia." Later he adds, "It is beyond doubt that Hezbollah's future role as an armed force will be determined by Iran. As long as Tehran sees value in Hezbollah's deterrent power against Israel and the United States, the Party of God will continue to exist as an armed entity, irrespective of regional developments." This perspective is echoed by the International Crisis Group (ICG), which despite offering

a range of practical domestic solutions, argues that “Until a broader regional settlement is found—one that deals not only with the Arab-Israeli conflict but also relations between the U.S., Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia in particular—one cannot hope for much more” than finding “a middle ground between irresponsibly allowing Hizbullah the unfettered use [of their arms] and recklessly seeking its forcible disarmament.” In Beirut, too, one key proponent of domestically pressuring Hizbullah into disarmament, Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt, now argues that after the May 2008 events, only a “grand bargain” with Iran would be strong enough to force Hizbullah’s submission to the state. It should be added that Jumblatt also criticizes “some of [his] allies in March 14th” who he says firmly believed that America and/or Israel would attack Iran in the previous period—and that such an attack was the only way to disarm Hizbullah. Bilal Y. Saab, “Rethinking Hezbollah’s Disarmament,” *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 12; “Lebanon: Hizbullah’s Weapons Turn Inward,” International Crisis Group Middle East Briefing no. 23, May 15, 2008, p. 9; interview by author, Walid Jumblatt, August 2008.

3. This was arguably the case in the run-up to the “Syria Track’s” spectacular collapse in March 2000 when policymakers were left largely unprepared for implementing a suitable alternative approach tailored specifically for Lebanon. “We believed that a resolution of the issues related to Lebanon would flow from an Israeli-Syrian agreement,” explained former Clinton administration official Robert Malley. “And that nothing would happen before then. . . . So why would we press Israel to take steps [in Lebanon]?”—steps that might have altered the domestic bases of Hizbullah’s support and countered its subsequent growth and assertiveness. As Ambassador Martin Indyk explained further, in reference to his secret negotiations with the Libyan regime, as far as Hizbullah was concerned, “We [the United States] did not know the group well enough to know what tests to offer” after the Syria Track fell apart. telephone interview by author, Martin Indyk, May 2006; telephone interview by author, Robert Malley, May 2006.

4. The idea of peacefully undermining Hizbullah by addressing the various issues that perpetuate its strength and popularity, was for years derided by some U.S. analysts, commentators, and officials—the argument usually being that Hizbullah would simply “invent” other reasons for remaining armed and initiating periodic hostilities with Israel. By 2008, however, opinions appeared to be changing even among ardent Bush administration supporters—although such views were typically underlined by a dangerous desire to try to disarm Hizbullah as inexpensively as possible, that is, without a credible national defense strategy that might disrupt Israel’s Qualitative Military Edge. After the May 2008 violence (which saw the Hizbullah-led opposition effectively controlling the capitol), one such voice was provided by Daniel Freedmen, a former foreign policy analyst for right-wing Republican presidential candidate Rudolph Giuliani, who wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that, “while the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) certainly didn’t start off negotiating in good faith, the political process helped in gradually changing their stated ideological aims. The same

could potentially be true for Hezbollah. If Hezbollah really is on the brink of what could turn out to be a seismic change,” he continued, “the U.S. should do everything to encourage this process. It should accept a greater role for Shiites in the Lebanese government as long as Hizbullah agrees to start, however gradually, decommissioning.” Several weeks later, Theodore Karasik and Ghassan Schbley of the RAND corporation argued that Hezbollah’s weapons, first, “can only be resolved by an internal Lebanese dialogue,” and, second, that “once the four [bleeding] wounds [see below, “Removing the Bleeding Wounds”] are healed—and prisoners/remains are exchanged—Hizbullah will face increasing internal Lebanese pressure to disarm. The Lebanese people will not so willingly accept rhetoric about where weapons are pointed.” Republican presidential candidate, Senator John McCain, added his voice to the debate, saying that, “The international community needs to more fully empower our allies in Lebanon—not only with military aid but also with the resources to undermine Hizbullah’s appeal: better schools, hospitals, roads and power generation, and the like.” In late July, Feltman officially underlined the overall point by telling a congressional committee that, “turning to the issue of Sheba’a farms, we believe a diplomatic resolution to the dispute would undermine Hizbullah’s spurious ‘resistance’ credentials and complicate the group’s efforts to maintain an armed state-within-a-state”—although, in contrast to the RAND report, Feltman was notably subdued on the need for addressing the other bleeding wounds. For Freedman, see Daniel Freedman, “The Axis of Weakness,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 2, 2008, available online at http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB121235706837736129-lMyQjAxMDI4MTAyMjMwNTI3Wj.html; for RAND, see Theodore W. Karasik and Ghassan Schbley, “Hezbollah’s Armory Up for Debate,” Rand Corporation, June 12, 2008, available online at <http://www.rand.org/commentary/2008/06/12/UPI.html>; for McCain, see the transcript of his speech for June 2, 2008, available online at <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0806/02/cnr.02.html>; for Feltman, see his remarks to the U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, July 29, 2008, available online at http://www.cedarsrevolution.net/jtphp/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1942&Itemid=2.

5. In one early July 2008 interview with Bloomberg News, Central Intelligence Director Michael Hayden described the relationship between Iran and Hizbullah as “a partnership” with “a senior and junior partner, but it’s also not a marionette theatre either.” See “CIA Director: Hizbullah May Not Back Iran in U.S. Clash,” *Narharnet*, July 9, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&00A8E1DF4F3EA2EFC2257481000BFFC8>.

6. According to the United Nations: “All overflights by Israel of Lebanese territory constitute violations of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006).” “Seventh Report of the UN Secretary General on the Implementation of Resolution 1701,” *Lebanon Wire*, July 3, 2008, available online at <http://www.lebanonwire.com/0807MLN/08070305UN.asp>.

7. Reasonable from the perspective not only of Hizbullah, but also key opposition parties, including AMAL and to a lesser degree the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM).

8. See especially, Ibrahim Najjar, “The Taif Agreement as a Liberal Social Contract of the Lockean Type,” in *Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: Selected Essays*, Paul Salem, ed. (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1997), p. 448. For the Taif Accord itself, the text can be found on the al-Bab Website, <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/lebanon/taif.htm>.

9. As Saab has argued, “Washington should craft its policy to support the Lebanese state, not to promote partisanship and political parties. . . . While it is understandable that politicians belonging to the March 14th coalition, who are physically threatened by Syria, should seek close personal partnerships and ‘bonding’ with U.S. officials, this provides little benefit to the United States. (Of course, leaders of the opposition do not hide their partnership with Syrian and Iranian officials either.) Instead, Washington should avoid becoming embroiled in Lebanon’s labyrinthine politics and its delicate communal balance of power.” A policy of supporting the process of state building, he concludes, “rather than blindly supporting sect leaders and politicians belonging to the March 14th coalition, can mitigate that handicap.” See Bilal Y. Saab, “Shaping Lebanon’s Future,” Brookings Institution, March 19, 2008, available online at http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/0319_lebanon_saab.aspx.

10. As one of the March 14 Alliance’s key supporters on Capitol Hill, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, Representative Gary Ackerman, put it: “As fall of 2007 passed into the spring of 2008, various Lebanese leaders came to Washington to plead for assistance and warn of the danger in Lebanon. These are brave, decent, and admirable people and they deserve every bit of the support we gave them. But there are significant failures on their side—if that future is going to be different than the past—[that] must also be considered and remedied. As the Lebanese political crisis worsened and their own situation became more perilous, their focus became more and more narrow. Rather than rallying the Lebanese people to save their state, they focused on rallying foreign support. Rather than exploiting the rancid hypocrisy and staggeringly obvious political liabilities of the March 8th opposition, they remained at war with each other over strategy and control of policy. Rather than reaching out to the large number of Lebanese Shiites who are not aligned with Hezbollah, they preferred to watch and wait.” See Gary Ackerman, “Update on the Situation in Lebanon,” July 29, 2008, available online at http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ny05_ackerman/WGS_072908.html.

11. The effect of this mostly private lobbying campaign has partially been neutralized by the lackluster public resolve expressed by U.S. officials over the years. According to one September 2007 report in Haaretz, “State Department official, Deputy Assistant Secretary Robert Danin, told his Israeli counterparts . . . that if Israel could provide the Lebanese government with data from launch-control computers used in the firing of cluster bombs in the summer 2006, this would be considered a major gain for the Siniora government.” Public statements on this particular “bleeding wound” remained muted, however, such that by the summer of 2008, Ambassador Feltman refused to discuss repeated U.N. complaints on the matter, telling Congress “we wanted to see

the Israelis provide the information to the United Nations. The Israelis have provided information twice to the United Nations. We had some questions about the timing, but they have now provided information twice to the United Nations. I'd refer you to the United Nations about whether—about the quality of this information, but they have done it.” [emphasis added] On the issue of overflights, too, Haaretz reported in late 2006, “Two Bush administration officials demanded that Israel Air Force overflights of Lebanon be halted, saying that such flights undermine the standing of Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. The two U.S. diplomats, David Welch and Elliott Abrams, held short meetings Thursday with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.” According to ICG, however, U.S. officials nevertheless insisted in interviews that such overflights, while unhelpful to Siniora politically, were not violations of Resolution 1701—a point in sharp contrast to U.N. determinations on the matter. Finally, despite belated comments by Ambassador Feltman and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on the usefulness of resolving the Shebaa Farms issue, U.S. officials still insist on focusing the issue on Syrian intransigence over border demarcation—suggesting that Damascus’s movement on this issue should be a precondition for any transfer. According to one U.N. diplomat familiar with the issue, “For a long time, the Americans pressed the U.N. to keep a low profile on this issue. Now she [Rice] wants the U.N. to resolve it.” Feltman, for his part, would later tell Congress, “A diplomatic solution to the Sheba’a farms dispute, beginning with the Syrian-Lebanese delineation of their border would constitute an important step toward implementation of one part of resolution 1701, normalized relations between Syria and Lebanon, and a lasting peace between Israel and Lebanon.” [emphasis added] For Danin, see: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/905646.html>; for Feltman, see: Jeffrey D. Feltman, “Hearing of the Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia, House Foreign Affairs Committee—Update on the Situation in Lebanon,” Federal News Service, July 29, 2008. For Haaretz, see Aluf Benn, “U.S. Officials Demand IAF Cease Overflights in Lebanese Airspace,” Haaretz, April 11, 2006, available online at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/783412.html>; for ICG, see “Israel/Hizbollah/Lebanon: Avoiding Renewed Conflict,” International Crisis Group Middle East Report no. 59, November 1, 2006, p.16; for U.N. comment, see Benny Avni, “Rice’s Shift on Shebaa Farms Is Boost to Lebanon’s Leader,” *The Sun*, June 17, 2008, available online at <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/rices-shift-on-shebaa-farms-is-boost-to-lebanons/80113/>.

12. As but one indication that U.S. officials have not fully thought through their own stated policy on Lebanon—one that now supposedly seeks solutions from within Lebanon—Ambassador Feltman suggested in March 2008 that he was not sure how an independent Lebanon policy might lead to an acceptable solution, especially for the Israelis, without making the country a card once again in the ongoing Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations. “I do not believe that there is necessarily a contradiction,” he said, “that we should be able to support an independent Lebanon and support an Israeli-Syrian peace process that is credible. I do not know all the mechanisms to do that, but I do not think that we should look at these as contradictory goals. What I was trying

to say perhaps a bit inarticulately was that there is no contradiction between having a foreign policy that looks at Lebanon as Lebanon and also sees how Lebanon fits into our regional calculations.” [emphasis added] In a similar vein, although U.S. officials have begun to assert—again, with varying public enthusiasm—that ending the Shebaa Farms issue and adequately arming the LAF might “reduce the need of the Lebanese to rely on private militias,” the same officials consistently fail to provide an analysis of Hizbullah, its alliances, and/or its constituency that would credibly support such a statement, much less the related overall argument that Hizbullah could be forced, politically, to submit itself to the authority of the state over time. Notable in this regard is Feltman’s reading of the February 2006 FPM-Hizbullah Understanding: “I have seen and heard in the time that I was in Lebanon various proposals to incorporate Hizbullah more solidly into the state the theory being that Hizbullah would then have more of a stake in the state, Hizbullah would be more of a normal player in the state. While Michel Aoun still believes his understandings document might yet work in this regard, this approach has so far failed with Hizbullah.” As far as why this approach has supposedly failed, Feltman does not speculate, although elsewhere he promulgates the view that Hizbullah is, at its core, a radical Iranian-Syrian pawn and therefore essentially immune to domestic pressures. For Feltman, see “The Lebanon Crisis,” pp. 33–34; for the Shebaa policy, see “Hearing of the Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia, House Foreign Affairs Committee—Update on the Situation in Lebanon”; for Feltman on Aoun, see “The Lebanon Crisis,” p. 23; for Feltman on Hizbullah, see “Remarks by Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman at the Dinner Hosted by Dr. Samir Geagea,” January 24, 2008, available online at http://lebanon.usembassy.gov/latest_embassy_news/press-releases08/remarksgeagea012408.html.

