

The Aftereffects of the Israeli-Hizbollah War

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Introduction

Five months after the end of the war, Lebanon, Israel and the region are still feeling its aftereffects. In Lebanon, the claims of victory were mixed with a sober assessment of the massive socio-economic losses, and the popular unity during the war was followed by deep division and rising tensions. In Israel, the sense of failure was confirmed with official investigations into the handling of the war, resignations, and political infighting. In the region, popular support for Hizbollah during the war was followed by a more mixed response to its role in the protests that began in December. Syria and Iran also had a mixed response to the war, finding both benefit and loss in its outcome. The U.S. administration also had a mixed reading of the war, feeling that some of its interests had been served and others had been frustrated. Five months after the end of the war, the players are still assessing its effects.

Postwar Protest, Paralysis, and Tension in Lebanon

The political divisions within the country were clear in the early days of the war when the government issued a statement disavowing the war, censuring Hizbollah, and blaming it for triggering the large Israeli response—a statement that was echoed in Riyadh, Amman, and Cairo. As the Israeli response became disproportionately large in comparison to the original Hizbollah operation of July 12 and as the extent of the Israeli targeting of civilian towns and villages became clear, the government quickly changed its orientation, accusing Israel of waging an all out war on Lebanon and organizing shelter and relief for the hundreds of thousands of refugees from the south. It also coordinated with Hizbollah and took the lead in international diplomacy to secure a ceasefire. Lebanon initiated the process with its own seven-point plan, and then, when the United States and France came up with a draft UN Resolution, the government was able to introduce some important amendments to it. As the war ended, the government claimed that it had secured a negotiated end to the war, that the UN Resolution was in line with Lebanese interests and secured under Chapter VI, not Chapter VII, and that it had coordinated with Hizbollah throughout and had taken the lead on national unity.

It soon became clear that Hizbollah saw the issues quite differently. Hizbollah leaders argued that members of the March 14 coalition had actually lobbied Israel and the United States to launch a war on Hizbollah and had given information to the enemy. They asserted that the government's statement at the outset of the war gave political cover to Israel, that the government had tried to corner and weaken Hizbollah while the fighting was going on, that UN Resolution 1701 had many provisions that they did not—and do not—approve of, and that the government wanted to use

Resolution 1701 to achieve American and Israeli goals of disarming Hizbollah—goals that they were not able to achieve through war.

The sharp differences between the government and Hizbollah were further exacerbated by the issue surrounding the international tribunal to adjudicate the Hariri and other assassinations. The first time the issue came up before the Council of Ministers in late 2005 the Hizbollah and Amal ministers withdrew from the cabinet. The government proceeded to approve the request to the UN to set up a mixed Lebanese-international tribunal, and the ministers subsequently returned to the cabinet. In the National Dialogue Discussions of 2006, all participants, including Hizbollah and Amal, agreed in principle to the establishment of such a tribunal. When the detailed draft of the proposed agreement with the UN arrived before the Lebanese cabinet in November of 2006, the Hizbollah and Amal ministers withdrew again, this time resigning completely. The resigning ministers charged that the prime minister and the March 14 camp were rushing the approval of the agreement, while they felt that the agreement needed detailed examination, review, and discussion; they also felt that after the ‘defection’ of a number of previously allied ministers to the March 14 camp within the cabinet, their March 8 camp no longer had sufficient representation in the cabinet (one third plus one) and could no longer block any March 14 decision, and hence their deliberations and views would not be able to alter the governmental decision in any way. The government, without six of its original 24 members, went ahead and approved the text of the treaty anyway. The March 8 camp charged that, without its Shiite members, the government was no longer constitutional because it violated the final article in the official preamble to the constitution which states that “no authority is constitutional which violates the pact of national coexistence.” The March 14 group responded that the constitution clearly defines when a government is considered no longer in standing, namely, when:

- the parliament withdraws its confidence from it by majority vote;
- the prime minister resigns; or
- more than one third of the ministers resign.

