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Geopolitics and Security of Israel in the Middle East
A Lebanese Case Study

General Introduction

Map of Lebanon

General Introduction

➢Since at least 1968, Lebanon has been suffering the consequences of a conflict with Israel, which continues today, despite the withdrawal of the Israeli military in 2000. And yet, the Lebanese army is the only one in the region that has never participated in the struggle against Israel. It is true that it was involved in the first war in 1948, but its contribution was rather symbolic. What happened between the land of the cedars and Israel to allow a conflict for over thirty years and prevents any possibility of normal relations between these two countries, and for Lebanon, through the South, to become the most incandescent battlefield of the Arab-Israeli conflict ?

General Introduction

Israel has not invaded Lebanon by chance. Indeed, the Israeli intervention was supported by a strategic logic, which eventually disappeared, leaving the way for a purely static security plan. This course demonstrates that the security argument had "perverse effects " in Lebanon.

Course Plan

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IV- What Security is there for Israel Today ?

South Lebanon

I- Security at all Costs:

The First Israeli Invasion of 1978

1. Israel's Objectives

On March 15, 1978, Israel attacks Lebanon, with a 30,000 strong army.
This attack is called the "Litani Operation ".

+ <u>Objective 1</u>: secure the northern border of Israel.
It sets up a safety line of 10 km in depth against the Palestinian commandos settled in South Lebanon.

1. Israel's Objectives

It is important to remember that the Israeli attacks against its northern neighbor began a long time before 1978.

On 28th of December 1968, Israeli forces destroyed the infrastructure of the Lebanese civil aviation company MEA at the international airport of Beirut. What for? To make the Lebanese government responsible for the Palestinian resistance present on its territory. Israeli attacks became regular from 1970, when Israel committed a real interventionist strategy in southern Lebanon.

Who Are The Palestinian Refugees Residing In The South Lebanon?

We must distinguish two types of Palestinian refugees in the 1970s : the civilian population and the armed resistance.

Palestinian civilians arrived in Lebanon in 1948, following the first Arab-Israeli war. Many of them settled in the Lebanese cities, others in refugee camps.

Palestinian fighters, known as *fedayeen,* arrived in Lebanon from 1968 and especially after the massacres of "Black September" in 1970*, marking the beginning of the implementation of Palestinian guerillas in Lebanon.

* Massacre of Palestinians by Jordanian forces.

Who Are The Palestinian Refugees Residing In The South Lebanon?

Until 1960, Lebanon saw nothing alarming in the Palestinian presence on its soil: unarmed refugees, whose presence in Lebanon was considered provisional.

However, from the 1970s, especially following the events of "Black September", this presence begans to cause a disturbance with the fragile Lebanese multi-confessional balance.

Terrified by Jordanian massacres, the PLO (Organisation for the Liberation of Palestine) sought to strengthen its presence on Lebanese territory. It gained a real autonomy, particularly in social services, creating a true "state within the state" in South Lebanon.

The Cairo Agreement

The signing of the *Cairo agreement* on November 3, 1969, recognized a PLO's "legal" presence on Lebanese territory.

It gave Palestinians in Lebanon the right to work, to reside and to move.

Palestinian resistance gained an important freedom in Lebanon.

"All this in the context of the security of the Lebanese state and the interests of the Palestinian revolution", affirmed the Cairo agreement.

The Cairo Agreement

In fact, signed under the aegis of Nasser, the Cairo agreement grants exorbitant rights to the Palestinian armed resistance, threatening the sovereignty of a fragile country at the institutional level.

"We will make sure", says Shimon Peres, Israeli politician, "that any civil life ceases in Lebanon if this country continues to practice its policy of supporting for Palestinian organizations".

Israel's Second Objective

+ <u>Objective 2</u> : Israel had another objective in Lebanon in 1978 – a territorial objective.

Indeed, the attack in 1978, was also a battle for water: to control the *Litani* River.