13. Support for staying the course, in regard to U.S. policy on the LAF, has notably come from U.S. analyst and former army ranger Andrew Exum, who argues, “Paradoxically, despite severe setbacks to U.S. policy this past year, the U.S. is now in a position where patience rather than drastic change may be the best course of action. . . . One of the ironies of the current situation in Lebanon, though, is that the wisest U.S. policy option at this point might be to continue doing what we have been doing in terms of the LAF.” Exum, however, fails to appreciate that the current U.S. approach has not been to build up the LAF as a “viable” instrument of the state, although he sensibly adds, “The real danger is that U.S. policy might overcorrect in one of two directions: either the United States could enter into direct negotiations with Hezbollah to undetermined ends or the United States could redouble efforts to arm Hezbollah’s internal enemies in the hopes that their domestic position will be weakened. The former option is foolish, while the latter is suicidal.” For Exum, see “What the U.S. Should Do,” Center for American Progress, July 22, 2008, available online at <http://www.middleeastprogress.org/2008/07/what-the-us-should-do/>; for Exum’s views on the main mission facing the LAF, see David Schenker, “U.S. Support for the Lebanese Army,” Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, July 14, 2008, available online at http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/07/us_support_for_lebanese_army/.

14. As one U.S. official told Naharnet recently, “U.S. efforts alone are not enough to prevent war, especially if not accompanied by Lebanese efforts to defuse the explosive situation and avert giving Israel a pretext to launch a new war.” See “Washington Warns against Manipulating Lebanon’s Elections,” *Naharnet*, September 27, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/newsdesk.nsf/MiddleEast/0360932DEF24A437C22574D1003340C0?OpenDocument>.

15. It will, of course, not be certain for some time precisely what official U.S. policy was at certain points and who communicated the policy to actors on the ground until the archives are made available and/or relevant persons speak freely on the record. Nevertheless, the available public evidence, supported both by on and off the record interviews with U.S. officials past and present, strongly suggests that the Bush administration’s approach to Lebanon has largely hewed to an aggressive, uncompromising line since at least the summer of 2005—one marked by a dangerous inability to recognize the pitfalls of continuing to apply pressure even when domestic allies saw the wisdom and necessity of compromise. Several events are indicative in this regard. Although, as discussed, the U.S. role in the 2006 July War and the May 2008 violence are perhaps the best examples of counter-force being brought to bear (with disastrous consequences), the U.S. stance on opposition demands for a national unity government and a consensus president were also crucial in the framework of the overall policy—albeit with counter-pressure as the operative strategy. Having supported the March 14 Alliance’s own hard-line Bristol Statement immediately following the end of the July War—a statement that unambiguously cast Hizbullah as an Iranian incarnation that should be disarmed as per UNSCRs—the United States strongly backed the legality and the necessity of the Siniora government in the wake of the November 2006 cabinet walkout by Shiite ministers (and one Christian minister). In the efforts that followed to reach a compromise on a national unity government, the United States failed to apply pressure on its March 14 Alliance allies to accommodate the FPM’s minimum demands for joining the government (eventually choosing to threaten Aoun). Washington also publicly threatened against a change in the composition of the Siniora government. As Ambassador Nicholas Burns put it to Lebanese television early on in the crisis: “I think you will see a tremendously positive response by the international financial community to help rebuild Lebanon, because that is based on the credibility that Prime Minister Siniora and his government have earned in the world . . . *[I]f for any reason the government does not continue*, I don’t think you have a consensus in the international community about assistance to Lebanon.” [emphasis added] Burns added that he did not “mean to say that as a threat.” Another U.S. official later added that the cabinet represented “the diversity of Lebanon itself,” thus effectively ignoring the serious domestic debate over the constitutionality of Siniora’s government, while dismissing street protests demanding a national unity government as an attempt at a coup d’etat by external actors. The approach was only magnified one year later when the issue of presidential succession came to the fore. In early October 2007, Jumblatt publicly stated that the United States supported a “half-plus-one” presidential vote—an

enormously controversial reading of the constitution that key March 14 Alliance figures would soon come to eschew (most notably Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Butros Sfeir as well as several March 14 Alliance candidates). A few weeks before the legal end to President Emile Lahoud's term, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad explained that, "[I]n many democracies, the president gets elected by a majority, and the constitution of Lebanon allows that." Welch added that two previous Lebanese presidential elections had been decided by "the barest absolute majority of votes," while Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice upped the ante by subsequently warning against "extra constitutional measures" that would be necessary to allow army commander Michel Suleiman to assume the post of president (possibly for two years only, as Aoun had proposed). After President Emile Lahoud exited, President Bush himself chimed in, saying "My position *has been* that the March 14th Coalition, if it had mustered a majority plus one, 50 percent plus one, should be allowed to go forward with the selection of the president." [emphasis added] Feltman would later echo the president's comments upon his exit from Lebanon, telling a gathering of Lebanese forces partisans: "Permit presidential elections now. Presidential elections now, in accordance with your constitution and uncomplicated by other issues, would be a significant step forward and illustrate that all parties are looking for a constructive way ahead." For a compelling recapitulation of the U.S. approach to Lebanon policy post-Hariri assassination, including Washington's stance on Aoun, the Hariri Tribunal, and early elections in 2005, see especially Gary Gambill's piece, "Lemons from Lemonade: Washington and Lebanon after the Syrian Withdrawal," *Mideast Monitor* 2, no. 1 (June/July 2007), available online at http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0705/0705_1.htm; for the Bristol Statement, see "Lebanon at a Tripwire," International Crisis Group Middle East Briefing no. 20, December 21, 2006, p. 6, and interview by author, Walid Jumblatt, August 2008; for Jumblatt on U.S. support, see Nicholas Blandford, "Jumblatt's Stand," *Now Lebanon*, October 2, 2007, available online at <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=15059>; for Feltman on presidential elections, see "Remarks by Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman at the Dinner Hosted by Dr. Samir Geagea."

16. Echoing a range of official statements on Hizbullah's growing military power, one IDF official told the Israeli cabinet in September 2008 that he believed, "Hezbollah in Lebanon now poses a larger threat to Israel than Iran." His comment came on the heels of an earlier statement by Labour Party leader and Minister of Defence Ehud Barak who said that the 2006 July War had indeed "strengthened" Hizbullah. Beyond the party's military might, however, even polling by pro-March 14 Alliance organizations support, the argument that the last three years of upheaval have not been kind to the March 14 Alliance. According to one midsummer Lebanese Opinion Advisory Committee (LOAC) poll: (1) Even after the May 2008 violence, Hezbollah's weapons ranked only third as a major issue of concern, at 10 percent (the economy was far and away the main concern at 70 percent). In LOAC's April survey, the issue of Hezbollah's weapons had come in at a negligible 2 percent. (2) Although 70 percent

of Lebanese believe the country is “headed in the wrong direction,” LOAC noted that, “This negative response actually represents a decline of 16 percentage points from this April survey, when 86 percent responded with wrong direction.” Interestingly, “Of the confessions, Christians gave the highest number of “right track” responses with 20 percent, up from 7 percent in this April survey.” (3) Buffering the “right-track” response, LOAC reported that “Seventy-eight percent of the respondents agree with the following statement: ‘The agreements reached at Doha are a reasonable compromise *in which neither side benefited at the expense of the other.*’” [emphasis added] Further confirming Lebanese satisfaction with the agreement signed by their leaders at Doha, 85 percent of respondents believe Doha was ‘mostly good for Lebanon.’” (4) On the question of the arms of Hizbullah, LOAC again found some movement in attitudes, this time more clearly negative for the opposition. But here, too, the percentage change is small compared to the magnitude of what happened two months prior (one should note that LOAC also fails to ask the key question of how state supremacy should be achieved): “62 percent believe that national defence should be the responsibility of government forces (national police and army) alone and 34 percent of respondents believe that national defence should be jointly assumed by government forces and the resistance,” an 11 percent decrease over April 2008. (5) LOAC also found that the percentage of Lebanese who viewed the May violence as “orchestrated to advance an American project in Lebanon” (41 percent) outweighed the number of Lebanese who thought it was orchestrated to advance an Iranian project (26 percent). (6) According to LOAC, the opposition remains ahead both in terms of support and perception in advance of next year’s elections: “Thirty-eight percent of respondents said they intended to vote for candidates aligned with the March 14 coalition and 34 percent said they intended to vote for March 8 candidates. . . . However, respondents reflect more confidence in March 8 candidates’ chances in the next elections over those from March 14. Respondents were asked, ‘Regardless of your personal preference for either the government (March 14) or the opposition (March 8) coalition, if parliamentary elections were held today, who in your opinion would win the most seats?’ Thirty-nine percent of the respondents said the opposition will win more seats in next parliament, while 32 percent chose March 14 candidates. Twenty-nine percent said they do not know.” Finally, support for Aoun and the FPM appears not to have been substantially hurt by the May violence. In July, Aoun was still the most popular Christian leader at 25 percent (according to the pro-March 14 Alliance poll)—a drop of only 2 percent over the same period one year before—while the FPM came in with 29 percent support among Christians (those who say the FPM best represents their views), only 1 percent lower than July 2007 (Lebanese Forces support actually dropped from 25 percent in 2007 to 21 percent in 2008). Additionally, support for the Future Movement among Sunnis declined precipitously, from 54 percent in July 2007 to 36 percent in July 2008. Hizbullah’s support rose among Shiites from 33 percent in July 2007 to 48 percent in July 2008. For IDF official, see Benny Avni, “Petraeus Visit Highlights Growing Strategic Prominence of Lebanon,” *The Sun*, August 7, 2008, available online at

<http://www.nysun.com/foreign/petraeus-visit-highlights-growing-strategic/83386/>; for Barak, see “Barak: Gaza Invasions Won’t Stop Qassams,” Haaretz, available online at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1010232.html>; for pro-March 14 Alliance polling, see the Lebanese Opinion Advisory Committee Web site, available online at <http://www.lebaneseopinion.org/>.

17. Two prominent Lebanese supporters of the March 14 Alliance have attempted to make precisely such an argument. Chatham House’s Nadim Shehadi argues that it would be wrong to view the May violence as a defeat for the government: “Imagine you and your opponent are 18th century English gentlemen, and he challenges you to a duel. Now imagine he challenges you at a moment you are certain to lose, in a place that will defeat you and with a weapon you cannot match. If you manage to change the time, place and weapon with which the duel is fought and live with your honour intact, then you have won the duel.” Although the March 14 Alliance’s “honor” was clearly and very publicly diminished—and the March 14 Alliance did fight and was defeated in several areas—Shehadi nevertheless argues elsewhere that it was “Gandhi versus Genghis Khan. . . . Playing the peaceful resistance and anti-war cards could win [the March 14 Alliance] much confidence and support.” Without elaborating on how this might be the case, and avoiding reference to public opinion polls by at least one prominent pro-March 14 Alliance group that suggests the reverse, Shehadi goes on to speculate that “the takeover was also a failure because Hizbollah and the opposition militias could not govern the conquered territory and had to hand it back to the army”—although it quickly became evident on the ground that the opposition’s preference was a clear-hold-and-transfer strategy. In a somewhat different vein, the *Daily Star*’s Michael Young argues that, post-Doha, “veto power, while [a] gain for the opposition, came at a price: the election of a president, when Hizbullah and Syria preferred to maintain an open-ended vacuum in the presidency to bring in a more pliant government [which both apparently now have in relative terms], and a new president, on their own terms. One of their conditions, often restated, was that Siniora not return as prime minister. The Qatari initiative derailed that strategy. Siniora is back [quite possibly for less than one year], Michel Suleiman has been elected, and while it would be a mistake to see this as a loss for Syria, his election has allowed a political process to resume in Lebanon with which Damascus feels uncomfortable, as it risks consolidating a post-Syria order.” [emphasis added] Later, Young argues, with little evidence to support his conclusion, that Doha “may” have actually been a product of U.S. prowess: “the Doha agreement, as several commentators have pointed out, was perhaps not a case of the U.S. being marginalized. As the fighting in Beirut flared up, the Bush administration held a conference call with its Friends of Lebanon partners. Rather than object to Qatari mediation in the Lebanese crisis, Washington, for a change, strongly endorsed Arab League action, in this case to end the fighting. Far from being irrelevant, the administration may actually have added some teeth to the Qatari efforts. . . . The Qataris also needed Saudi and Egyptian backing to mediate in the Lebanese crisis, and American support for the Qatari mission *must have*

encouraged Cairo and Riyadh in that regard.” [emphasis added] For Shehadi, see “Long Division,” *Economist*, September 11, 2008, available online at http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12079102&fsrc=rss&CFID=26886865&CFTOKEN=29081219, and Nadim Shehadi, “Futile Victory,” *The World Today*, June 2008, available online at <http://www.nowlebanon.com/Library/Files/EnglishDocumentation/Other%20Documents/shehadi.pdf>; for Young, see Michael Young, “A Logic of Power that Threatens Lebanon,” *Daily Star*, June 12, 2008, available online at <http://michaelyoungscolumns.blogspot.com/2008/06/logic-of-power-that-threatens-lebanon.html>.

18. Sounding the alarm, an October 7, 2008, opinion piece by Sarkis Naoum in *An-Nahar* (see p. 14) asserted that, “Despair almost prevailed over the spirit of the Lebanese people who are awaiting the launching of the international tribunal. . . . This was due to the fact that the information and analyses carried by media outlets during the last few months gave the impression that the settlement of this issue was no longer urgent and that it might have been placed on the shelf while awaiting the outcome of many other developments in Lebanon, in the region and outside of it. . . . The phantom of despair returned to the spirits of those Lebanese when observers following the job of the investigative committee and the steps of establishing the tribunal said that the report of the head of the investigative committee will not include any names unless a resolution accusing them is issued, following the establishment of the court and setting a specific mechanism for its function. But the phantom of despair returned to the spirits when the issue of funding the court appeared again as a hindrance to the start of its work. It is known that in order for it to assume its responsibilities, necessary funds should be provided for the coming four year at least. Half of these funds should be offered by Lebanon, since private funding is illegal.” Sarkis Naoum, “No International Tribunal without Funds and Accused!” *An-Nahar*, October 7, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com.