The controversy over the text of the tribunal agreement revolves particularly around Article 3 of the Attachment to the agreement. This article defines responsibility for the crimes in very broad terms, stating that not only those who committed the crimes should be held responsible, but also any of their accomplices or superiors who had authority over them. The March 8 camp felt that this wording was dangerously broad; more importantly, it felt that the wide authority of this international tribunal, backed by the United States and France and abetted by the March 14 camp in Lebanon, would be used as a political tool to pursue political ends—that the tribunal would be an open-ended institution in time and jurisdiction, and that it would be used to penetrate the security apparatus of Syria and maybe Hizbollah, weaken and humiliate them, and pursue the political ends of fighting Syria and Hizbollah and their allies under legalistic terms. At a basic level as well, Hizbollah as well as Iran could not afford a further weakening of Syria after its withdrawal from Lebanon, leaving Hizbollah exposed to attack as became clear in the summer war. While the March 8 leaders argued that they accepted the principle of the tribunal but simply wanted to amend some of the articles of the agreement, the March 14 camp charged that Hizbollah wanted to block the tribunal altogether in order to protect Syria, or amend the agreement so as to render it ineffective.

Resigning over the tribunal issue, the March 8 camp soon widened their objection to the makeup of the government itself and demanded the expansion of the National Unity Government in which they could retrieve their ‘one third plus one’ representation. They argued that the March 14 camp was not a popular majority and had its majority in parliament because of a gerrymandered electoral law used in 2005 and because of the support of Hizbollah to some March 14 slates during that election. They argued that between Hizbollah, Amal, the Aounist movement, and other allies *they* had a majority in the government, and therefore deserved *at least* veto power in the cabinet. The March 14 camp countered that they had gained their majority in parliament and government through constitutional electoral and legal means and that if some wanted to resign from the government or if they wanted to be in the opposition, that was their right. The March 14 camp also argued that the March 8 camp was only seeking the ‘one third plus one’ representation in government either to block the international tribunal or to bring down the government altogether (by resigning), or both. They also argued that the March 8 camp already had control of the presidency and the office of speaker of parliament and that March 14 was not about to give up control of the prime ministership as well.

Frustrated with the March 14 refusal to expand the government to give March 8 their requested representation, the March 8 parties announced their intention in early November to begin a series of massive protests and demonstrations and to escalate them rapidly in order to force the government to accept their demands. Curiously, throughout the month of November, the protests were repeatedly postponed; some analysts argue that Syria and Iran were hopeful that the Baker-Hamilton report and the mid-term elections in the United States would convince the Bush administration to reach out to them as potential partners in managing the conflict in Iraq as well as Lebanon and elsewhere. There was also hope that Iran and Syria could prevail upon Hizbollah to postpone its protests; interestingly, 48 hours after Bush went to Amman on November 29 and made it clear that he was not reaching out at all to Damascus and Tehran, the street protests commenced and the opposition rhetoric escalated to calling the government agents of both the United States and Israel. The recent escalation of pressure from the Bush administration against Iran and the inclusion of Hizbollah prominently in the State of the Union address made things even more tense in Lebanon.

The war has presented Hizbollah with new realities. On the one hand, its military preparation paid off extremely well; it not only survived a war that was designed to destroy it, but it also inflicted heavy damage on Israel. On the other hand, Hizbollah itself suffered heavy damages, and the Shiite community suffered the worst devastation in recent history. Furthermore, Resolution 1701 had wrested control of south Lebanon from it, and put it in the hands of the Lebanese army and over 10,000 UN troops, many from largely hostile and/or Western countries. It had also brought western fleets to patrol Lebanon’s waters and put in place mechanisms to seal off the border with Syria against rearmament. 1701 also reiterated the principle of disarming Hizbollah, although it did not spell out the mechanism. In brief, Hizbollah felt that after the devastation they were subjected to during the war, 1701 was designed to further isolate and weaken them—in a sense, a continuation of the war by other means. This, along with the broad mechanism of the Tribunal which they felt would be used for political ends, and their deep distrust of the March 14 camp, led them to draw the line and try to change the course of politics through massive protest, hopefully leading to a change in government and/or early parliamentary elections.