The Israeli interest in the Litani is not new. This river was already coveted by Zionist movements a long time before the creation of Israel in May 1948. [See in this regard the work of Frederic Hof, indicated in the bibliography].

Ben Gurion had already said in 1968: "40 or 50 years ago, when we were talking about the Jewish national home, it always concerned the whole of Palestine. The boundaries were the Litani River and the desert. "

Did the Israeli government succeed in achieving its objectives?

2. The Israeli Offensive: Between Failure and Success

Military Failure

In strictly military terms, the invasion was a failure. Israel could not neutralize the Palestinian resistance as they wished. They were surprised by the strength of Palestinian resistance.

The Israeli Offensive: between Failure and Success

Geopolitical Success

However, the invasion was far from being an abortive attempt. It marked a decisive geopolitical and territorial upheaval: the Israeli army managed to set up a "security belt" in southern Lebanon, occupied by its soldiers to protect northern Israel.

Significant success when Israel was to get ready to give back the occupied Sinaï to Egypt in 1973. (Israël had occupied the Sinaï in 1967).

Better. Israel gets territorial acquisitions guaranteed and protected by the Lebanese army and not by the Israeli army. The Free Lebanon Army (FLA), Was an army completely devoted to Israel, led by Saad Haddad, who commands the occupied area.
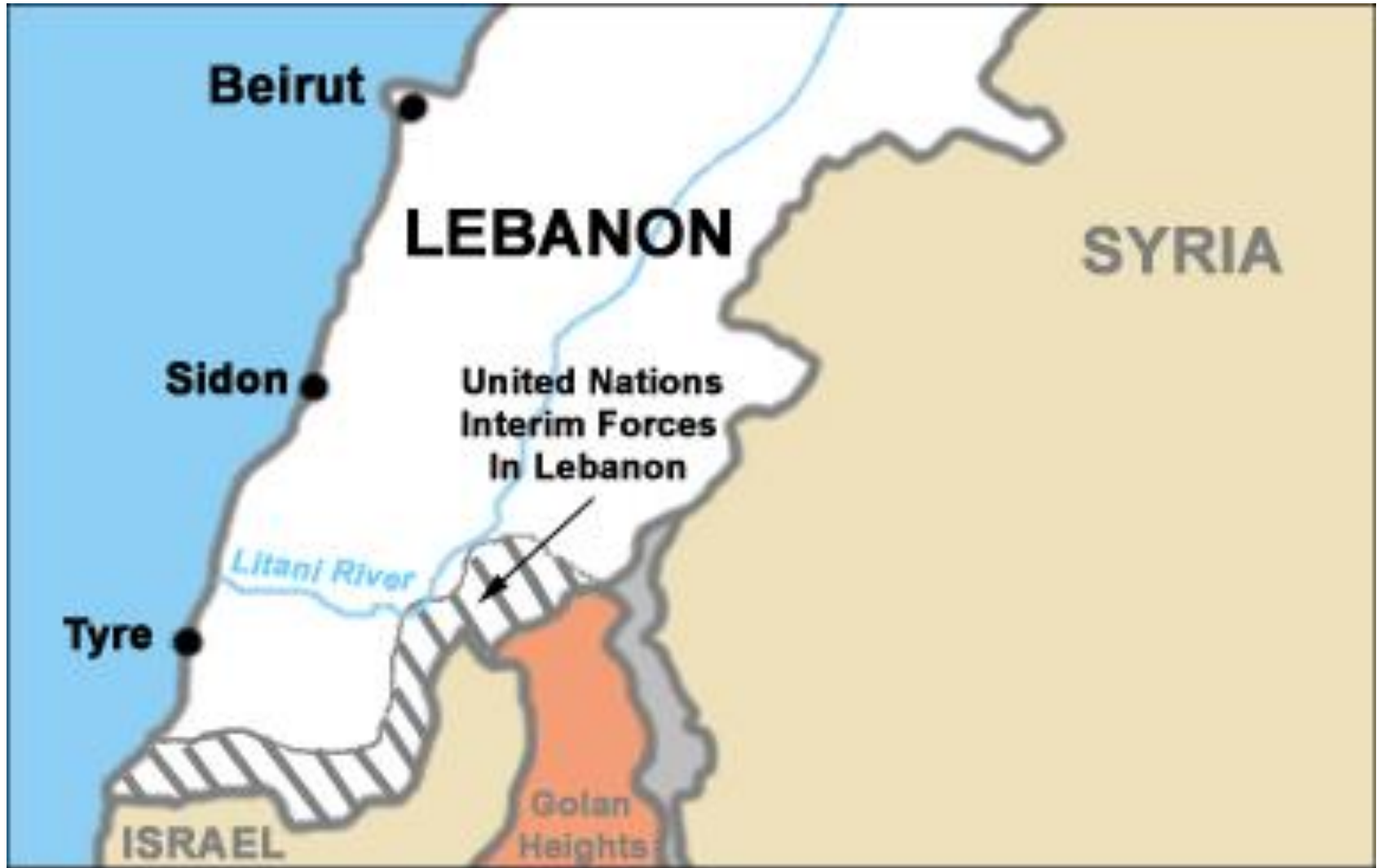
Resolution 425 (1978)