19. According to General Aoun, Jumblatt, and Hizbullah’s Ali Fayyad, in the lead-up to the February 2006 Understanding, and then again before the July War, Hizbullah found itself in an increasingly difficult position domestically—a point underscored by the party’s apparent desire to sign just such an understanding even though it meant, for the first time, placing a horizon on its independent weaponry. Hizbullah would also, of course, assent to a series of national roundtables on the status of its weapons and the creation of a national defense plan, while also tacitly encouraging engagement efforts directly with the United States, most notably via Hizbullah-affiliated labor minister Trad Hamade who met with Bush administration official Elizabeth Cheney shortly after the withdrawal of Syrian forces. The post–July War period, however, brought a tightening of Shiite community support for Hizbullah, a public opinion deeply divided about the Siniora government’s performance during and after the war (especially in regard to the relatively slow reconstruction effort), and a Christian community that still viewed the FPM and Aoun as its leading representative. As far as U.S. standing after the July War is concerned, according to one August 2006 poll, while 69 percent of the Lebanese public viewed the United States as an “enemy” after the war ended, less

than 30 percent felt this way about France or Saudi Arabia (Syria and Iran scored 22 percent and 19 percent respectively). Four months later, a Gallup poll showed 59 percent of Lebanese still had a “negative” or “very negative” opinion of the United States (up from 42 percent in 2005). Interview by author, Michel Aoun, September 2008; interview by author, Walid Jumblatt, August 2008; interview by author, Trad Hamade, May 2006; interview by author, Ghaleb Abu Zeineb, May 2006; for postwar attitudes among Shiites, see especially “Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis,” International Crisis Group Middle East Report no. 69, October 10, 2007, available online at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=5113>; for U.S. standing after the July War, see “Lemons from Lemonade: Washington and Lebanon after the Syrian Withdrawal.”

20. In comments before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in early June 2008, former Bush administration official Elizabeth Cheney criticized Israel’s performance during the war, citing its “inability, unwillingness to do what was necessary . . . to fundamentally deal a blow to Hezbollah.” Her comments echoed statements by former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, who told the BBC in March 2007 that before any ceasefire Washington wanted Israel to eliminate Hezbollah’s military capability. “Mr Bolton said an early ceasefire would have been ‘dangerous and misguided.’ He said the U.S. decided to join efforts to end the conflict only when it was clear Israel’s campaign wasn’t working. Israel was reacting in its own self-defence and if that meant the defeat of the enemy, that was perfectly legitimate under international law.” According to the BBC, he added, “the U.S. was deeply disappointed at Israel’s failure to remove the threat from Hezbollah and the subsequent lack of any attempt to disarm its force. . . . Mr Bolton, a controversial and blunt-speaking figure, said he was ‘damned proud of what we did’ to prevent an early ceasefire.” For Cheney, see Micahel Abramowitz, “Tough Words from This Cheney on U.S. Mideast Policy,” *Washington Post*, June 9, 2008, p. A15, available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/08/AR2008060801820.html>; for Bolton, see “Bolton Admits Lebanon Truce Block,” BBC News, March 22, 2007, available online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6479377.stm.

21. For an excellent review of Israel’s options under international law, and the further suggestion that Hezbollah would have been significantly undermined by just such an approach, see especially Karim Makdisi, “Israel’s 2006 War on Lebanon: Reflections on the International Law of Force,” *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 6 (Summer 2006): 9, available online at http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes/MITEJMES_Vol_6_Summer.pdf.

22. See “Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 30, 2007, available online at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2007/Winograd+Inquiry+Commission+submits+Interim+Report+30-Apr-2007.htm>.

23. When asked to explain the government’s actions, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told the press on May 8, “I guess one of the main decisions behind these clashes is their challenging of the telecom system that Hezbollah [has] is

pretty much their strongest point . . . we—in the Secretary’s statement, she restated our unshakable and unswerving support for the government, and the March 14th movement is a pillar of that government as well. We are absolutely in contact with them. Our Charge on the ground, Ambassador Sison, is in contact with a variety of individuals who are involved in the government as well as the March 14th movement . . . we fully support the Government of Lebanon and [inaudible]—and the political factions in that government that are working on behalf of the Lebanese people. What you’re talking about is the Lebanese state simply exercising sovereignty over the territory of Lebanon. . . . *So the actions that the government took certainly were legitimate actions that any government around the world would recognize as working on behalf of the people that elected that government.*” [emphasis added] When asked by one reporter, “by taking this action, and the clashes that ensued in the last 48 hours, is it realistic to say that there is a possibility that the March 14th group can actually come out with even less influence, less control,” McCormack answered: “Look, I’ll leave it to political pundits to, you know, do the political scorecard. We support this government. We support those in Lebanon who are fighting on behalf of democracy and the Lebanese people,” later adding, “I will restate our unswerving commitment and support for the Siniora government *for doing all the right things.*” [emphasis added] Interestingly, Feltman had actually been one of the first figures in Lebanon to raise the telecom network issue, as early as fall 2007, evidently viewing it as an ideal wedge issue for the Lebanese, just as it certainly was for the Western journalists and politicians he regularly engaged and who were generally unfamiliar with the de facto and de jure state of war prevailing in the country. For McCormack, see State Department Daily Press Briefing, May 9, 2008, available online at <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/may/20080512122555xjsnommis0.8858911.html>.

24. Interview by author, Ali Fayyad, September 2008; for polling data, see note 16.

25. Refusing to characterize the U.S. approach as aggressive and uncompromising, U.S. deputy chief of mission William Grant prefers to define it as “unwavering” and “consistent.” It is interesting to note, however, that although public records are not available to support the assertion, Jumblatt now argues that several prominent March 14 Alliance leaders “really believed” that the U.S. military would intervene as it had in 1958 and 1982. Whether U.S. officials encouraged or discouraged this view in the lead up to May 8, Jumblatt would not say. Interview by author, William Grant, September 2008; interview by author, Walid Jumblatt, August 2008.

26. Although Ackerman was groping for a potentially even more forceful approach, he explained that, “In November, Assistant Secretary Welch appeared before this Subcommittee and heard this warning, quote, ‘Lebanon is truly on the brink of either collapse of the Cedar Revolution or the return of civil war. Like most Lebanese, we want neither. For Lebanon to remain a sovereign and independent state ruled by a government elected and accountable only to the Lebanese people, the United States and the international community are going to have to act fast,’ unquote. And still there was

no noticeable shift or change in U.S. policy.” “Update on the Situation in Lebanon,” Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 110th Congress, 2d sess., July 29, 2008, available online at <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/43838.pdf>.

27. According to one news report in late May, “Hizbullah has been left weakened by the recent turmoil in Lebanon and could pay the price in next year’s elections, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her British counterpart David Miliband have said . . . ‘Hizbullah has lost something very important which is any argument that it is somehow a resistance movement on behalf of the Lebanese people,’ Rice told journalists. . . . ‘What it is, is a militia that, given an opportunity, decided to turn its guns on its own people. It is never going to live that down,’ she said. ‘Yes, I think they have been hurt in the long term.’” On the other side of the ledger, Ambassador Feltman would later tell Congress that “By taking a step back and placing this development in a broader view, we see that this concession [cabinet veto power] may have less significance on the ground, given that the previous Lebanese cabinet nearly always operated on consensus basis and many decisions require only a simple majority to pass”—a misleading statement contradicting strong prior U.S. opposition to any such changes and ignoring the way in which a potential walkout by one-third plus one of the cabinet could be used to pressure simple majority votes. “Significantly,” he continued, “March 14th has retained the Prime Minister and majority in the cabinet [for one year potentially until new elections determine the new majority], elected a president it supports [and who supports Hizbullah’s right to resistance, for now], and received an agreement to raise Hizbullah’s arms in the context of renewed national dialogue [which would indeed merely “renew” previous discussions accepted by the opposition].” Feltman went on to explain that “Hizbullah has only one minister in the cabinet,” although it previously had only one—Muhammad Fneish. “And for the first time, March 14th has appointed an independent Shia minister, Ibrahim Shamseddine, to the cabinet, which will make it much more difficult for Hizbullah and its allies to assert that they are the sole voice of the Lebanese Shia community”—although with little grassroots support or organization behind him, Shamseddine is far from representing a credible alternative to Hizbullah’s dominance of Shiite politics. For Rice, see “Rice: Hizbullah Hurt in the Long Term,” Naharnet, May 23, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&7F6F9453009D9C11C2257452000D0238>; for Feltman, see Jeffrey D. Feltman, “Hearing of the Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia, House Foreign Affairs Committee—Update on the Situation in Lebanon”; for the limits of an American “Shiite strategy,” see “Israel/Hizbullah/Lebanon: Avoiding Renewed Conflict,” International Crisis Group Middle East Report no. 59, November 1, 2006, available online at <http://www.lebanonfiles.com/uploads/168133.pdf>; and interview by author, Walid Jumblatt, August 2008.

28. As Nasrallah put it in regard to Hizbullah’s overall dislike for internal conflict and chaos, “This is because the resistance in Lebanon, being a defensive force, prevents Israel from fulfilling its greed, dreams, and ambitions in Lebanon. Therefore,

[Israel] seeks to deplete and weaken it through dragging it into internal fighting and conflict, because it will benefit most from any internal infighting or sedition.” See “Hezbollah Leader Nasrallah Addresses Jerusalem Day Rally in Lebanon,” BBC Monitoring International Reports, October 7, 2007.

29. See note 16.

30. See “Lebanon: Hizbullah’s Weapons Turn Inward,” International Crisis Group Middle East Briefing no. 23, May 15, 2008, available online at <http://www.crisis-group.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=5526>.

31. The 2005 cabinet statement, whose vagaries eventually led to a walkout by Hizbullah and its allies, was noticeably less favorable to the party, affirming, “Lebanon’s respect for international legitimacy in the framework of sovereignty and national unity. . . . National resistance is a true and sincere expression of the national right of the Lebanese to liberate their land and face Israel’s threats and aggressions.” See Nicholas Blandford, “Lebanon on the Verge of Government,” *The National*, July 6, 2008, available online at <http://www.thenational.ae/article/20080705/FOREIGN/30495101/0/SPORT>.

32. Although the Future Movement, in particular, has faced growing dissension on its right flank—from the salafis—it has also faced growing criticism from, among others, Jumblatt. As one September 13 *An-Nahar* piece explained, “In less than two days, Jumblatt criticized the statements of Deputy Muhammad Kabbara who said that, ‘Tripoli is the capital of the Sunnis,’ and did not spare Deputy Ghinwa Jalloul.” He explained further, ‘Our problem resides with some in the hard-line Lebanese lobby in America, which asked us to conduct the presidential elections in the Marina (in Dbayeh) under the protection of the American fleet.’” Radwan Akl, “Junblatt’s Electoral Calculations Different from Those of His Allies . . .,” *An-Nahar*, September 13, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com; for the drop in Future Movement support, see note 16 above.

33. Interview by author, Western European election expert in Beirut, September 2008; U.S. election expert in Beirut #1, September 2008; U.S. election expert in Beirut #2, September 2008.

34. “Nasrallah Addresses Rally on the International Day of Jerusalem,” September 26, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com.

35. According to the Stimson Center, the LAF’s 2005 budget was believed to be \$531 million, with only several million dollars devoted to procurement annually. Troop levels, according to various estimates, may now be as low as, given the recent phase-out of compulsory national service. For a particularly good review of the LAF’s capacity versus Israel, see especially Anthony H. Cordesman’s November 2008 report entitled “The Israeli and Syrian Conventional Military Balance: An Overview,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 25, 2008, available online at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/081125_arab-israeli-syrian_conv_mil_bal.pdf; for Stimson, see Emile El-Hokayem and Elena McGovern, “Towards a More Secure and Stable Lebanon: Prospects for Security Sector Reform,” Henry L. Stimson Center, February 2008, p. 32,

available online at <http://www.stimson.org/swa/pdf/LebanonConfReport-WebVersion.pdf>.

