



**BORDER PROBLEMS.  
LEBANON, UNIFIL AND  
ITALIAN PARTICIPATION**

***Lucrezia Gwinnett Liguori***

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## Abstract

In an era in which migration continues unabated and globalization is more and more relevant, on the one hand borders seem to have become out-dated even to have been eliminated. But, on the other hand, in some parts of the world, it seems as though they have assumed a deeper meaning, having become increasingly impenetrable and firm. The fear of losing one's own identity has become stronger, and therefore the desire to maintain and protect one's own traditions has grown.

Before studying the issues related to borders, and specifically the case of Lebanon, it is important to analyze the concept of border itself.

When one speaks about borders, one can be referring to one of several concepts.

In Italian, for instance, the noun *confine* indicates a boundary, and is therefore connected to the idea of a line, a dividing line between two countries, at the edge of a territory<sup>1</sup>. It is linked to the idea of a more or less distinct *border line* that can separate two States and that has been defined and agreed upon by them. It is the result of political agreements<sup>2</sup> stipulated between the States involved<sup>3</sup>; thus, a border becomes a virtual barrier and an artificial, imaginary and invisible construction with a very strong influence on the peoples it divides<sup>4</sup>. To express this concept in Arabic one usually uses the noun *hadd*<sup>5</sup> (pl. *hudud*), which gives the idea of a cutting object, such as the edge of a knife or of a sword, and this is used to define a border, a borderline or a boundary<sup>6</sup>.

The origin of the other Italian noun *frontiera*, is connected to the concept of movement<sup>7</sup>. As Ratzel<sup>8</sup> put it, the frontier does not represent a line, but rather an area, a *border region*. It is a region where someone goes forward and someone else goes backward, a sort of a no man's land, where the laws from either side are not applied. To express this concept in Arabic, especially in the seventh and eighth centuries<sup>9</sup>, the noun *thaghr* (pl. *thughur*) was used. The root *th-gh-r*<sup>10</sup> contains the idea of an opening, of a mouth and its front teeth, and therefore of something that does not define a closed border, but rather an element that is exposed and open to what's beyond. During the eleventh century, *thaghr* was used to indicate the ports along the Syrian coast line (Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre, Acri) which protected the inland from sea attacks<sup>11</sup>.

In the eleventh century Mahmud al-Kashghari<sup>12</sup> translated the Arabic *thaghr* with the Turkish *uc*. This word, which also means "farthest point", "border", "far end", was used by the Ottomans in the Balkans to indicate the boundaries under the *ucbey's*<sup>13</sup> control.

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<sup>1</sup> Zingarelli, N., Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana, Bologna: Zanichelli Editore S.p.A., 1996: p. 408.

<sup>2</sup> If these agreements should collapse, even the power of the border collapses. (Conforti, B., *Diritto Internazionale*, Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 1999: p. 111-112).

<sup>3</sup> Accepting a border means accepting sovereignty on the other side of the border. (Conforti, B., *Op. Cit.*: p. 111-112).

<sup>4</sup> "Modern history is the history of borders, where borders are nothing but different moments written in space." Foucher, M., *Fronts et Frontières, Un tour du monde géo-politique*, Paris: Fayard, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> Gibb, H.A.R., Krames, J.H., Lévi-Provençal, E., Schacht, J., *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Paris: Editions G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose S.A., 1991: p. 136-139. Today the word *hadd* is usually used to indicate both the concept of boundary and that of frontier.

<sup>6</sup> *Vocabolario Arabo-Italiano*, Roma: IPO, 1999: p. 197; Wehr, H., *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, London: J.Milton Cowan, 1980: p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> Romano, R., *Enciclopedia Einaudi*, Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1979: p. 403-413.

<sup>8</sup> Ratzel, F., *Anthropogéographie*, Stuttgart: Engelhorn, 1899.

<sup>9</sup> Gibb, H.A.R., Krames, J.H., Lévi-Provençal, E., Schacht, J., *Op. Cit.*: p. 478-480.