The first Israeli invasion of Lebanon ended with a resolution of the Security Council: Resolution 425 (1978).

Centered mainly on three points, it:
 1. requested that territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon to be "strictly respected";
 2. asked Israel to cease its military action immediately against Lebanon and demanded the immediate withdrawal of its forces from all Lebanese territory;
 3. decided to establish under its authority an intermediate United Nations forces in Lebanon, hence the establishment of the UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon).

UNIFIL 1978

Resolution 425 in the field

None of these decisions were respected.

Concerning the second point, not only Israel did fail to withdraw its troops from Lebanese territory but it set up a "safety belt" which kept growing.

Moreover, it was not so much the UNIFIL mentioned by the resolution, which still exists today in the South, which ensured the security of Israel, but the Lebanese forces of the Free Lebanon Army (FLA).

To Conclude

The invasion of 1978 has changed the geopolitical order in Lebanon.

In fact, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, was able to accomplish what none of his predecessors before him succeeded to do: to ensure the security of Israel from Lebanese soil.

Thus the whole Tsahal's strategy was implemented: to move the war into the territory of the enemy.
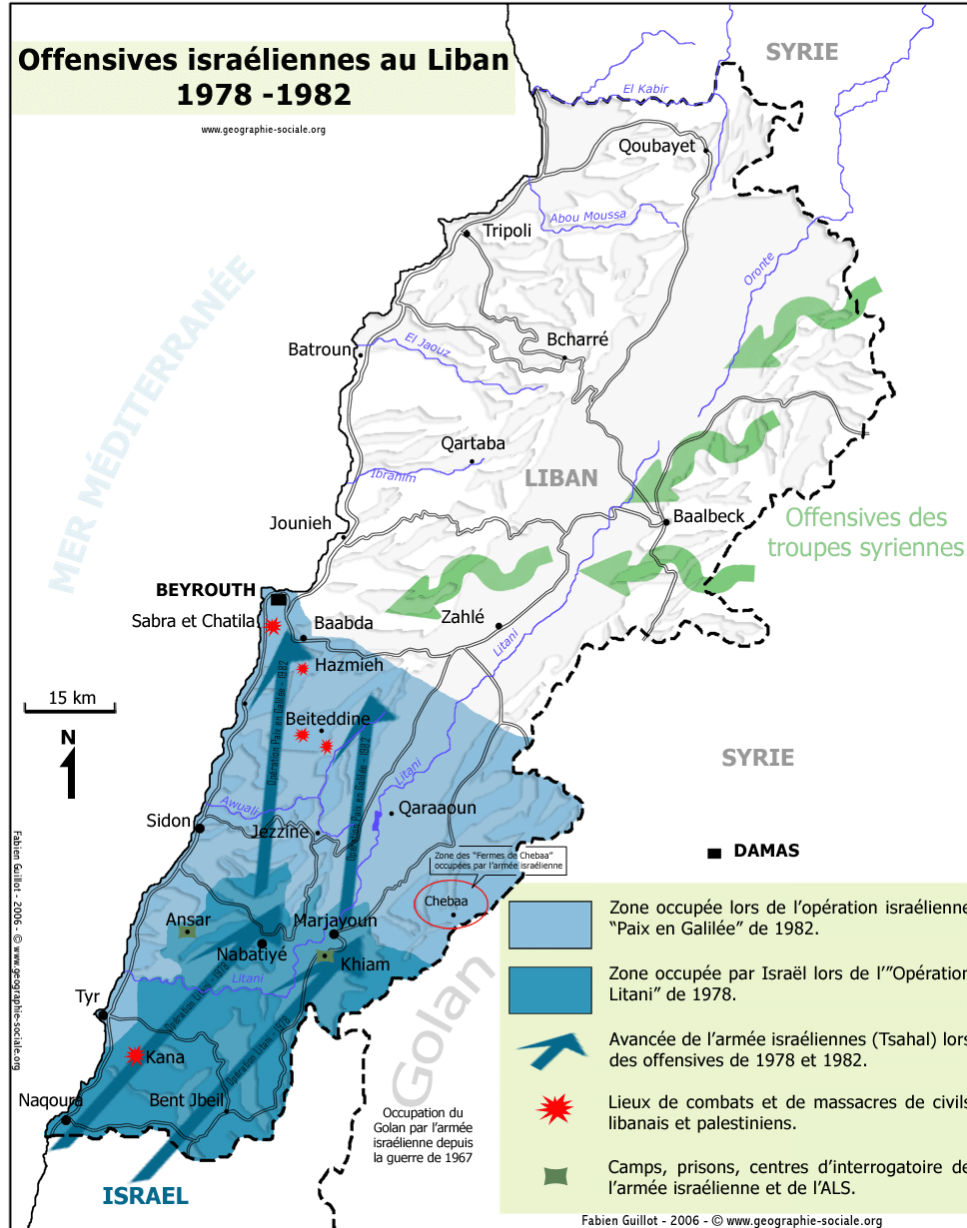
South Lebanon thus became an essential piece in the Israeli strategy.

However, although this attack creates a change in the geopolitical order, we can not yet speak about a turning point. It will take place with the second largest Israeli invasion of 1982, as we will see in the second part.

II- A Turning Point in the Israeli Military Strategy

The 1982 Invasion

Israeli Offensive 1978-1982

Offensives israéliennes au Liban
1978 -1982

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SYRIE

El Kabir

Qoubayet

Abou Moussa

Tripoli

Oronte

Batroun

El Jaouz

Bcharré

MER MÉDITERRANÉE

Qartaba

Ibrahim

LIBAN

Jounieh

Baalbeck

Offensives des
troupes syriennes

BEYROUTH

Sabra et Chatila

Baabda

Zahlé

Litani

Hazmieh

15 km

N

Beiteddine

SYRIE

Litani

Awali

Qaraaoun

Sidon

Jezzine

DAMAS

Zone des "Fermes de Chebaa"
occupées par l'armée israélienne

Ansar

Marjayoun

Chebaa

Zone occupée lors de l'opération israélienne
"Paix en Galilée" de 1982.

Nabatiyé

Khiam

Litani

Golan

Zone occupée par Israël lors de l'"Opération
Litani" de 1978.

Tyr

Avancée de l'armée israéliennes (Tsahal) lors
des offensives de 1978 et 1982.

Kana

Lieux de combats et de massacres de civils
libanais et palestiniens.

Naqoura

Bent Jbeil

Occupation du
Golan par l'armée
israélienne depuis
la guerre de 1967

Camps, prisons, centres d'interrogatoire de
l'armée israélienne et de l'ALS.