36. According to U.S. officials, the LAF's record on end-use compliance is amongst the best in the world—having maintained command and control over its U.S.-supplied weaponry through decades of turmoil. As one unnamed official told *An-Nahar* in September 2008, “As for the reservations or concerns about providing the Army with weapons that might be transferred to other forces [in reference to Hezbollah], he said that his country ‘trusts the Lebanese army, which faced great challenges during the civil war and was able to transcend similar periods despite all that happened during the war.’” The same U.S. official added a related point—one underscored by several retired LAF generals—that the LAF would be able to handle the absorption of sophisticated equipment, especially helicopters, if they were in fact provided (all the more so since U.S. weapons transfers are routinely packaged with training and maintenance capability). “First,” the official said, “I must stress that, in our point of view, the Lebanese army—at the administrative and organizational levels—is considered qualified to receive our support and is able to absorb it considering the skills it enjoys both individually and collectively, in addition to its organizational structure. . . . Honestly, we are often, not just politically, but also technically cautious in dealing with armies of many developing countries. . . . But the situation differs with regard to the Lebanese army, which we consider as being among the very rare armies within these countries that deserves our assistance and support.” It is important to note further that, while one of the primary impediments to equipping the LAF often cited by U.S. officials is the latter's supposed lack of understanding concerning request and transfer protocols, Washington saw fit to train the first small group of LAF procurement officers only in July 2008—that is, exactly three years after the ascension of the Siniora government and despite the fact that the Security Assistance Management course is only a two-week program. On the issue of program flexibility to get the LAF the equipment it has long said it needs, policymakers had essentially two options: the Department of Defense 1206 program and the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. On both accounts, the United States had a great degree of flexibility to at least announce, and in the case of certain equipment, actually deliver within six months to one year. Indeed, according to the Pentagon, the Department of Defense 1206 program (known as Global Train and Equip) “allows a response to urgent and emergent threats or opportunities in six months or less.” So while the FMF program typically has a three-to-four-year start to finish timeline (which actually means sophisticated equipment can start arriving within one to two years), the 1206 program was able to rush maritime patrol craft, sophisticated intelligence equipment, interoperable communications gear, and night vision goggles to more than a dozen nations in fiscal year 2007. Pakistan, as one notable example, saw its transport and assault helicopter fleet upgraded under the program with night vision equipment and limited visibility pilot training. According to one U.S. official based in Pakistan, and quoted in a military review of the program, “‘1206 funding is the only thing that can produce effects within a fiscal year.’ . . . An officer from DSCA [said] the

most attractive aspect of 1206 is that all that is needed to generate an effect is to have a receptive partner. As long as there are units that can absorb the training and equipment, and *as long as there is leadership/headquarters acceptance*, the United States can rapidly plan and execute a 1206 project.” [emphasis added] Although the FMF program moves at a somewhat slower pace, U.S. officials still faced a number of options to help the LAF when it needed it. According to one Department of Defense official overseeing Lebanon, Cobra helicopters could have been delivered to Lebanon, in full, within two years. Had the United States been serious, therefore, in its commitment to helping the LAF meet its responsibilities under UNSCR 1701 of August 2006, commanders on the ground would have undoubtedly had access to at least some of the Cobras during the Nahr al-Barid battle, and likely all by May 2008. Two final points are necessary on the issue of collusion. Although U.S. officials express their confidence that sophisticated arms would not be transferred to Hizbullah—former Department of Defense official David Schenker points out that, “Hezbollah has received an arsenal from Moscow, Syria, and Iran that is so highly advanced, that it need not covet LAF stocks”—it is nevertheless apparent that: first, when faced with internal violence, the LAF will not act in a way that might split it (that is, as in May 2008 if it had decided to take on the better manned, equipped, and trained opposition forces); and, second, it will join in the defense of Lebanon if Lebanon is attacked by Israel, no matter the reason for such an attack. As far as the first point is concerned, the very idea of trying to use the LAF should be discarded by the United States and its allies (for reasons discussed above). Second, the LAF’s mission is explicitly to defend Lebanon—a far different proposition than aiding an offensive Hizbullah action, as in the July 12, 2006, capturing operation. Since the LAF does not stand accused of aiding Hizbullah offensively, and since a further binding of Hizbullah to the LAF is actually the desired outcome of enhancing the LAF’s capabilities, U.S. and Israeli concerns about future collusion should be subordinated to the overall objective of achieving the LAF’s monopoly over the means of violence (see “The Risks Ahead,” above, for more discussion). For U.S. stance on the LAF, see, especially, “Cobras or No Cobras to Lebanon?” Naharnet, September 26, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&0E552FD8045673CBC22574D000260027>; also, e-mail interview by author, Department of Defense official involved in Lebanon policy, September 2008, and interview by author, State Department official involved in LAF policy, Beirut, September 2008; for the FMF and Department of Defense 1206 programs, see especially Eric Thompson and Patricio Asfura-Heim, “Assessments of the Impact of 1206-Funded Projects in Selected Countries: Lebanon, Pakistan, Yemen, São Tome and Principe,” CNA Corporation, July 2008, available online at <http://www.cna.org/documents/D0017988.A4.pdf> and Nina M. Serafino, “Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2006: A Fact Sheet on Department of Defense Authority to Train and Equip Foreign Military Forces,” Congressional Research Services, May 2008, available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22855.pdf>; for Schenker, see Schenker, “U.S. Support for the Lebanese Army.”

37. Responding to media reports that Cobra helicopters had been denied, one U.S. official told Naharnet, “There are some in Lebanon who are waging a political and media war against the United States and accuse us of all sorts of things.” See “Cobras or No Cobras to Lebanon.

38. According to U.N. officials in Beirut, the LAF “has not received sufficient international support to allow them to grow in terms of their strength or of their capabilities.” As one top official put it, “Even with the troop levels they had six months ago [in early 2008] the LAF was not able to accompany UNIFIL—that is, even when they claimed they had 10,000 troops. . . . Out of the 380 patrols on one day, only two were with LAF. So they are not able to do enough checkpoints, not doing searches etc.” Interview by author, U.N. officials in Beirut, September 2008.

39. In one particularly exaggerated statement, Feltman explained, “Our partnership includes the commitment of the United States to provide the Lebanese Army with everything it needs to fight and defeat the armed extremists in north Lebanon, and the United States fulfils its promises. We are providing the Lebanese Army with equipment, arms, and required training to protect Lebanon and the Lebanese people from the *external and internal threats*.” [emphasis added] “Lebanese Army Command Receives 130 Military Vehicles from USA,” BBC Monitoring Middle East, September 13, 2007.

40. According to the Congressional Research Service, Jordan received \$763 million in military aid from fiscal year 2006 to fiscal year 2008, or \$126 per person. Lebanon received \$103 per person over the same time period. See “Annual U.S. Aid to Jordan Since the Gulf Crisis,” Congressional Research Service, August 2008.

41. “U.S. Assistance to Lebanon FY2004-FY2009,” Congressional Research Service, August 2008.

42. “Army Commander: Response to Assassinations Is by Unity and Dialogue. . . .” *As-Safir*, September 12, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com

43. Ibid.

44. For both Suleiman and Fatfat, see Zeina Khodr, “Lebanese Army Fights for Equipment,” Al Jazeera, August 20, 2007, available online at <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2007/08/2008525173120896145.html>.

45. Rosanna Bou Mounsif, “Grant: Army Sets Its Needs; No U.S. Restrictions on What It Can request,” An-Nahar, August 18, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com.

46. In one of his most recent comments on the subject, Suleiman reportedly told President Bush at the White House in September 2008 about “the Lebanese insistence on equipping the army with modern weapons [which are] to face terrorism and defend the country and *reassure the Lebanese that the state is their primary source of protection*.” [emphasis added] *The Daily Star*, in a piece headlined “Suleiman Tells U.S. Envoy Army Needs Advanced Weaponry,” reported in early October 2008, “President Michel Suleiman said after meeting U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State David Hale on Tuesday that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) needed to be equipped with advanced weaponry in order to confront terrorism and protect civil peace in Lebanon. Hale, who

was accompanied by U.S. Ambassador Michele Sison, visited the Presidential Palace and discussed with Suleiman ways to enhance political and military cooperation between Beirut and Washington.” For Suleiman’s September comments, see: “Lebanese Press Round-Up: September 26, 2008,” *Now Lebanon*, available online at <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=60394&MID=101&PID=2>; for Star comments, see Hussein Abdallah, “Suleiman Tells U.S. Envoy Army Needs Advanced Weaponry,” *Daily Star*, October 8, 2008, available online at http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=96589.

47. In the same August 2008 interview, Grant explained, “When we talk about airplanes, for example, the army leadership does not ask for warplanes that do not meet Lebanon’s needs, but for advanced helicopters that harmonize with the needs of the army”—although such helicopters would not be forthcoming, and despite the fact that at least one US official would later blame the Lebanese government for not requesting such helicopters. See Bou Mounsi, “Grant: Army Sets Its Needs.”

48. According to one October 2006 report by Nicholas Blanford, in late 2005 the LAF undertook its own assessment of its needs, alongside a U.S. and European effort, and drew up a “wish list” of advanced equipment. “The list, which was seen by Executive, included five dozen Main Battle Tanks, several combat helicopters, such as Apache or Cobra attack helicopters, nearly 30 patrol boats and a number of self-propelled 155mm artillery guns, in all amounting to nearly \$1 billion.” According to Blanford, the figure was subsequently slashed to under \$100 million with “most of the offensive weaponry such as heavy artillery and aircraft replaced with more mundane, but vital, logistical items such as transport vehicles, and communications and surveillance equipment. Minister of Defence Elias Murr also envisages a lighter-armed more mobile military. *He apparently disavowed the army’s ‘wish list’* and is placing emphasis on twin propellered troop transport helicopters capable of ferrying soldiers rapidly to remote areas of the border as well as anti-tank missiles and anti-aircraft weapons as a means of thwarting potential Israeli air and ground incursions.” [emphasis added] Of course, even Murr’s own “wish-list” was apparently not transferred as a formal request to Washington and would not be forthcoming either. For an excellent report on the 2005–06 U.S. and European assessments, see especially Christine Spolar, “U.S. Studies Lebanon’s Military,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 3, 2006, available online at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/org/news/2006/060303-lebanon-military.htm>; for Blanford, see Nicholas Blanford, “Reforming the Lebanese Army,” *Executive Magazine*, October 2006.

49. According to one Western European defense attaché, “the problem for the equipment is that the U.S. presents, shows, the LAF a catalogue with all that is possible to order . . . the Lebanese can only choose through this catalogue. The Lebanese would have liked to order some light tanks or light personnel carriers because they badly need them—a little more modern than they have but it was not possible because it was not available in the catalogue. What was proposed were several hundred HUMVEES—so they received HUMVEES—this particular vehicle is the worse one for the LAF since

it is very big and needs a lot of gasoline. The LAF is strapped for gasoline, but they could not have something else. So they accepted.” Interview by author, Western European defense attaché #1, August 2008.

50. Ibid.

51. According to one May 2008 report in Haaretz, “European diplomats familiar with the events in Lebanon claim that in the past year the United States has refused to provide the Lebanese army with advanced weapons that would have helped against Hezbollah and other militant groups. They said this was because of Israeli requests. The European diplomats told Haaretz that although Lebanon asked the U.S. to provide heavy weapons such as antitank missiles and assault helicopters, the U.S. aid has concentrated on training Lebanese army units and supplying light arms and ammunition. They say the U.S. refused the requests because of Israel’s fears that heavy arms could be used against it in the future or even fall into Hezbollah hands.” Saab reports further that, “Although the Bush administration has provided more than \$380 million in tactical aid to Lebanon since the Syrian withdrawal of 2005, no air-defence system or intelligence-gathering equipment has ever been included in U.S. military-assistance programs for fear that it might fall into enemy hands or challenge Israel’s ability to wage aerial campaigns in Lebanon with impunity.” He cites, “Assertion communicated to the author by current senior U.S. Department of Defense officials in a private meeting at the Pentagon.” One recent conference report by the Stimson Center is even clearer in characterizing U.S. concerns as centering on Israel’s Qualitative Military Edge—although the report notes a fear of weapons’ transfer and the lack of a defense strategy. “The policy of QME in favour of Israel constrains the type and amount of assistance Lebanon can obtain from the United States.” For Haaretz, see Yoav Stern and Barak Ravid, “Lebanon PM: Hezbollah Did to Beirut What Israel Didn’t Dare,” *Haaretz*, November 5, 2008, available online at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/982080.html>; for Saab, see Bilal Y. Saab, “Rethinking Hezbollah’s Disarmament,” *Middle East Policy Council Journal* 15, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 9; for Stimson, see El-Hokayem and McGovern, “Towards a More Secure and Stable Lebanon,” p. 5; also, interview by author, retired LAF general #1, August 2008, interview by author, retired LAF general #2, August 2008, and interview by author, retired LAF general #3, August 2008; interview by author, Western European defense attaché #1, August 2008, and interview by author, Western European defense attaché #2, September 2008.

52. Departing, somewhat, from the public position on LAF assistance and Hizbullah’s arms, Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt told the *Chicago Tribune* in March 2006, after confirming an ongoing review: “We’re looking for stability. . . . An unstable Lebanon is a danger to itself, to its immediate neighbours and the region. This is part of our overall strategy.” He then asked, “The larger question is: Who is their enemy? Are they looking at Israel? Al-Qaeda? Syria? . . . In our minds, this is the army that sooner or later will have to stand up to the armed branch of Hezbollah.” Later, amid ongoing hostilities during the July War, one State Department spokesperson made the quid pro quo even clearer: if the LAF hoped for equipment, even spare parts, it

would have to first focus on “using its military to keep Hizbullah in check.” The point was underscored by U.S. officials interviewed by ICG who “implied” that “the LAF must be trained and equipped to meet Hizbollah’s, not Israel’s, challenge.” All of this, of course, stands in sharp contrast to the line that U.S. officials typically promulgate: as one State Department official put it, “The U.S. doesn’t define your enemies; that is Lebanon’s job.” For *Tribune*, see Spolar, “U.S. Studies Lebanon’s Military”; for State Department spokesperson, see Donna Miles, “Lebanon to Be Among First Beneficiaries of New DoD Funding Authority,” *Military Connection*, August 2006, available online at <http://www.militaryconnection.com/news/august-2006/funding-authority.html>; for the ICG, see “Israel, Hizbollah, Lebanon,” p. 21; for comments by John Hillen, assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, see Lebanese-Canadian Coordinating Council, LCCC News Bulletin, May 11, 2006, available online at <http://www.10452lccc.com/daily%20news%20bulletin/may.english11.06.htm>.

53. E-mail and phone interview by author, Department of Defense official involved in Lebanon policy, September 2008.

54. For a well-informed version of LAF efforts to devise a temporary fix, see David Schenker, “U.S. Support for the Lebanese Army.” Strangely, after illustrating the LAF’s attempt to bootstrap its own solution (and avoiding the subject of the Gazelle helicopters delivered without HOT missiles), Schenker insists later that, “The materiel provided by the United States was what was required for the operation and what could be absorbed by the LAF.”