The March 14 camp saw things differently. Many blamed Hizbollah for giving Israel an excuse to launch yet another war on Lebanon and were furious that the Lebanese population, economy, and state had to pay for a decision that had been made, without consultation, by Hizbollah. They felt that the government had provided a reasonable middle ground during the war and had secured reasonable terms under difficult circumstances in Resolution 1701. After the war, they felt that Hizbollah was still committed to a Syrian and Iranian agenda, unwilling to disarm or accept UN Resolution 425 even if Shebaa Farms were returned, unwilling to allow the international tribunal to be established, and intent on maintaining a state within a state in Lebanon. The profound disagreement between these two tendencies existed in Lebanon before the war; the war however, exacerbated the tensions and brought issues more to a head. 2007 began with Lebanon in paralysis and indeed on the brink of collapse. Escalating street protests threaten to get out of hand at any point and risk civil unrest at a time of very high Sunni–Shiite tensions in the country. Meanwhile, the economy, reeling from the \$8 billion cost of the war itself, was hemorrhaging people and capital as street protests and government paralysis since early December shattered investors’ and peoples’ confidence in the future. The recent Paris III donor conference for Lebanon, held on January 25, garnered a massive \$7.6 billion of grants and loans for the country; however, without a resolution to the political standoff, the country will not be able to repair the economic damage of the war and move on.

While the people pulled together during the war at a humanitarian level and in the face of massive Israeli attacks, the deep political differences after the war drove leaders and people apart. Five months after the war, Lebanon is more divided than it has been in years.

Regional and International Repercussions

Although in some ways a limited war between Israel and a non-state actor in one Arab country, the war had a large impact on politics and power perceptions in the region comparable to the effects of larger and wider wars. It was the first war that did not end in victory for Israel; it was the first Iranian proxy war against Israel; it was the first large-scale Islamist war against Israel; it was another partial defeat for U.S. policy; it proved the efficacy of new ways of confronting Israel; it presented Syria with new opportunities; etc.

Although it was the fifth Israeli war in Lebanon, the aftereffects of this war continue to shake Israel months after its ending. Although the human and socio-economic damage to Israel was barely 5 percent of the damage to Lebanon, the war had enormous political and military impacts on Israel. Although most Israelis started off supporting the war, they ended up deeply dissatisfied with the conduct of the war, and the war ended with most Israelis feeling that Israel—while perhaps not losing outright, had not won the war, and its nemesis, Hizbollah, had survived the war and had even scored a number of victories, such as continuing to launch rockets into Israel throughout the war, and beating Israeli tank and infantry columns on the battlefield. A population that assumes that it cannot afford to lose any war was deeply distressed by the inconclusive results of the summer war; with Israeli expectations high—victory in every battle and every war—the mixed result of the summer war was perceived as a loss; for Hizbollah, surviving the Israeli onslaught and simply being able to continue to fight throughout the war was interpreted around the Arab and Islamic world as a victory.

From the Israeli perspective, at the political level, the conduct of the war discredited the leadership of the country—Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Defense Minister Amir Peretz, and Israeli Defense Forces Chief Dan Halutz, who resigned in mid-January. While Lebanon is stuck in division and dissension after the war, so too is Israel, with accusations and counter-accusations relating to the war shaking the Olmert government, strengthening the right wing Likud party, and raising the possibility of early elections. The war also halted the plan devised by Ariel Sharon and implemented by Kadima and Olmert, which began with the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and was to continue with completion of the wall in the West Bank and partial unilateral withdrawals from parts of the West Bank outside of the wall, and hunkering down behind the wall as the new de facto borders of Israel. That plan is now dead. Israel had neither won a war, nor had an active plan for peace or security.

Voices calling for re-launching the peace process with Abu Mazen and Syria were countered by voices that argued that events in Gaza and Lebanon proved that there was no peace or security based on withdrawal and that Israel had to maintain control of the West Bank, perhaps take back parts of Gaza, and maintain its security by military force. They argued further that Syria and Iran did not favor peace and would continue to support groups in the region such as Hizbollah and Hamas that would work against it. Some also talked of the necessity of another war against Hizbollah in the near future to reverse the impression in the Arab and Islamic world—and in Israel—that Hizbollah had won, and to eliminate Hizbollah as a military threat. Beyond the actual results of the summer war, many Israelis were concerned that the relative Israeli defeat by Hizbollah had dangerous general effects, such as piercing the deterrent image of Israeli invincibility that had been built up since the 1967 war, and illustrating a new style of guerrilla or irregular warfare that was highly effective against Israel and that could be learned and used by other groups in the region, such as Hamas, or others.