ISRAEL

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Fabien Guillot - 2006 - © www.geographie-sociale.org

1. Operation « Peace for Galilee »

On the eve of this second major invasion, Lebanese sovereignty was practically nonexistent.

When looking at the map of Lebanon on the eve of the 1982 invasion, what do we see ?

In the extreme south, the area controlled by FLA; a little above we have the UNIFIL deployment area; the rest of Lebanon is under the influence of the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) dominated by Syrian forces, except for a small portion between the capital Beirut and Batroun, which is under the control of the Lebanese Forces militia. Notably absente: the Lebanese army.

As for the capital Beirut, it is a real Lebanese microcosm concentrating various armed groups, which allowed the capital to acquire the label of "The world capital of terrorism".

The war

On June 6, 1982, nearly 60,000 soldiers crossed the Lebanese border again.
Double the amount of soldiers became engaged in 1978.
Tsahal crossed the area occupied by the UNIFIL , and reached *Tyre*, the *Chouf*
as well as the presidential palace in *Baabda*, not far from Beirut.

Israel has called this operation "Peace in Galilee."

However, contrary to this name, the Israeli intervention was not only to
secure the north of Israel and to allow it to grow safely. Israeli officials had
wider ambitions, matured and prepared in advance.

Israel's Wider Ambitions

The initial goal of breaking the PLO remained the same, but became more radical.

It was not only about destroying the Palestinian resistance, but destroying all Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

Several institutions such as the Red Crescent or UNRWA were concerned.

A war machine lead to the famous massacres in the Palestinian camps of *Sabra* and *Shatila*, 16th, 17th and 18th of September*.

Israel also attacked the Lebanese capital in August 1982. This is the first time that the Israel Defense Forces (Tsahal) occupied an Arab capital. The purpose: to threaten the Lebanese people in order to force the government to put end to the Palestinian resistance.

* Several Palestinian civilians (and Lebanese) were killed by the Lebanese Phalange military forces, with Israel's blessing.

An Arab-Israeli war in Lebanon

In reality, it was a real Arab-Israeli war which took place on Lebanese territory: by destroying the Palestinians, Israel created a political vacuum which allowed it to have free hand in the Occupied Territories.

But Israeli ambitions in Lebanon are not only military or about security. They are also economic. Hence the signing of the agreement named the 17th of May Agreement.

The 17ᵗʰ May 1983 Agreement

-Lebanon and Israel asserted their right and desire to "live in peace" in "secured and recognized borders" and proclaimed "The end of the state of war between them" (Preamble)

-To show respect by both sides for the sovereignty of the other.

+ Israel agreed to withdraw all its forces from Lebanon.

+ None of the territories can be used as a basis for hostile activities against the other part.

+ The agreement prohibited the entry, deployment, and transition in Lebanese space of forces coming under any other state without having diplomatic relations with Israel.

+ The agreement created a "security area" in the South.

The 17th May Agreement, Normalization or Economic Invasion?

The agreement sets up a one-way commercial relationship with Lebanon. In fact, the invasion of 1982 was also a real "economic invasion".

According to estimates, the business relationship brought Israel nearly $ 30 million per year.

Lebanese regions experienced an Israeli economic surge: bank branches, export companies, even El Al airline opened offices in South Lebanon. Israeli goods arrived on the Lebanese market while Israel applied protectionism against Lebanese products. Similarly, several procedures were put in place to facilitate the free movement of Lebanese to Israel: the villages of the South became the best provider of workforces looking for a job.

Why is a Small Country Like Lebanon Economically Advantageous for Israel?

The American economist Milton Friedman, economic advisor to the Israeli government, understood it several years before the Israeli invasion.

He said: "If only 5% of what Beirut has will be transferred to Israel, so that this country becomes an international center", transforming itself into a "financial center in order to take the place of Beirut." But "Israel cannot take the role of Beirut because the Arabs don't come here."

2. The Limits of Israeli Security Strategy

The march on Beirut showed all the limits of Israeli strategy.

It proved itself as unique and sterile at the same time.