<sup>10</sup> *Vocabolario Arabo-Italiano*, Roma: IPO, 1999: p. 130.

<sup>11</sup> Miquel, A., "La perception de la frontière chez les géographes arabes d'avant l'an Mil", *Castrum 4, Frontière et peuplement dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Age*, Roma-Madrid, 1992: p. 129-133; Wehr, H., *Op. Cit.*: p. 103.

<sup>12</sup> Pedani, M.P., "Cristiani e Musulmani nel Mediterraneo", in Moatti, C., (under the direction of), *La mobilità des personnes en Méditerranée de l'Antiquité à l'Epoque Moderne*, Roma: Ecole Française de Rome, 2004: p. 240.

Furthermore, different languages do not have the same capacity to distinguish between the concepts of border, boundary and frontier.

The Spanish *frontera*, the French *frontière* and the English *frontier* derive from the late Latin *fronteria* or *frontaria*, a term that indicates that part of the territory which is located *in fronte*, i.e. on the edge<sup>14</sup>.

The old Germanic word *Mark* had the same meaning (peripheric region). In the thirteenth century, though, a new concept, *Grenze*<sup>15</sup>, entered German, from the Polish *granica*. Initially, it referred to a line of demarcation between landed properties; later though it came to assume the sense of a territorial border between two States.

In English<sup>16</sup> there are several nouns with different shades of meaning. A *border* indicates the periphery of a nation defined by its centre, or it can also be a dividing line between two countries, States, etc. or the land along it (frontier). A *boundary* refers to a line that marks a limit; it is a bound. A *frontier* indicates either the border between two countries or that part of a settled, civilized country which lies next to an unexplored or undeveloped region.

In French<sup>17</sup> one speaks about *frontière* to define the edge of a territory which determines its extension (*borne*) or the limit (*démarcation*) that separates two States. *Région* or *zone frontière* indicate a no man's land, and *confins* defines those parts of a territory which are located at its edge, on the border. Finally *limite* indicates a line that separates two pieces of land or two adjoining territories.

In Spanish<sup>18</sup> one will often find the noun *confín*, which indicates a dividing line that separates populations, provinces, etc. and represents their limits, their boundaries. The area which separates two States, instead, is called *frontera* and is at the edge of a specific region.

However, one must consider that borders are not only spatial and political elements; as Simmel wrote<sup>19</sup>, "borders are not spatial factors with sociological effects, but rather sociological factors that assume a spatial form". It will be useful to bear this distinction in mind while analysing the case of Lebanon.

Therefore, one understands how borders define one's identity and help define those on *one side* of the line from those on the *other side* of the same line, they help define an *us* and a *them*, an *inside* and an *outside*. Borders define individuals' identities, but they *are not* the identities themselves<sup>20</sup>.

Though strongly linked to political and geo-political questions due to the concepts of State, territorial sovereignty and self-determination<sup>21</sup>, the concept of border is also strongly intertwined with sociological and cultural issues.

Borders, in fact, are what we find *between* States but can also be established *within* a State. Internal borders are also virtual entities, but often they are very firm barriers profoundly bound to the concepts of national identity, to the definition of the majority, minorities and ethnic groups within any given population.

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<sup>13</sup> The "lords" of the borders.

<sup>14</sup> Romano, R., *Op. Cit.*: p. 403-404.

<sup>15</sup> Drosdowski, G., *DUDEN. Deutsches Universal Wörterbuch*, Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut, 1989: p. 631.

<sup>16</sup> Agnes, M., *Webster's New World. College Dictionary*, Cleveland, Ohio: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2004: p. 169, 172, 569.

<sup>17</sup> Robert, P., *Le Robert*, Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1994: p. 438, 979, 1285.

<sup>18</sup> Sanchez, A., *Gran Diccionario de uso del Español Actual*, Madrid: Sociedad General Española de Librería, S.A., 2001: p. 577, 1076, 1080.