On the other hand, the Israeli war on Hizbollah also had some positive results from the Israeli perspective. Although it did not defeat Hizbollah, it did weaken it, deplete some of its arsenal, and expose its strategies and tactics; furthermore, Resolution 1701 did deprive Hizbollah of operational freedom in the extreme south, brought over 10,000 western influenced troops into the south, and promised to close the sea lanes and Syrian border to Hizbollah rearmament. The war and its aftermath also put Hizbollah in hot water with many political parties and groups in Lebanon and shattered the consensus support in the country that Hizbollah had largely enjoyed in previous years. In addition, the large scale devastation of civilian Shiite homes and livelihoods in south Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut imposed a high cost on Hizbollah and would force it to think twice before launching any further operations against Israel. Indeed, despite continuing Israeli violations of Lebanese air space and land borders after the war, Hizbollah did not respond, and it soon became more embroiled in intra-Lebanese protests and disputes rather than carrying the battle further against Israel.

As was the case before the war erupted, Israel—and the concern of the United States—was mainly focused on their perception of the threat of Iran’s bid for nuclear weapons. Indeed, the extent of the Israeli response to the war and U.S. backing for it, is linked to their attempt to eliminate Hizbollah as a proxy for Iran in preparation for rising pressure on Iran—or even for an eventual military strike against Iran. In that regard, although Israel did not achieve its full objectives, it did have some success. Hizbollah’s strategy and tactics have been exposed, its capacities have been reduced, and

the Israeli population has seen what Hizbollah can do; in all these aspects, Israel is now better prepared—and Hizbollah less so—to sustain another Hizbollah-Israel war. Hizbollah's robust performance during the war surprised Israeli and American military experts, and certainly made them think twice about the ease and cost of any military strike against Iran; on the other hand, it gave them insight into what such a confrontation might be like and gave them an opportunity to prepare more effectively for such an eventuality. On balance, the summer war reduced Hizbollah's capacity to act as a proxy deterrent for Iran and gave Israel and/or the United States—despite Israel's poor performance—some valuable insight and information.

In Iran, most reports indicate that Tehran perceived the summer war to have very mixed results. On the one hand, Iran benefited greatly in credibility and popular support in the Arab and Islamic world for the strong performance of Hizbollah. It reversed decades of defeatism prevalent since the 1967 and 1973 wars, showed that Iranian steadfastness and defiance was not hot air, and that Iran could deliver the spirit, the discipline, and the hardware that could confront Israel and potentially defeat it. It renewed Iran's claim to leadership of the Islamic street and even put Persian Iran in a leadership position of traditional Arabist causes. It confirmed Iran's position as a major player in the Arab Israeli conflict—through not only Hizbollah, but also Hamas—and added an important card in Iran's hand in any future negotiations over nuclear weapons, gulf security, or Arab Israeli peace. On the other hand, the war had down sides as well. First, it devastated the Shiite community of Lebanon which Iran had been nurturing for two decades; second, it put Hizbollah into intense political conflict with major Lebanese political groupings, something Iran had been eager to avoid previously; third, it wasted much of Hizbollah's deterrent power for Iran before Iran could make use of it; fourth, it raised Sunni Shiite tensions in the region—already high because of Iraq—something that Iran, in its bid for Islamic leadership, is always eager to avoid. Iran moved to provide large-scale support for Hizbollah and aid for its constituents after the war and supported Hizbollah's opposition moves within the country, but Iranian officials were also careful to channel significant aid through the Lebanese government as well, and to avoid the impression of being too embroiled in domestic and sectarian Lebanese disputes.

Syria also had mixed readings and reactions to the war. On the one hand, it basked in the reflected glow of Hizbollah's strong performance in the war and could claim credibility for its strong anti-American and anti-Israeli line and for its long term support for Hizbollah. On the other hand, Syria could see that Israel had prosecuted a major war for the first time since 1982, and that this war had major strategic objectives to eliminate Syria's main ally in Lebanon; Syria could also see that this war was part of an American strategy to weaken an Iranian and Syrian proxy in the region, in preparation for further pressure on Tehran and Syria. Although Syria, for the time being, could afford to be less concerned about a military strike against itself than Iran, a new front in the confrontation with the United States—which had so far been limited to Iraq and Afghanistan—seemed now to be opening up through Lebanon, to Iran and, perhaps indirectly, Syria. Strategically, Syria was left weaker after the war than before: Hizbollah's deterrent power vis-à-vis Israel was reduced; the Lebanese border—once a favorite pressure point for Syria against Israel—was now under Lebanese government and UN control; and the UN expected Syria to comply with the prevention of arms shipments to its ally, Hizbollah, and would be monitoring that compliance, or lack of it. Moreover the war had further infuriated king Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who was already angry over the assassination of Saudi-backed Lebanese former prime minister Hariri the year before and other assassinations in Lebanon, and who felt that Hizbollah's triggering of the summer war