55. Numerous examples of the inadequacy of the U.S. response to Nahr al-Barid have circulated among LAF officials, current and retired, as well as in the Lebanese media—some true, others simply untrue, and still others unverifiable. According to the Stimson Center’s report, “in Nahr al-Barid, the fighters of Fatah al-Islam were equipped with the most advanced sniper rifles—weapons that the LAF issued rifles could not compete with” (although the United States did in fact eventually send a limited number of such rifles). “The panellists argued that had the army been equipped with better weapons systems, including helicopters, smart bombs, anti-tank rockets and missiles, field computer technology and night vision binoculars and snipers, victory over the militia would have been achieved faster and at a lesser human cost.” The report notes especially that the LAF did not “have an adequate communications network, forcing soldiers to rely on their personal cell phones to communicate.” Later, it would transpire that the United States had also blocked a Western European state’s effort to rebuild the maritime radar capabilities of the LAF in the months leading up to Nahr al-Barid. According to one embassy official directly involved in the issue, the country was forced to find an alternative supplier of the equipment since the United States refused to allow the export license—even though military use of the equipment was technically “impossible” (a reference to Hizbullah’s alleged use of LAF radars during the July War). The State Department, for its part, touts a range of items it says it has delivered to the LAF, including “a total of over 12 million rounds to the LAF. In response to the LAF’s request to improve its transport capability, the United States has

delivered 285 all terrain vehicles (HUMVEES) to the LAF since 2006, and 300 more will arrive over the next year. The LAF has also received 200 cargo transport trucks. In addition, the United States has provided repair parts for all vehicles and critical repair parts for the LAF's helicopters. U.S. assistance to the LAF has also supplied the same front-line weapons that the U.S. military troops are currently using, including assault rifles, automatic grenade launchers, advanced sniper weapon systems, anti-tank weapons, and the most modern urban warfare bunker weapons"—although in the latter three cases, the amounts have been negligible. For an overview of the U.S. response, see: Scheherezade Faramarzi, "Lebanese Army Blames Lack of Heavy Weapons from U.S. on Long Battle at Refugee Camp," Associated Press, August 14, 2007; interview by author, Western European defense attaché #1, August 2008, and interview by author, retired LAF general #1, August 2008; for maritime radar, see interview by author, Western European embassy official, September 2008; for the damage caused as a result of poor equipment, see "Towards a More Secure and Stable Lebanon," p. 18.

56. "Nasrallah addresses rally on the International Day of Jerusalem," September 26, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com.

57. See "Hale Conveys U.S. Offer of Cobra Helicopters," Now Lebanon, September 5, 2008, available online at <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=57668>.

58. On September 21, according to the blog Friday Lunch Club, LBC-TV reported that a spokesperson for the Israeli foreign ministry said Israel continues applying "pressures" on the United States to "prevent" it from providing the Lebanese army with equipment. The spokeswoman added that a meeting grouped a U.S. delegation headed by Feltman and an Israeli team headed by Premier Ehud Olmert to discuss "equipping the Lebanese army with helicopters and weapons, and that Israel fears Hezbollah might have access to these weapons." Only a few days later, Hizbullah's deputy head, Shaykh Naim Qassem, pointing to the Israel statements, said, "The spokeswoman for the Zionist government announced officially yesterday that Israel had objected to Jeffrey Feltman, who came to Israel to discuss the possibility of supplying the Lebanese Army with some weapons. Israel refused to keep the answer secret and to achieve what it wants, as it usually does with America. It acted in a way, thinking that it would humiliate the Lebanese by preventing the armament of the Lebanese Army by America. We know that this talk makes us more convinced of our resistance approach." For AIPAC's resistance to arms transfers over the summer of 2008 see Barak Ravid, "Israel Attempting to Scuttle \$400 Million U.S.-Lebanon Arms Deal," *Haaretz*, June 20, 2008, available online at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/994770.html>. Additionally, according to one commentator writing on July 29, 2008, in the *Jerusalem Post*, "Israel has recently begun openly expressing its alarm about these weapon transfers. Given Hizbullah's now inarguable control over Lebanon and its sway over its military forces, it is all but a foregone conclusion that these weapons will likely be used by Hizbullah and its allied forces in the Lebanese army in any future war with Israel. In recent weeks, senior Defense Ministry officials

have been dispatched to the Pentagon in an attempt to convince the U.S. to stop the weapons transfers. Yet while the Pentagon was only too happy to give Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Gadi Ashkenazi an unrequested medal, it has rebuffed all of Israel's entreaties." For LBC, see The Friday Lunch Club, available online at <http://friday-lunch-club.blogspot.com/2008/09/israel-opposed-equipping-lebanese-army.html>; for Qassem, see "Lebanese Hezbollah Leader on Israel, Sectarian 'Sedition,' Other Issues," BBC Monitoring Middle East—Political, September 26, 2008; for *Jerusalem Post*, see Caroline Glick, "Ending Lebanon's Free Ride," July 29, 2008, available online at http://www.carolineglick.com/e/2008/07/ending_lebanons_free_ride.asp.

59. See "Hale: U.S. to Provide Lebanese Army with Stronger Equipment," Naharnet, September 25, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/newsdesk.nsf/Lebanon/414A4852B60BC319C22574CF0028EEBE?OpenDocument>.

60. See "Cobras or No Cobras to Lebanon?"

61. Ibid.

62. Joe Ma'karoun, "Suleiman in Washington: Political Pleasantries and Military Helicopters!" *As-Safir*, September 26, 2008, translated by Mideastwire.com. The issue may yet be resolved in favor of the Cobra transfer—but more likely in the form of "armed" transport helicopters long sought by the ministry of defense. An early October announcement of a "U.S.-Lebanon Joint Military Commission" said that, "the U.S. military will support Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) assessments of helicopter options available to them." [emphasis added] The press release from the U.S. Embassy in Beirut also heralded "three military contracts totalling \$63 million of U.S. grants to the LAF for secure communications, ammunition, and infantry weapons." Additionally, in late November, *An-Nahar* reported that the United States was prepared to provide a small number of M60 tanks from excess Jordanian inventory in the new year, although it remains to be seen if even this extremely limited provision of heavy weaponry comes to fruition, contrary to Congressman Rahall's prediction. For the Joint Commission, see "Inaugural U.S.-Lebanon Joint Military Commission," press release from the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, October 6, 2008, available online at http://lebanon.usembassy.gov/latest_embassy_news/press-releases08/prmil100608.html; for the provision of M60 tanks, see "Gemayel: No Change in Alliances. . . . Their Moderation is Tactical While Ours Is Strategic," *Naharnet*, November 23, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&611D3D37690F3D45C225750A00501679>.

63. According to *Naharnet*, Nasrallah's key aide, Hussein Khalil, "wondered whether the U.S. was willing to supply the Lebanese army with anti-aircraft guns in the light of repeated Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace." See "Hizbullah's Khalil: No Lebanon without Resistance," *Naharnet*, July 30, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&B0BF45E8AF2DBB23C2257496005C33FD>.

64. Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (Saqi: London, 2005), p. 134.

65. Nicholas Noe, ed., *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah* (Verso: London, 2007), p. 297.

66. The threat would, of course, later be directed against Hizbullah specifically, in the wake of the 2006 July War, when U.S. warships were periodically stationed off the Lebanese coast as a show of Washington's "commitment" to the Siniora government.

67. Qassem, *Hizbullah*, p. 78.

68. See note 16.

69. Interview by author, Ali Fayyad, September 2008.

70. "Hezbollah Figure Says Lebanon's Doha Agreement 'Big Achievement,'" BBC Monitoring Middle East—Political, May 30, 2008.

71. "Lebanese Hezbollah Chief Delivers Speech, Addresses News Conference," BBC Monitoring Middle East—Political, July 3, 2008.

72. Conversely, U.S. officials have long been unable to accept the rational basis for Hizbullah's support—or the ways in which that same rational basis constrains the party's use of violence. One seminal example of this came shortly after the May violence when Welch told the Saudi-owned *Asharq Al-Awsat* daily that "he believed Hizbullah is strong only because it has arms, adding that the Shiite group's other capabilities were limited. Welch also told *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper on Wednesday that he believes . . . the party is clinging to its weapons because it is not capable of persuading the Lebanese into accepting its cause." See "Welch: Hizbullah Keeping Its Arms Because It Lacks Persuasion Techniques," *Naharnet*, August 14, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/0/7D03C94647D65199C22574A5003A3DCA?OpenDocument>.

73. Hizbullah leaders often argue that they must be particularly careful in their actions, given what they say is the Shiite community's inherent vulnerability. As Nasrallah told one audience in 2002, "Once, in a discussion of resistance operations, I told certain officials that 'we are concerned about the nation, the state, and the future more than you think.' Why is this so? Because when, Heaven forbid, the country is menaced by security, military, and political dangers or economic collapse, then those people who have capital, bankrolls, companies, children, luxury homes, and houses abroad, flee. They have a second citizenship. It is very simple. They collect the rest of their family and leave the country. [However] our houses, graves, life, death, honour, and mortification—they are all here. Where else can we go?" His logic, of course, would be tested during the July War, when the brunt of the Israeli assault fell on the Shia community. The result was arguably a higher risk calculus—and a higher order of rationale—for Hizbullah in sparking any future violence. See Helena Cobban, "Hizbullah's New Face," *Boston Review*, April/May 2005, available online at <http://bostonreview.net/BR30.2/cobban.html>.

74. For Alagha, see Joseph Elie Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Pragmatism* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam

University Press, 2006), available online at www.isim.nl/files/Dissertation_Alagha.pdf.

75. Composed of the Future Movement (Sunni), the Progressive Socialist Party (Druze), and Amal and Hezbollah (Shiite).

76. As Nasrallah put it: “So, we said we want to participate in the political life in order to protect the resistance. We did not want to allow the situation on the internal Lebanese front to reach the point of confrontation with the resistance. We did not want to allow anyone to drag the Lebanese Army, the Lebanese security forces, or the Lebanese political forces to a confrontation with the resistance. This is why we have strongly participated in the government and the political life.” “Text of Speech by Lebanese Hezbollah Leader on ‘Resistance and Liberation Day,’” BBC Monitoring Middle East—Political, May 26, 2007.

77. As Mohammed Ben Jalloun points out, this process actually began as early as the fall 2004, when Ghalib Abu Zeinab, the politburo member in charge of Hizbullah’s relations with Lebanon’s non-Shiite communities, explained: “we look at the coexistence we have between the different confessions here as an example, and we don’t want to overthrow it. If it was a ‘majority-minority’ system here it would be explosive. So we’ll hang onto this confessional balance we have for now. But I don’t know what will happen in 20 years.” See Mohammed Ben Jalloun, “Hezbollah’s Democratic Demands,” Swans Commentary, January 15, 2007, available online at <http://www.swans.com/library/art13/jelloun3.html>.

78. “Nasrallah Speech to Protesters,” December 7, 2006, translation by Mideastwire.com.

79. One illustration of the enduring popularity of the FPM in the wake of the July War was provided in the August 2007 by-elections, when Aoun’s candidate, the largely unknown Camille Khoury, defeated Phalange party leader, former president, and father of the slain minister of parliament who had previously represented the district, Amine Gemayal. Interview by author, U.S. election expert in Beirut #2, September 2008.

80. Hizbullah’s lingering concern over Aoun’s stance on national defense was briefly evident in one Al-Manar report on the new U.S. position on Shebaa Farms. After carrying Aoun’s criticism of U.S. policy, the station cut away right before Aoun explained, “We were very pleased that the Americans began to understand our viewpoints [emphasis added]. Had they done that earlier, they would have spared us a lot of trouble, especially with regard to establishing good relations with Syria.” Several months later, Aoun articulated a plan for a defense strategy that sought the expansion of the ranks of “resistance fighters” beyond Hizbullah to all communities in Lebanon—effectively a series of village guards, but with the caveat that Hizbullah’s forces would be linked and on par with other local forces. Aoun also suggested to the National Dialogue Table in November 2008, that an expanded “national resistance” would be linked to a “second” deterrent power, the national army, all of which would effectively function under the ultimate authority of the state—although this contentious second point remains only strongly implied as an opening position in the negotiations. For

Aoun on Al-Manar, see “Lebanese Al-Manar TV reports reaction to remarks by USA’s Rice on Shab’a farms,” BBC Monitoring Middle East—Political, June 18, 2008; for Aoun’s discussion of a national defense strategy, see also the section, “Rapprochement with the FPM,” above.

81. For polling data, interview by author, Abdo Saad, September 2008.

82. Interview by author, Abdo Saad, September 2008. This point is underscored by several retired, pro-opposition, and pro-government LAF generals in interviews. Interview by author, retired LAF general #3, August 2008.

83. See note 16 above for LOAC polling data.

84. Interview by author, senior advisor to Speaker Nabih Berri, September 2008.

85. “Birri Addresses Crowd on the 30th Anniversary of Al-Sadr’s Disappearance,” August 31, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com. Berri’s deputy, Ali Hassan Khalil, would later go somewhat further in a speech on intra-Christian reconciliation, saying, “All the military capacities provided for the Lebanese Army through the government should be allocated to integrate with the resistance, as stipulated by the ministerial statement with the aim of empowering the Army to defend the border and protect national stability.” [emphasis added] “Amal MP: Intra-Christian Reconciliation Represents Momentum for Muslims,” October 6, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com.

86. See “English Translation of the Speech Delivered by Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah at the Divine Victory Rally on 22nd September 2006,” available online at <http://www.debianhelp.org/node/1463>.

87. Beyond the Winograd Report conclusions, excerpted above, see especially William M. Arkin, *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 2007), available online at <http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/aul/aupress>.

88. Noe, *Voice of Hezbollah*, p. 306.

89. “Nasrallah’s Speech during Iftar Banquet,” Al-Manar TV, September 4, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com.

90. See note 11.

91. For an overview of the original *Haaretz* story and the subsequent denial by the UN secretary general, see Barak Ravid, “UN Chief: Debate on Shaba Farms Ownership Is Premature,” *Haaretz*, December 7, 2007, available online at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/880722.html>.