<sup>19</sup> Simmel, G., *Sociologie. Etudes sur les formes de socialisation*, Paris: PUF, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Bocco, R., Meier, D., "Penser la notion de frontière au Moyen-Orient", *A Contrario*, Vol 3, 2, 2005: p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Beitz, C. R., *Political Theory and International Relations*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Studying sociological, political and geo-political borders, one discovers that the principle is always that of *differentiation*, which means that often one defines the other by defining himself first. However, this antithesis and these definitions are not satisfying, because one defines a concept by referring to another concept, which is subject to change.

Let us consider a frequent situation. Given a region in State *A*, close to State *B*, where both groups *a* and *b* live, belonging respectively to the majorities of State *A* and of State *B*, the *b* population will be considered a minority, but could easily become majority if the border lines were moved.

Lebanon went through just such a transformation<sup>22</sup>: during the Ottoman Empire, Christians formed the vast majority of the autonomous province of Mount Lebanon, established between 1861 and 1864, but, after World War I, the extension of the administrative area, advocated by France, and the subsequent incorporation of other territories which were prevalently Muslim, caused a decrease of the Christian majority in Greater Lebanon<sup>23</sup>.

From this example one can easily understand how, due to a small modification of borders and therefore as a consequence of something independent of the intrinsic characteristics of distinct populations, important changes can take place.

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<sup>22</sup> Donini, P.G., *Le minoranze nel Vicino Oriente e nel Maghreb*, Salerno: Pietro Laveglia Editore, 1985: p. 23-24.

<sup>23</sup> De Poli, B., *Geografia Culturale. Frontiere e Identità del Vicino Oriente e Maghreb*, Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia, A.A. 2006-2007.

## 1. Borders in the Middle East

One must not forget that these concepts of State, border and territorial sovereignty have not evolved through the world at the same speed or with the same naturalness.

When considering the Muslim world, for example, one realizes that the European post-medieval idea of the State<sup>24</sup> was unknown to the Islamic political theorists. The Ottoman theories of a State and of a government derived from the Islamic concept that God was the source of every authority and law, and that a government existed only to allow the community of believers to fulfil its duties towards God. The community – *not* the State – was the basis of the social order<sup>25</sup>.

During the pre-colonial period, the State (in Arabic *dawla*<sup>26</sup>) cannot be said to have existed in either the Middle East or in North Africa as it is considered today exist<sup>27</sup>. In fact, the State is a relatively recent European import. The *dawla* referred to the dynasty that one was subjected to; the borders of the authority of a *dawla* were not the State's borders, but rather the borders of the submission to the dynasty. It was the subjected populations that formed the domain, not the territory, which means that a tribe was subject to its sovereign even when it moved geographically. Therefore, borders, as precise lines of demarcation, did not really exist; they often were indefinite and variable. Also, another factor, typical of the pre-colonial period, was that divisions among subjects were substantially of a religious order: different religious communities formed different *millet*<sup>28</sup> whose religious leaders referred directly to the sultan<sup>29</sup>.

One must not forget that the idea of the "Islamic world" comprises all that has been conquered by Muslims and consequently those borders are to be considered open, as they tend towards expansion and to a theoretical Islamization of the entire world.

Before the colonization period, the only border one could have possibly found within Muslim territories would have been the one connected to the different importance given to religious sites: i.e. Mecca and Medinah would come first, then the Hijaz, and last, the remaining Islamized world. The real distinction in the orthodox tradition of Islam was to be made between the *Dar al-Islam* and the *Dar al-Harb*: the first was the House of Islam or of Peace, where Muslims or the *dhimmi*<sup>30</sup> lived. The second was the House of War, which referred to all those territories that had not been islamized and that theoretically should be conquered through *jihad*<sup>31</sup>. However, these religious principles did not

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<sup>24</sup> This idea of State was of a territory that was independent from sovereigns or dynasties and that was organized according to the rules that had been established within. (Naff, T., "The Ottoman Empire and the European States' System", in Bull, H., Watson, A. eds, *The expansion of International Society*, London: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>25</sup> Naff, T., *Op. Cit.*: p. 143.