with Israel might be an underhanded way for Syria to shake the Lebanese state further and bring about its downfall or takeover once again by Syria's allies. This Saudi displeasure was heightened by what were perceived as personal insults from Syrian president Bashar Asad calling Arab leaders, including King Abdullah, "half men"; and also by Syrian support for Hizbollah and opposition forces after the war to turn against the Saudi-backed Siniora government in Lebanon, accusing it of collusion with the enemy, and trying either to bring it down directly, or to paralyze the economy so severely that the country would collapse of its own accord. Throughout, Syria also lives under the threat of the Brammertz investigation into the assassination of Hariri and others whose results will be released in mid-2007, and the threat of the establishment of a mixed Lebanese-international court to try the perpetrators; indeed, much of the Syrian support for opposition moves in Lebanon to paralyze or bring down the government are linked to its opposition to the formation of such a tribunal.

Indeed, although Syria was supporting Hizbollah and the opposition in Lebanon, it was taking a more conciliatory approach in other places: it made repeated declarations of good intentions toward the United States, it opened an embassy in Baghdad and hosted Iraqi President Jalal Talabani in Damascus, and it welcomed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to Damascus to help broker a Fatah-Hamas deal. It also made repeated statements of its eagerness to restart peace talks with Israel over the Golan Heights. Despite confusion within the leadership situation in Damascus, there are clear indications that the Syrian leadership feels that it is in a position both of strength and vulnerability: it is strong because Iran is strong, Hizbollah and Hamas are strong, Israel is bruised, and the United States is suffering in Iraq; it is vulnerable because the United States and Israel are beginning to perceive its main ally, Iran, as the current main threat—moving beyond Iraq and Afghanistan; because its buffer in Lebanon has been directly attacked and weakened; because its relations with Saudi Arabia are at an all time low; and because in any wide outbreak of Sunni–Shiite civil war, spilling out of Iraq or Lebanon, Syria—as a majority-Sunni country governed by an Alawite minority—would be the principal victim.

In Saudi Arabia, the summer war, followed by the Hizbollah-led near-rebellion of December, in conjunction with ongoing Sunni–Shiite violence in Iraq and apprehension of receding U.S. power and rising Iranian power—particularly with Iran's suspected bid for nuclear weapons—has been causing serious rethinking of regional policy there. King Abdullah is apparently feeling the need for Saudi Arabia to put more muscle behind its traditional foreign policy that had been built upon financing friends and paying off enemies in a policy build almost exclusively on purse strings. With the loss of Iraq and threats of Iranian influence with Syria, and in Lebanon and Palestine, Saudi Arabia is increasingly feeling the need to provide a counterbalance to Iranian and Shiite power in the region. In Lebanon, it provided support to the Siniora government during the war, and was even more firm in its support after the war, when Hizbollah apparently led a movement to topple it. Saudi Arabia also let slip that it would feel obliged to arm and support the Sunnis of Iraq if the country spun out of control. There were also hints that, in an open Sunni–Shiite showdown in the region, the minority Alawi regime in Sunni majority Syria might not fare well. Events in Lebanon were among the elements that spurred Saudi Arabia to take a more direct and active role in the region, shoring up its allies in Lebanon and Palestine, taking a hard line with Syria, and urging the United States to make more efforts to stabilize Iraq and dissuade Iran from going nuclear.

Internationally, the summer war also had significant effects. For the United States, the war brought mixed results: the objective that it shared with Israel of destroying Hizbollah, both as an end in itself and as a deterrent for Iran, was not fully achieved; yet, Hizbollah was weakened both during the war and through Resolution 1701. The war at first took American war planners aback, but it also provided them with valuable advance lessons in planning for any potential attack on Iran. The strength of Hizbollah also had the dual effect of giving American hawks pause, but also at the same time convinced them further that the Hizbollah and Iranian threats were very serious and hence—in their minds—could not be left intact and had to be dealt with. Thus, among some hawks, the summer war convinced them further of the need to confront Iran and perhaps the need to encourage another war against Hizbollah in the not too distant future. Indeed, U.S. administration thinking as of this writing seems to be focusing not only on stabilizing Iraq, but also moving naval forces and anti-missile defenses into the Gulf in preparation for a ratcheting up of political and military pressure on Iran along with the UN sanctions that have been put in place. Indeed, in the thinking of some American hawks, the summer war might have been a prelude for an attack on Iran. With oil prices now down to almost \$50 a barrel, and the world economy having sustained prices of \$75 a barrel with no apparent slowdown, some in the U.S. administration might be thinking that a strike on Iran might be sustainable in terms of the temporary shock to oil prices.