92. In early November 2008, Hizbullah’s head of international relations, Nawaf al-Mussawi, reiterated the party’s longstanding position that Lebanon’s border with Israel/Palestine, as fixed between the Mandate Powers and later the Armistice Agreement, had improperly confiscated land, in particular the so-called “seven vil-lages” that presently lie in northern Israel. “We should be attentive to attempts to consider the Blue Line a border line, which strips Lebanon of millions of square meters from its national soil. . . . Zionist terrorist organizations,” he said, “moved the border line from what was established in 1920 to a new line in 1923 which stripped Lebanon

of seven villages and 20 farms.” However, as ICG notes, according to Hizbullah’s Abu Zeinab, the issue of the seven villages is not considered a “strategic” issue like Shebaa, Kfar Shouba, and Ghajar—a politically wise decision by the party since the villages are Shiite and any attempt by Hizbullah to raise the villages to the level of actionable items within the liberation file would likely be seen as narrowly sectarian in character. For Mussawi, see “Even UN Admits Blue Line Is Not a Border,” *Zawya*, November 5, 2008, available online at http://zawya.com/Story.cfm/sidDS051108_dsart8/Even%20UN%20admits%20Blue%20Line%20is%20not%20a%20border%20-%20Hizbullah/.

93. In addition to water, as ICG notes, Israeli officials sometimes argue that the farms are “critically important” for the Israeli military “because of the presence of Israeli observation posts overlooking southern Lebanon and that if Israel were to give it up, ‘we would see a huge improvement in Hizbollah’s capacity,’” but adds that “other Israeli military experts argue that adjacent hills offer an adequate alternative for observing activity north of the border.” See “Israel/Hizbollah/Lebanon.”

94. According to a June 16 report by *The Daily Star*, “Lebanese officials were still awaiting official notice Thursday from Israel regarding Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s bombshell announcement that Israel would withdraw from the disputed Shebaa Farms once the area is proven to be Lebanese. Olmert made the unexpected announcement on Wednesday during a meeting with French President Jacques Chirac, saying that Israel would be ready to withdraw its occupying forces from the Farms—the first time Israel makes this declaration. Lebanese local daily *An-Nahar* quoted a source in Paris as saying that during the talks, the Israeli premier offered to pull his army out of the Shebaa Farms ‘after Lebanon demarcates its border with Syria and declares Lebanese sovereignty over the region.’ When contacted by *The Daily Star*, Lebanese parties and officials said they are studying the announcement carefully until it becomes ‘official.’” Rym Ghazal, “Lebanese Await Official Word from Israel on Pullout from Shebaa Farms,” *The Daily Star*, June 16, 2006.

95. Since the 2006 July War especially, Nasrallah has repeatedly chastised the government’s inability to end overflights, return prisoners, and restore the Shebaa Farms: “We do not expect you to restore the Shebaa Farms in one year and several months, but we would like to ask you to verify what you have been doing to restore these Farms, and what relations you have been using to achieve this end. This concerns the Shebaa Farms only. The authority team was incapable of either restoring the Farms or convincing the Zionist enemy to place them under UN mandate.” “Lebanese Hezbollah Leader Nasrallah Addresses Martyrs’ Day Rally,” BBC Monitoring Middle East, November 13, 2007.

96. “There is an impression,” Nasrallah explained in 2000, “that the issue of Shebaa Farms—despite their being Lebanese territory—might be the justification necessary to keep Lebanon linked to what remains of the military aspect of the conflict with Israel—as a factor in the confrontation between the Syrians and Israelis. Then the best thing for Israel to do would be to withdraw from Shebaa Farms as well. In this case, no one would have any excuses. There would be no occupied Lebanese territory left.

From the Lebanese point of view, everything would then be obvious. If anyone wanted to fight Israel afterwards, he wouldn't be doing so from a Lebanese perspective. . . . If the issue is causing so much aggravation to Israel and the UN, then let the Israelis leave Shebaa. Then, the Israeli government can stand up and say: 'Do we occupy any more Lebanese land?' To which the Lebanese will have to reply, 'No.' And the matter will be closed." See "Hizbollah: Next Stop Shebaa Farms," *Mideast Mirror* 14, no. 101 (May 30, 2000).

97. According to a November 2006 Associated Press report, "an internal Israeli Defense Force document says the overflights 'are intended in part to pressure the international community to take action to stop arms smuggling to Hizbullah guerrillas and to release two abducted Israeli soldiers.' A senior Israeli defense official confirmed the authenticity of the document. The document contradicts official Israeli assertions that the overflights are routine reconnaissance operations designed to gather intelligence about Hizbullah, which clashed with Israel over the summer in a month long war. The document, titled 'Strategic diplomatic messages: the army must continue overflights to secure international pressure,' was approved by chief of staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, a former air force commander, the official said." [emphasis added] See Tom Regan, "U.S. Demands Israeli Air Force Stop Flights into Lebanese Airspace," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 3, 2006, available online at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1103/dailyUpdate.html?s=rel>.

98. As Bill Arkin explains, in reference to the "34 minute" Israeli air force operation, which reportedly disabled Hizbullah's long-range missile capability: "There is, in fact, little evidence on the ground to indicate that the Israeli attacks undertaken on 12 July (or 13 July) were focused so intently on Hezbollah's rocket force, and there is no evidence that 94 such attacks were focused on the rocket force. . . . What is more, Hezbollah subsequently carried out extensive long-range rocket strikes, a fundamental reality that seems to call into question *whether Israel had intelligence of such fidelity at the time to even validate the original bomb damage assessment.*" [emphasis added] See Dennis M. Drew, *Recapitalizing the Air Force Intellect: Essays on War, Airpower, and Military Education* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 2008), available online at <http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/aul/aupress>.

99. For the 2007 LIBAT report recommendations, see "July 2007: Lebanon," Security Council Report, available online at www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTIsG/b.2876597/k.B98E/July_2007brLebanon.htm.

100. Michael Young has sensibly suggested just such an approach: "But if Suleiman is bold, he might ask the government to accept that the issue of overflights be dealt with in the context of the Armistice Commission, with UNIFIL sitting at the table too. The president might then ask that the UN and the international community stop the overflights, but also that they develop a system, with Lebanon, to apply Resolution 1701 along the border with Syria. In other words Suleiman can use Hizbullah's valid displeasure with Israeli overflights to propose ways to implement the resolution in its entirety." See Michael Young, "Flying High Again with Hizbullah," *Daily Star*, August

7, 2008, available online at <http://michaelyoungscolumns.blogspot.com/2008/08/flying-high-again-with-hizbullah.html>.

101. See “Syria Officially Asked for Border Control Coordination,” Naharnet, October 2, 2008, available online at <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/newsdesk.nsf/0/F0B3F5D793BE4F06C22574D60028AC96?OpenDocument>.

102. Detailing Israel’s tremendous satellite reconnaissance capabilities, one September 2007 report in the *Jerusalem Post* stated that, “Israeli space capabilities will take a giant leap in September when the Defense Ministry launches its most advanced spy satellite aboard an Indian rocket. The new satellite is capable of transmitting tiny images in all weather conditions. Following last month’s successful launch of the Ofek 7 spy satellite, Israel is making final arrangements to launch the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI)-developed TecSar. It will be the first Israeli satellite with Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) capabilities, and will monitor developments at Iran’s nuclear installations. . . . It was developed by the IAI’s Space Division MBT and can create images of objects on earth even in cloudy weather conditions, a capability not available with the Ofek satellites. . . . ‘This new satellite will be a major leap for the IDF and its operational capabilities,’ a senior defense official said Thursday. ‘This will enhance our intelligence gathering capabilities, and its successful launch will place Israel as one of the leading countries in the world in satellite development.’ Defense officials . . . said the TecSar would be more advanced than the Eros B satellite, which Israel launched in April 2006 and has the ability to spot images on the ground as small as 70 centimetres. In addition to the Ofek 7, Eros B and the Amos 1 and 2 (both communication satellites), Israel currently operates the Ofek 5 spy satellite, successfully launched in May 2002. IAI plans to launch the Amos 3 in the coming months.” See Yaakhov Katz and Greer Fay Cashman, “Israel to Launch Spy Satellite in India,” *Jerusalem Post*, September 20, 2007, available online at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1189411441975>.

103. According to the United Nations, “During the period from the end of the 2006 conflict through 19 June 2008, incidents involving unexploded ordnance, including cluster munitions, led to 27 civilian fatalities and 231 civilian injuries. Mine-clearance incidents have resulted in 13 mine-clearance fatalities and 38 injuries thus far.” See “Seventh Report of the UN Secretary General on the Implementation of Resolution 1701.”

104. See “Israel,” Landmine Monitor, 2007, available online at <https://www.icbl.org/lm/2007/israel.html>.

105. Interview by author, UNIFIL officials Beirut, June 2008.

106. See Schenker, “U.S. Support for the Lebanese Army.” In the same piece, Schenker adds, “But it’s important to understand that the strength of this institution [the LAF] does not primarily rely on its capabilities, but rather on its will to take on difficult missions on orders from the democratically-elected government of Lebanon. *No amount of U.S. military assistance will change this current dynamic.*” [emphasis added] In this, of course, Schenker disregards Sulieman’s understanding that the

LAF was greatly constrained by its lack of men and equipment during the May 2008 violence; not to mention statements by Commander Kahwagi that the LAF was also hobbled during Nahr al-Barid for some of the very same reasons. “Taking on difficult missions” is therefore, in the minds of LAF commanders, very much a function of the fighting capabilities of the army, as well as its belief in the fundamental right and necessity of certain missions. For Suleiman’s understanding, see Fatimah al-Issawi, “Source: Sunni Leaders Interfered to Prevent Officers’ Resignation. . .,” *Asharq Al-Awsat*, May 15, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com.

107. Interview by author, retired LAF general #1, August 2008; interview by author, retired LAF general #2, August 2008; interview by author, retired LAF general #3, August 2008.

108. U.S. officials, and some analysts, have long praised the LAF for supposedly not requesting “prestige” weapons—the idea being that such weapons would constitute a mere show of force unrelated to the actual defense needs of the country. Although both Suleiman and Kahwagi have made clear that they want and need such weapons, both have also been frank that they serve an added purpose—communicating to the Lebanese that the LAF is trying, to the best of its abilities, to bring sophisticated weapons to bear in defending against both an outsized Israeli opponent as well as potentially deadly extremists. Interview by author, Western European defense attaché #1, August 2008.

109. While not conceding the point on the dual purpose of advanced equipment, Exum argues, “I . . . am all in favor of a more robust military partnership with the LAF. But we need to think hard about the likely missions the LAF will be called upon to execute in the near future. To my mind, threats emerging from within Lebanon—along the lines of groups like Fatah al-Islam—represent a more realistic adversary than the IDF.” See Schenker, “U.S. Support for the Lebanese Army.”

110. According to a November 2006 ICG report, “A senior government official said the army would need \$1.2 billion in equipment and weapons, and the ISF \$200-300 million,” in order to provide for adequate troop and equipment levels. “Military officials agreed, stressing the army’s need for defensive weapons: anti-aircraft, anti-ship and anti-tank especially.” See International Crisis Group, “Israel/Hizbullah/Lebanon.”

111. E-mail interview by author, Congressional Research Service staffer, September 2008.

112. A potentially fruitful example of small countries purchasing air defense systems was recently provided by Estonia. According to a report in *Defense Industry Daily*, “The Baltic States have made efforts to implement short-range air defense programs, though to date these have mostly been efforts to defend vital targets within their countries as opposed to any effort at national air defense. While Latvia and Lithuania opted for Sweden’s unjammable laser-guided RBS-70, Estonia went in a different direction. After narrowing the competition to Raytheon’s FIM-92 Stinger and MBDA’s Mistral, the Estonian government announced the winner of a 1 billion Kroon (currently about \$84.5 million) contract on Feb 28/07 for Mistral missiles,

networked via Saab's Giraffe 3D radars. Now the first systems are being delivered." See "Estonia Chooses new SHORAD Air Defense System," *Defense Industry Daily*, September 1, 2008, available online at <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/estonia-chooses-new-shorad-air-defense-system-03088/>.

113. Israel's water potential is among the lowest in the world—approximately 350 cubic meters per capita. Lebanon, by comparison, has five times the water resources of Israel per capita. Moreover, as one midsummer report in the *Jerusalem Post* makes clear, Israel is also in the middle of an almost unprecedented water emergency: "This is the worst crisis since records started being kept 80 years ago," Water Authority head Uri Shani declared Tuesday [July 8] morning at a special press conference in Tel Aviv. "Like most countries, Israel is dependent on rainfall and the amount of rainfall is decreasing. There is a drop of 100 million cubic meters per year." The Sea of Galilee, which is fed by the Wazzani and Hazbani rivers, is currently at its lowest point in forty-six years. See Ehud Zion Waldoks, "Mismanagement to Blame for Worst Water Crisis Ever," *Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2008, available online at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1215330895145&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>; for Israel's record on water vis-à-vis Lebanon, see Karim Makdisi, "Towards a Human Rights Approach to Water in Lebanon: Implementation beyond 'Reform,'" in *Water as a Human Right for the Middle East and Africa*, Asit K. Biswas, Eglal Rached, and Cecelia Tortajada, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2008), available online at http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-127237-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.

114. For a good overview, see Glal Luft, "The Wazzini Water Dispute: More Tension along the Israel-Lebanon Border," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 20, 2002, available online at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2088>, and also "Israel Warns of War over Water," BBC News World Edition, September 10, 2002, available online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2249599.stm.

115. According to a National Intelligence Council report, the Jordan River basin especially remains as a potential source of "low-level armed conflict." With water "becoming more scarce in several regions, cooperation over changing water resources is likely to be increasingly difficult within and between states, straining regional relations," the report asserts. See National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 2008), available online at http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_2025_project.html.