Unique, because it is the first time in its history that Israel came to conquer an Arab capital. Sterile, because it was trapped in its stunning victory in the first week of war, and was embroiled in an ineffable warrior stagnation which eventually turned against it.

The « Security Zone »

Moreover, the *false* departure of 1985 locked Israel into a security plan that was to become increasingly ineffective.

Israel will always keep a part of South Lebanon under its control: the "security belt" has become a "security zone", taking up nearly 10% of the Lebanese territory, where it exercises control through the South Lebanon Army (SLA) (the ALL becomes SLA) under the control of Antoine Lahad.

Is this "Security Zone" able to Protect Galilee?

The answer is negative. In fact, neither the UNIFIL in the South since 1978 and the Israeli army, nor the SLA soldiers, could offer a real guarantee for the security of northern Israel. Katyushas continued to fall in Galilee.

It is true that the *fedayeen* left Lebanon after the 1982 operation, but another resistance came to replace it. This time the resistance was not Palestinian but Lebanese: The Hizbollah (Party of God).

The "security zone" became paradoxically the symbol of the defeat of the Israeli strategy in Lebanon, as we will see later.

III- The Israeli Security from Lebanon: an Impossible Equation

To Introduce

Lebanese war ended in October 1990. It lasted fifteen years (1975-1990).

Constitutional revisions took place through the Taïf Agreement, signed in Saudi Arabia by various Lebanese leaders. This agreement influenced the Lebanese political life until today.

However, the end of the "hot" war left the Lebanese-Israeli conflict intact. They moved from one invasion to another in the 1990s, showing the invalidity of the military option.

1. From One Invasion to Another : The Invalidity of The Israeli Military Option

On July 25, 1993, Lebanon witnessed the operation called, by the Israeli government, "the settling of scores".

Nearly ten years after the great invasion of 1982, the attack had the taste of "déjà vu".

Its Goals?
To neutralize the resistance in the South, which was not Palestinian this time but represented by the Lebanese Party of God (Hizbollah).

The failure is obvious. As with the Palestinian resistance, the security problem remained the same.

The second invasion

But Israeli officials did not see it in the same way. They seemed to prefer routine attack and against attack, rather than wondering if the "security zone" was really useful.

On 11 April 1996, they undertook the fourth major military operation : "Grapes of Wrath".

It had the same military objective: to have done with the Hizbollah.
The operation ended in disaster: the bombing of a Qana UNIFIL camp near Tyre killed 102 Lebanese civilian refugees .

Both operations in 1990s, have proven that it is unrealistic to try to reduce Hezbollah by force. Besides, Israeli government was aware that Lebanon was not its own master because its was occupied by Syria.

2. The Inevitable Withdrawal

On May 24,2000, in the morning, Israel withdrew its last troops from Lebanese territory.

Such withdrawal put an end to 22 years of Israeli occupation in the south. The question that arises here is: why did Israel withdraw in 2000 ? Why not before?

Several factors may explain the withdrawal including the following two:

- Israeli society
- the Shia factor

2.1 Israeli Society

The debate on the withdrawal began to be heard in Israeli society following the 1982 war.

Indeed, it showed obvious signs of fatigue in relation to the Lebanese issue. Two Elements succeeded to put pressure on the Israeli political and military environment: the press and civil society.

The press is clear on this: "Lebanon pursues us like a curse", or Lebanon "is becoming our little Vietnam", were the headlines of some of Israeli newspapers. This view was clear, especially after the two invasions of 1993 and 1996. The press was outraged because Israeli politicians failed to reconsider their military options.

Israeli Society

As for the Israeli civil society, it was especially active to call into question the usefulness of the Israeli military presence in Lebanon.

Social unrest thus found expression in social movements, including those held by parents of soldiers against the Israeli occupation and who were able to be a real force-of opposition, with the help of the media.

The second element, which played in favor of the withdrawal, can be found on the Shia side.