Although it is harder to gauge, the summer war also had an effect on Russian policy. After 2005, when Syria seemed inept at managing its regional interests in the wake of the assassination of Hariri, the Cedar Revolution—all too similar to the painful Ukrainian Orange Revolution in Russian eyes—and the ignominious Syrian retreat in the face of a U.S.-backed government in Lebanon, the summer war indicated a new reality. Hizbollah showed that it was a very powerful and credible force; that it could face down a sustained Israeli and U.S.-backed attack; that it could claim massive popularity around the Arab and Islamic world, and that it could be part of a credible counterbalance to U.S. power in the region. Hizbollah's performance also indicated that its backer, Iran, must be even more capable, powerful, and serious. It also indicated that Syria—despite its stumblings and failings in 2005—could be shored up and salvaged as part of an axis that could be close to Russia and could thwart U.S. dominance in the region. To be sure, Russia wants to have things both ways to some degree: it wants to maintain reasonable relations with the United States and Europe, but it has also made clear over the past two years, at least, that it is pulling back from the Western-embracing policies of Yeltsin, and that Russian President Putin will use Russia's oil wealth and his new control of the Russian state and economy to reclaim Russian power in Eastern Europe and to chart an independent course in world politics, and certainly to reject American hegemony, either in Eastern Europe or in the Middle East. Russia has struck arms deals with both Syria and Iran, and has provided some cover for them in the Security Council, while at the same time not breaking its relations with the West. The summer war showed Russia that there were powers in the Middle East that could stand up to Israel and the United States, and therefore indirectly encouraged it to think of Iran, Syria, and Hizbollah as potential, or indirect, allies.

Conclusion

The summer war will likely prove to be one episode within a longer confrontation between international and regional powers. It might be most closely linked with potential conflict with Iran over the nuclear issue, but it could also prove to be a critical station within an ongoing recalibration

of power among Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United States, and other powers active in the Middle East.

Within Lebanon, the longest term impact of the war might be on the economic situation: while the politics of the country and region ebb and flow, the Lebanese economy is hard put to carry the cost of the damages of the summer war, estimated at over \$8 billion, and the costs of the paralysis brought about by the political showdown that began in November and December of 2006. While the parties and politicians maneuver, 2007 might see an unsustainable drain on the Lebanese economy and a potential collapse of the national currency. The Paris III Conference to help Lebanon, held on January 25, gives a very necessary economic cushion to the country, but if the political standoff continues, even such support will be unable to prevent a collapse.

As 2007 gets under way, there is little cause for optimism in Lebanon and the region. The country itself, rather than building on the popular unity that was displayed during the war, has fallen back into all too familiar political and sectarian divisions. The region is mired in crises stretching from Israel-Palestine to Iraq, passing through Somalia, Iran, and Afghanistan. And the two most active players in the region today, the United States and Iran, have continued equally hard-line and uncompromising positions.

Room for common ground and compromise exists. Within Lebanon, there should be enough support to approve the international tribunal even with some amendments, and there should be ample room to agree on the formation of a new power sharing government and the election of a new president, accompanied by approval of a new parliamentary election law and followed by parliamentary elections. In the region, Syria is fearful of the international tribunal but has indicated its eagerness to engage in talks over Iraq as well as the Golan Heights and other key issues. President Ahmadinejad might be slightly weakened by the recent elections in which he did not fare well and by dropping oil prices, but even his administration has indicated its willingness to cooperate with the United States in Iraq. In the United States, the Baker-Hamilton report expressed broad support in the United States for more diplomacy and realism in the Middle East and for counterbalancing force with dialogue and a search for common ground and multilateral cooperation. Only in a calmer Middle East can Lebanon hope to secure a stable future.

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