116. "Nasrallah Speaks to Party Graduates, Addresses Political Deadlock," April 8, 2007, translation by Mideastwire.com.

117. "Hizbollah: Next Stop Shebaa Farms."

118. See Daniel Sobelman, "Hizbullah Two Years after the Withdrawal—A Compromise between Ideology, Interests, and Exigencies," *Strategic Assessment* 5, no. 2 (August 2002), available online at <http://www.weltpolitik.net/Regionen/Naher%20u.%20Mittlerer%20Osten/Gesamtregion/Analysen/Hizbollah%20Two%20Years%20after%20the%20Withdrawal%20-A%20Compromise%20>

between%20Ideology,%20Interests,%20and%20Exigencies.html.

119. Ibid.; interview by author, Ali Fayyad, September 2008.

120. Hizbullah leaders often cite the 1992 expulsion of hundreds of HAMAS and Islamic Jihad members, including many top leaders, to an area in southern Lebanon that became known as “no-man’s land.” Comments by right-wing politicians supporting some kind of a transfer or expulsion policy—especially from the National Union-National Religious Party and former cabinet members like Avigdor Lieberman—in addition to prominent historians like Benny Morris have likewise provided fodder for the claim.

121. See “Poll Shows 62% of Israelis Favour Emigration of Arab Citizens,” Electronic Intifada, May 11, 2006, available online at <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article4702.shtml>, and Neta Sela, “Poll: 62% Want Arab Emigration,” Ynetnews, May 9, 2006, available online at <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3248693,00.html>.

122. Adir Waldman, *Arbitrating Armed Conflict: Decisions of the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group* (New York: Juris Publishing, 2003), p. 61. For the April Agreement and the critical side letter between the United States and Israel, see pp. 27–28.

123. For Tzur, see Waldman, *Arbitrating Armed Conflict*, p. 116.

124. The French-sponsored “April Understanding” was signed by Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and the United States on April 26, 1996. It effectively ended the open conflict that had been raging for two and a half weeks between Israel and Hizbullah and that had claimed hundreds of casualties, almost all on the Lebanese side. Most significantly, the April Understanding affirmed the legitimacy of the Hizbullah military operations in Lebanon, greatly restricted attacks on Lebanese civilians by the Israelis, and placed a modest prohibition on Hizbullah attacks launched directly from civilian areas.

125. “Seventh Report of the UN Secretary General on the Implementation of Resolution 1701.”

126. Interview by author, UN officials in Beirut, September 2008.

127. According to one USAID official in Beirut, an inadequate amount of agency resources has been focused on the key issue of water, although the official hoped that this would change in the coming years. Interview by author, USAID official, September 2008.

128. The Ministry of Energy and Water estimates that only as much as 20 percent of the Decennial Plan’s construction projects and 60 percent of the planning efforts for drinking water and irrigation (out of a \$1 billion proposed program) have actually been finished as of 2007. Moreover, most of this expenditure can be accounted for by refurbishment projects that merely brought the sector back to where it started from years ago. According to Fadi Comair, director general of Hydraulic and Electrical Resources at the Ministry, there remains more than \$900 million in yet-to-be-funded projects that he described as vital for ensuring the future functioning of Lebanon’s water network. See William Long, “Water Reform Efforts Stuck in Neutral as Crisis Looms,” *Daily Star*, August 20, 2007, available online at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article>.

asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=25&article_id=84640; for an overview of water related projects in southern Lebanon, see Antoinette Sleiman, "Litani River and Litani River Water Authority Projects," Litani River Authority, June 8, 2007, available online at http://www.riob.org/ag2007/comms/8_08_45/Sleiman_Antoinette_Litani_River_and_Litani_River_Authority_Projects.pdf.

129. Israeli politicians such as Lieberman and Benny Elon of the Moledet party, as well as others who advocate "transfer" policies, have been regularly feted by U.S. think tanks, politicians, and organizations from across the political spectrum. In contrast, earlier this year, after ministers of parliament complained that settler groups were being invited to official U.K. embassy events in Jerusalem, British foreign office minister Kim Howells announced that such persons would not be invited to future events hosted by the British embassy in Israel, given their role in undermining the peace process.

130. The Stimson Center's Hokayem has argued that, "Reform should rank high on the list of Lebanese politicians' priorities, because calling Hizbollah's bluff by pointing out that it does not seek institutional reform provides an opportunity to undermine one of Hizbollah's main levers of power and influence. Hizbollah, according to conventional wisdom, exists in part to right the wrongs of political underrepresentation and economic disenfranchisement of Lebanon's large Shiite community. It would therefore make sense to expect Hizbollah to champion political reform; after all, more institutionalized Shiite power would translate into more Hizbollah power. But to believe that Hizbollah seeks to advocate Shiite rights within the state framework is to fundamentally misread its objectives. Reform would actually undermine the political strategy that has enabled Hizbollah to maintain its special status and impose its objectives on the rest of the country. . . . In other words, Hizbollah by far prefers being a state within a state to any alternative, barring perhaps a complete (and unlikely) domination of Lebanon's political scene." See Emile El-Hokayem, "Lebanon: Hizbullah's Enduring Myth," Stimson Center, November 14, 2006, available online at <http://www.stimson.org/pub.cfm?id=348>. For Hizbullah's steady reversal on deconfessionalization—beginning in 2004 and accelerated after the al-Hariri assassination—see note 77.

131. According to Democracy Reporting International, Sunnites and Shiites are equally underrepresented—accounting for 26 percent of the registered voter population but holding only 21 percent of parliamentary seats (Christians, by contrast, hold 50 percent of the seats but only a 39 percent share of the registered voter population). Of course, Shiites may be even more underrepresented than Sunnites in parliament, given speculation that their community may now constitute as much as 40 percent of the population. In the absence of an updated census, the exact contours of Shiite disenfranchisement remain impossible to confirm—although what is certain is that, by a combination of law and custom, Shiites are essentially excluded from key posts such as prime minister, army commander, Central Bank head, and minister of finance, not to mention a range of other civil service positions that continue to

rely on outdated population statistics. See “Assessment of the Electoral Framework: Lebanon,” *Democracy Reporting International*, April 2008, p.18; interview by author, Paul Salem, August 2008.

132. Qassem, *Hizbullah*, p. 213.

133. One of the more interesting hypotheses supporting the move toward deconfessionalisation is that, according to Mark Farha, “a traditional, sect-focused analysis of the Lebanese predicament omits perhaps the most critical segment of Lebanese society. A case can be made that the most underrepresented constituency in Lebanon is not the Shiites, Sunnis, or Christians, but the considerable number of Lebanese who do not identify primarily with the sect or creed into which they are born (or particularly care how many seats it is allotted). Interestingly, the proportion of Lebanese who privilege their national identity over their confessional identity (34%, according to a 2005 survey) compares positively with virtually all Arab and Middle Eastern countries. If the strengthening of an inter-communal civic identity is the only exit out of the vicious cycles of confessional conflict, temporary compromise, and renewed contestation, then finally lending a voice and official, constitutional recognition to what Jawad Adra calls the ‘hidden third’ of Lebanese society is one of the most sensible steps to secure Lebanon’s future stability and prosperity.” See Mark Farha, “Demography and Democracy in Lebanon,” *Mideast Monitor* 3, no. 1 (January-March 2008), available online at http://mideastmonitor.org/issues/0801/0801_2.htm.

134. While stressing the necessity of U.S. investment in reform processes, Saab nevertheless rejects movement on the most important process—deconfessionalisation. He argues that, “The abolition of political sectarianism, while essential to the future of liberal democratic politics in Lebanon, is not a realistic goal in the near term (a gradual process is a more stable and desirable path).” Engaging the government and building state capacity should therefore be the primary focus of U.S. efforts, according to Saab. By these mechanisms, “The United States can avoid being seen as playing sectarian favourites in Lebanon. After all, a key structural handicap for the U.S. government is its strained relationship with one of Lebanon’s largest communities (and now with its allies). . . . A policy of supporting the Lebanese state, rather than blindly supporting sect leaders and politicians belonging to the March 14th coalition, can mitigate that handicap.” Saab’s larger point, made elsewhere, is that Hizbullah may actually have its most radical aspirations encouraged by a push toward deconfessionalization—and that this might then allow Hizbullah to use the state toward these ends. He argues, “If Lebanese political elites reach a historic deal and abolish confessionalism (a long-championed political ideal) for the sake of a majoritarian (one man, one vote) system, Hezbollah can start seeing its Islamic state project become a reality. This is because a truly democratic system in Lebanon that divorces communal identity from political access would enable the Shia, presumably the largest sectarian group in Lebanon, to become the majority in both the parliament and the cabinet. Political confessionalism, ironically and with all its faults, appears to be the most potent deterrent to Hezbollah’s Islamic aspirations.” Saab fails to recognize, however, that even under a deconfessionalized state, there

would be strong minority powers, especially in regard to the religious character of the state, and that broad (inevitably) cross-sectarian alliances would still be necessary to project any agenda—especially a military one. In this, he falls into the trap of assuming that the Shiites are an electoral “majority” (and a monolithic one at that) whereas in fact most accounts put the Shia as a plurality of the population (even less when one considers registered voters). For Fadlallah’s condemnation of Hizbullah’s 2005 fatwa on voting—one indication that the party’s means and ends remain strongly challenged within the Shiite community—see note 150. For Saab on deconfessionalization, see Bilal Y. Saab, “Shaping Lebanon’s Future,” Brookings Institution, March 19, 2008, available online at http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/0319_lebanon_saab.aspx; for Saab on the Islamic state project, see: Bilal Y. Saab, “Rethinking Hezbollah’s Disarmament,” p. 12.

135. The Lebanese constitution stipulates: “The first Chamber of Deputies which is elected on the basis of equality between Muslims and Christians takes the appropriate measures to realize the abolition of political confessionalism according to a transitional plan. A National Committee is to be formed, headed by the President of the Republic, including, in addition to the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the Prime Minister, leading political, intellectual, and social figures. (2) The tasks of this Committee are to study and propose the means to ensure the abolition of confessionalism, propose them to the Chamber of Deputies and the Ministers, and supervise the execution of the transitional plan. (3) During the transitional phase: a. The confessional groups are to be represented in a just and equitable fashion in the formation of the Cabinet. b. The principle of confessional representation in public service jobs, in the judiciary, in the military and security institutions, and in public and mixed agencies are to be cancelled in accordance with the requirements of national reconciliation; they shall be replaced by the principle of expertise and competence. However, Grade One posts and their equivalents are exempt from this rule, and the posts must be distributed equally between Christians and Muslims without reserving any particular job for any confessional group but rather applying the principles of expertise and competence.” See “Lebanon Constitution,” *International Constitutional Law*, September 21, 1990, available online at http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/1e00000_.html#I000_.

136. Presumably such a plan would also encompass related structural issues such as judicial independence and oversight, administrative decentralization, and a redrawing of the electoral system in light of the ultimate goal of deconfessionalization.

137. Najjar, “The Taif Agreement,” p. 446.

138. For the inadequacy of the election law reform passed by parliament in September 2008, see Doreen Khoury, “Lebanon’s Election Law: A Cup Half Full,” *Daily Star*, October 10, 2008, available online at http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=5&article_id=96630.

139. According to one November 2006 ICG report, “The March 14 forces ultimately would be threatened by the establishment of such a state, which would terminate the patronage and community-based system to which they owe their power.” See

International Crisis Group, “Israel/Hizbollah/Lebanon”; for Hizbollah’s own shift on deconfessionalization, see note 77.

140. Interview by author, top adviser to Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, September 2008.

141. Ibid.

142. Interview by author, Ali Fayyad, August 2008. The leading Shiite religious voice in Lebanon, Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, has notably maintained strong, vocal support for deconfessionalization, telling one recent interviewer, “Since Lebanon’s independence, the country has faced a series of crises. The presidential crisis may be resolved today, but tomorrow a new crisis may arise. Is the sectarian system in this country the problem and what can be done to prevent repeated crises? This is the fundamental strategic problem in all of Lebanon’s problems. The sectarian system turned Lebanon into a disunited state, because each sect seeks to take power, and that’s why there are those who speak in a sectarian language. There are those talking about Sunni rights, Shiite rights, Christian rights, and even the rights of the Catholics, Orthodox, Armenians, and so on. We find no one speaking of Lebanon as the homeland, of citizenry and identity of the Lebanese human being.” See Maneula Paraipan, “Talking with Ayatollah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah,” World Security Network, September 15, 2008, available online at http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_id=16451&topicID=42.

143. Interview by author, Michel Aoun, September 2008.

144. Interview by author, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, October 2008.

145. According to the leftist daily *As-Safir*, “The head of the Nabtiyeh Assembly of Businessmen Abdullah Bitar held a news conference yesterday in which he apologized to the families of the martyrs who were offended by the visit of the American Charge-D’Affaires Michele Sison to his house in the village of Shoukine in southern Lebanon. He explained the circumstances in which the visit took place and considered that it was merely a ‘summer cloud’ and that this issue has been closed for good. Bitar congratulated Lebanese parliamentary speaker Nabih Birri and secretary general of Hezbollah Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah and the Lebanese people and the courageous resistance for the liberation of the Lebanese captives from the prisons of the Israeli occupation.” See “Bitar Apologizes for Receiving Sison,” *As-Safir*, July 8, 2008, translation by Mideastwire.com.