2.2 The Shia Factor, or How to Understand Hizbollah's Evolution

Question: Would Israeli leaders, who on the eve of the 1982 war, had studied Lebanese society, village by village, community by community, forgot to take into consideration the Shia factor?

Despite the fact that a majority of people belong to the South Lebanese Shia community, senior Israeli leaders actually knew a bit about this community.

The Israeli government was so focused on the PLO and the Palestinians, that it paid little attention to Lebanese living in the South.

The Bad Israeli Calculation

This same government had not noticed, for example, that during the 1970s the population was mobilized against the Palestinian presence in the South, accusing them of threatening the Lebanese security with their attacks against Israel.

Hence, many Lebanese Shia were not unhappy with the arrival of Tsahal in the region in 1978, hoping that their forces would help the Lebanese to achieve what they had failed to do alone: liberate the South from Palestinian commandos and "give Lebanon back to the Lebanese."

Therefore, when Itzhak Rabin declared at that time that "Israel has let the Shia genie escapes from the bottle," he had absolutely not realized that the Shia community in the south had begun to radicalize its resistance when it realized Israeli soldiers had come to Lebanon to stay, as the Palestinian armed resistance did before them.

IV- What Security is there for Israel Today ?

The Israeli Invasion of 2006

The July 2006 war between Israel and Hizbollah certifies that the safety factor is still relevant to Israel. The Party of God (or Hizbollah) occupies an important place in Israel's calculations. [See the map next slide]

Indeed, in July 2006, Israel launched a military operation, six years after its departure from South Lebanon. The apparent objective was still focused on security: breaking Hizbollah. To achieve it, the same strategy was applied: to make the Lebanese government responsible for Hizbollah actions.

Thus, during 33 days, Tsahal put Lebanese people under a collective punishment, bombing many civilian infrastructures: airports, ports and fuel depots, roads, bridges, factories, etc..
The toll of victims was heavy on the side of the civilian population: over 1,100 dead, over 4,000 injured and nearly a million displaced.

July 2006 Attack

Resolution 1701 (2006)

This new attack ended up like the others, with the adoption of a new resolution: the famous Resolution 1701 (2006).

It reiterates the demand for disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon (an idea already mentioned in a previous resolution: Resolution 1559 (2004) and also in the Taïf Agreement), increases in the number of UNIFIL forces in the South and, above all, to allow the Lebanese army to deploy in The Southern region of the country after decades of absence.

Disarming the Hizbollah ?

However, the issue of disarming Hizbollah, the origin of the war of 2006, remains unsolved.

In reality, one asks the forces of the party to be discreet, in other words "What cannot be seen does not exist." As for UNIFIL, it doesn't have a mandate to disarm.

The international community refers to the Lebanese for the solution of this thorny issue. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations at that time, is convinced that "The disarmament of Hizbollah must be done through negotiation and internal Lebanese consensus."

Why did Israel Retrun Back to Lebanon in 2006?

In fact, Israeli troops had not completely evacuated the South in 2000. They still occupied a small part called the "Shebaa Farms". This small territory is claimed now by the Hizbollah for the resistance movement.

These farms are gaining in importance since the Israeli withdrawal.

What exactly is the value of these hamlets?

Interest is essentially twofold: geographical and hydraulic.

These villages are situated on the slopes of Mount Hermon and reach up to 2000 meters of altitude. This is a strategic position which allows Israel to see the streets of Damascus. It is a centerpiece of northern Israel defense force. Moreover, these heights are rich in water. An essential resource for countries in the region.

The Farms of Shebaa an Open Issue

Everyone should know that what became Shebaa's "problem" has its origins in the negligence of border demarcation between Lebanon and Syria, which dates from the French mandate.

Consequences: this area, at the limit of three countries, Lebanon, Syria and Israel, has become the center of the dispute between these three states.

Nowadays, the farms are claimed as Lebanese by Lebanon, but also by Syria. Such a position legitimizes Hizbollah's actions as a resistance. But it also legitimizes Israeli military attacks.

The End