146. According to an October 2007 report from ICG, “there is little reason to believe a Shiite political alternative will emerge any time soon. Critics have been given a platform by the March 14 movement (including the Free Shiite Current led by Mohamed Hajj Hassan; Mohamed Ali al-Husseini; Hani Fahs; and the former Hizbollah Secretary General, Subhi Tufayli). Others with some influence on the ground have vocally criticised Hizbollah, Ali al-Amin, the mufti of Tyr; members of formerly important families, such as Khalil Khalil and Ahmad al Asa’d; as well as political newcomers, such as Esam Abu Derwish, a businessman who established a successful humanitarian assistance network in the South). So far, however, they

do not represent a coherent force; they are, rather, individual, divided personalities with scant support among Shiite rank-and-file.” See “Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis.”

147. Interview by author, Abdo Saad, September 2008.

148. According to ICG, as far as Fadlallah is concerned: “After years of tensions, Fadlallah’s relations with both Hizbollah and Iran have improved.” As one Fadlallah staffer explained: “Today there are other priorities, and these have brought us together. I am referring to heightened confessional tensions, passage of Security Council Resolution 1559 and the July 2006 war. We ask ourselves: why suddenly such American interest for our small country? The answer is clear: as we see it, the United States wants to put an end not only to Hizbollah, but to resistance. We may differ with Hizbollah on ideological grounds, but not on the principle of resistance. In the current context, Mohamed Hussein Fadlallah believes the priority is to preserve the resistance. Of course, if the threats and fears were to recede, the differences between the two Shiite currents would come back to the fore.” [emphasis added] See “Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis.”

149. Interview by author, Sayyid Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, June 2006 and June 2008.

150. One should consider comments by former secretary of state Colin Powell regarding the 1983 marine barracks bombing, which killed 241 U.S. service personnel: “What we tend to overlook in such situations,” he writes in his autobiography, “is that other people will react much as we would. When the shells started falling on the Shiites, they assumed the American ‘referee’ had taken sides against them. And since they could not reach the battleship, they found a more vulnerable target, the exposed Marines at the airport.” Recent comments by the marines’ commanding officer at the time are perhaps even more illustrative of Powell’s point that, instead of being a simple terrorist attack, the bombing was part and parcel of exactly the kind of brutal conflict that the United States had decidedly entered with its shelling of opposition areas. “It is noteworthy that the United States provided direct naval gunfire support—which I strongly opposed for a week—to the Lebanese Army at a mountain village called Suq al-Garb on 19 September and that the French conducted an air strike on 23 September in the Bekaa Valley. American support removed any lingering doubts of our neutrality, and I stated to my staff at the time that we were going to pay in blood for this decision.” For Powell, see “Colin Powell’s Thoughts on the Beirut Bombing,” from Colin Powell, *My American Journey: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1995), available online at <http://www.beirut-memorial.org/history/powell.html>. For commanding officer, see “U.S. Partly at Fault for Lebanon Massacre?” Daily Pundit, October 13, 2008, available online at <http://dailypundit.com/?p=32208>.

151. Even as late as June 2005, the ICG reported that, “relations between Nasrallah and Fadlallah are strained, and they have met only once since al-Hariri’s assassination. On [one] issue [Nasrallah’s pre-election fatwa calling for Shiites to vote for the Shiite list] in particular, Fadlallah appeared to be seeking to curb efforts by Hizbollah to assert

a hegemonic position among Shiites”—Fadlallah having vehemently criticized the fatwa as irrational and ultimately leading to corruption. ICG adds that Fadlallah, “has also been critical of Hizbollah’s close ties to Iran, in particular its relationship to Supreme Leader Ali Khomeini, considered by the movement as its *marjaa taqlid*. He paid a heavy price for his critique: he was harshly attacked and pressured by Hizbollah and Iran.” For more on Fadlallah’s relations with Hizbollah, see International Crisis Group, “Hizbollah: Rebel Without a Cause?” Middle East Briefing no. 7, July 30, 2003, available online at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1828&l=1>.

152. “Lebanese Shi’i leader Fadlallah comments on reports of differences with Iran,” BBC Monitoring—Political, June 11, 2001.

153. According to Joseph Alagha, “during the 1980s, Fadlallah openly called for the rationalisation and routinisation of Hizbullah’s charisma, arguing against Hizbullah’s enthusiastic-unbalanced discourse.” Jamal Sankari argues further that, “Fadlallah was instrumental in encouraging Hizbullah to reconcile with its rival, AMAL, and with its opponents in the Christian Maronite rightist party, Al-Kateab. Even more striking was Fadlallah’s role in persuading the Hizbullah leadership to integrate their Islamist party with the reformed democratic order of post-civil war Lebanon. Thus Fadlallah managed to shift Hizbullah away from its idealist revolutionary quest for an Islamic republic, modelled on the Iranian regime of Wilayet al-Faqih, towards a position that embraced gradualist change through legitimate reform.” For Alagha, see Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah’s Ideology*; for Sankari, see Jamal Sankari, *Fadlallah: The Making of a Radical Shiite Leader* (London: Saqi, 2005), p. 286.

154. Sankari describes Fadlallah’s position as “modernist,” arguing that “to the extent that Fadlallah’s Islamist discourse addresses the key issues of modernity (secularism, pluralism, democracy, scientific and technological progress and cultural Westernization), and the question of how to deal rationally and legitimately with its challenges and opportunities, it is of a modernist stripe.” Sankari, *Fadlallah*, p. 288.

155. “Lebanese cleric says Israel trying to topple Palestinian government,” BBC Monitoring Middle East—Political, November 3, 2006.

156. The “Paper of Common Understanding Between Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement,” as it was officially titled, almost immediately provided Hezbollah with the valuable sectarian cover, not to mention the votes, that it needed to more effectively counter the parliamentary majority’s control of the legislative and street-level political processes. This effort had become especially pressing by February 2006, as Nasrallah had only recently extricated Hezbollah and its ally AMAL from a two-month-long boycott of the government. In the wake of a riot by mostly Sunni extremists the previous day in downtown Beirut, the Understanding also provided a welcome example of new efforts to establish Muslim–Christian cooperation. Nasrallah, for his part, would consistently stress the strength of his partnership with Aoun in the coming months, proclaiming at one point during the signing ceremony at Beirut’s Mar Mikhail Church that “Between Aoun and I there is transparency. Be honest and tell me I disagree with you over this and that or I want to disarm you next year . . . today

we created a clear document and we both have enough courage and honesty to commit to it.” Notwithstanding this, for Hezbollah as a political party, the understanding was more than just a clear document or even an immediate political play. The result of months of negotiations between two parties that had long been opposed in both religion and politics, the understanding was essentially the first comprehensive update to the party’s 1992 parliamentary platform and the 1985 Open Letter respectively—even though there had been periodic predictions of just such a comprehensive effort following the Israeli withdrawal in May 2000. Most significantly, of course, from the perspective of the FPM, the understanding finally placed a horizon on Hizbullah’s arms. For Nasrallah, see “It’s Official: Aoun and Hezbollah Are Allies,” *Ya Libnan*, February 7, 2006, available online at http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2006/02/it_is_official_1.php.

157. According to one report in October 2008 that relies on interviews with a number of local analysts and politicians, “Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun, is currently the frontrunner in the Christian dominated areas, elections expert Kamal Feghali says . . . Carlos Edde, leader of Lebanon’s National Bloc, an independent party formerly part of the majority movement, . . . said, ‘After the takeover of Beirut by Hezbollah, it is unfortunate that many Christians prefer to side with the strongest, without considering the long-term effect on the society they are living in. . . . One thing is for sure, if one considers the many factors that led to the failure of the Cedar Revolution of 2005, *I would single out by far the defection of General Aoun to the pro-Syrian side,*’ he added.” [emphasis added] The perception that Aoun had emerged from the May violence mostly undiminished was sounded early in the summer by Michael Young, who argued: “No one likes to take a prediction back, but last week I wrote that Michel Aoun would be unable to win as large a parliamentary bloc in next year’s elections as he controls today. Three developments in the past week indicate why this reading may have been over-optimistic; and why those of us who focus on Aoun’s undoubted loss of power in the past three years might also be guilty of overstating his failings to our own peril.” For the FPM’s continuing popularity, see Adla Massoud, “Lebanon’s New Electoral Law Will Impact Christians,” *Middle East Times*, October 13, 2008, available online at http://www.metimes.com/International/2008/10/13/lebanons_new_electoral_law_will_impact_christians/5266/print/; for Young, see Michael Young, “March 14 Urgently Needs a New Impetus,” June 26, 2008, available online at <http://michaelyoungcolumns.blogspot.com/2008/06/march-14-urgently-needs-new-impetus.html>.

158. Refusing to accept the FPM’s stance on Hizbullah as a potentially sensible approach to the issue, U.S. officials have nevertheless been consistently unable to offer compelling alternatives, instead blaming the March 14 Alliance for not doing a good job of “reaching out” to Aoun’s supporters. In one typical statement, Feltman speculated that, “Michel Aoun’s followers probably would be horrified at living under a state controlled by the equivalent of Iranian mullahs.” Because of this, Feltman continued, “maybe there is an opportunity to rebuild bridges between the March 14 Alliance leaders and followers of Michel Aoun with the goal of strengthening the state

and at last dismantling militias.” As far as accomplishing this task was concerned, Feltman avoided discussing the FPM’s prescriptions, instead suggesting that the March 14 Alliance should somehow calm Christian “worry” over “Sunni power.” See “The Lebanon Crisis,” p. 26.

159. According to U.S. officials, the August 2007 executive order was targeted against any person or party who might be contemplating a second government in the wake of the constitutional crisis gripping the country since the 2006 cabinet walkout and the impending presidential elections. *An-Nahar* would report, however, that the main target was Aoun and his supporters in the United States: the move reflects the U.S. administration’s “never-ending concern” over the possibility of Aoun’s participation in any activity that could lead to the emergence of dual governments or hinder upcoming presidential elections if he figured he was not going to win. Beyond the Orwellian language employed by the executive order—targeting children and spouses of alleged antidemocratic persons—the measure reflected the continuing refusal by the United States to acknowledge that there was a legitimate dispute over constitutional interpretations, one that would later lead even the March 14 Alliance figures to buck U.S. support for a half-plus-one presidential vote. For the executive order, see “Executive Order: Blocking Property of Persons Undermining the Sovereignty of Lebanon or Its Democratic Processes and Institutions,” The White House, August 2, 2007, available online at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/08/20070802-1.html>; for *An-Nahar* summary, see “Lebanon: Aoun Donors Will Be Closely Watched by U.S. Treasury,” *Ya Libnan*, August 8, 2007, available online at http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2007/08/lebanon_aoun_do.php.

160. “Lebanon is in grave peril,” said Congressman Ackerman in October 2007. “Lebanon’s independence and sovereignty is under attack by Syria and Iran, and their bootlicking Lebanese proxies, Hezbollah, Amal and the Aounist bloc.” See “Ackerman Measure Condemning Syria and Iran’s Interference in Lebanon Passed by House,” October 15, 2007, available online at http://www.house.gov/list/press/ny05_ackerman/PR_101507.html.

161. See note 79.

162. Although some U.S. officials and March 14 Alliance leaders reportedly have signaled a desire to promote President Suleiman as a possible “third way” within the Christian community—the expectation being that he would then undercut the FPM’s prospects in 2009 and possibly preserve the current majority—it remains unclear as to whether Suleiman would assent to such a role, and more importantly, whether he is even up to the task at hand. With few tests on wedge issues since his election last summer, Suleiman has thus far been able to walk a careful rhetorical line between the two opposing camps. An electoral position effectively opposed to March 8, however, would greatly tax his political acumen and stamina and could lead to his diminishment as a potential facilitator on the more pressing issue of Hizbullah’s weapons.

163. See “Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis.”

164. Qassem has described the effect of tying the resistance to the state thusly: “The Party considered that where resistance falls under the willpower of government, it loses its capability to achieve liberation and is placed inside a sphere of political limitations. As

such, when Lebanon was under international pressure and the Lebanese government became the organ responsible for administering the resistance, the latter might have been obliged to take steps that could have encumbered resistance activity.” Presumably, Qassem believes the same would be true in a post-liberation environment where offensive activities of the state would be “encumbered.” Defensive activities, Hizbullah officials now openly concede, would not face a similar encumbrance—although the limitations imposed by a lack of equipment, manpower, and training would, of course, remain in the absence of international support. See Qassem, *Hizbullah*, p.106.

165. According to Schenker, “Worse, if March 14 loses the spring 2009 parliamentary elections, and a Hizbullah-led coalition heads the new government, U.S. assistance to the LAF would likely end altogether. Today, Lebanon faces an increased threat of instability—from festering Islamist problems in the north and ongoing Syrian meddling. Washington’s strategy of military capacity building is important, but is also insufficient and may soon be downgraded.” See David Schenker, “The Future of U.S. Military Aid to Lebanon,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 3, 2008, available online at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2933>.

166. Interview by author, Ali Fayyad, September 2008.

167. See Adam Wander, “U.S. Turns a Blind Eye on Chinese Aid for LAF,” *Daily Star*; September 26, 2008, available online at http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_ID=10&article_ID=96338&categ_id=2.

168. Interview by author, Ali Fayyad, October 2008; interview by author, retired LAF general #1, August 2008.

169. A turn toward Russia for heavy weapons, in particular, may yet come under the leadership of the current majority. According to France 24, Future Movement leader Saad al-Hariri visited Moscow in early November 2008 and told Interfax news agency that current American military aid is “limited to light weaponry,” and that the Lebanese army also needs “tanks and artillery equipment. These needs will be addressed when the Lebanese defence minister visits Moscow this month or at the latest in December.” “Lebanon Leader Says Russia Will Sell It Tanks: Reports,” France 24, November 9, 2008, available online at <http://www.france24.com/20081109-lebanon-leader-says-russia-will-sell-it-tanks-reports?pop=TRUE>.

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