<sup>26</sup> Originally *dawla* indicated the change of the ruling dynasty, then it became a synonym of 'dynasty'. In the nineteenth century its meaning changed again and began to refer to a political organization established within a territory where that organization had absolute power. (Elger, R., *Piccolo dizionario dell'Islam*, Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore S.p.A., 2002: p. 324-325).

<sup>27</sup> De Poli, B., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *Millet* (directly from the Arabic *millah*) is an Ottoman Turkish term for a confessional community in the Ottoman Empire. In the nineteenth century, with the *Tanzimat* reforms (the reorganization of the Ottoman Empire) the term started to refer to legally-protected religious minority groups, other than ruling Sunni. (Ursinus, M., "Zur Diskussion um "millet" im Osmanischen Reich", *Südost-Forschungen* 48, 1989: p. 195-207).

<sup>29</sup> De Poli, B., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>30</sup> A *dhimmi* is a non-Muslim who is nevertheless one of the People of the Book (i.e. Jews and Christians, later also Sikhs, Zoroastrians and Mandaeans) and subject of a Muslim State. The term connotes an obligation of the State to protect the individual, while the individual pays a tax, known as the *jizya*. (Elger, R., *Op. Cit.*: p. 132).

<sup>31</sup> Elger, R., *Op. Cit.*: p. 85. Etymologically the noun *jihad* indicates the striving, the struggle to reach a specific objective (the Arabic root *j-h-d* means "to strive"). In Muslim law *jihad* indicates war in the name of Islam: the war which permits



last, and the Muslim world saw itself divided by conquerors and began to assume the shape it has today. Along with colonization, the colonizers and the local *élite* began to draw borders in the Middle East and new ideas of State and territorial sovereignty spread<sup>32</sup>.

As a consequence of the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire into several mandates, protectorates and colonies<sup>33</sup>, and after World War II, the present borders were defined, marking a distinct change between the past and the present political theories, in which one passed from the principle of sovereignty over populations to the principle of sovereignty over territory.

This concept of nation<sup>34</sup> was new to the Muslim world and in almost every country it caused desperate attempts to create and invent a tradition, with the aim of uniting the people there<sup>35</sup>.

Very often in the past, and still today, these new Middle Eastern borders have caused instability throughout the region. The fact that the borders were drawn and imposed without keeping in mind or giving importance to regional cultural divergences has set the scene for some of the worst conflicts, conflicts based on cultural differences.

## 2. Lebanon as a complex case

Lebanon represents a very interesting case, since all its internal, external, political, social and cultural borders are marked by uncertainty and doubts. Several factors continue to be present, such as the internal divisions and the communal animosity which has re-emerged, and delicate issues such as the Blue Line, the Shebaa Farms and al-Ghajar.

As mentioned above<sup>36</sup> “borders define one’s identity and help define those on *one side* of the line from those on the *other side* of the same line, they help define an *us* and a *them*, an *inside* and an *outside*. Borders define individuals’ identities, but they *are not* the identities themselves”; “borders are not spatial factors with sociological effects, but rather sociological factors that assume a spatial form”.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider the Lebanese geographical and political borders, but it is also essential to analyse its cultural and social boundaries.

Since the time of the Phoenicians<sup>37</sup>, this small strip of land has always represented a shelter for minorities in search of protection.

Due to its position – a bridge between three continents, at the crossroad of the caravan routes and on the Mediterranean Sea – Lebanon has, since antiquity, been the cradle for commercial and cultural exchanges, developing a significant and general sense of openness and tolerance. However, unrest

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extending or defending the territory which is dominated by Islam itself (Cor. 8:30; 61:8; 2:217). *Jihad* is one of the Muslim community’s duties, and therefore, should always be fulfilled. Today this concept is felt especially among radical Islamic movements or among those Muslim States which tend to isolate themselves from the West. (Elger, R., *Op. Cit.*: p. 136).

<sup>32</sup> Bocco, R., Meier, D., *Op. Cit.*: p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Before, during and after World War I, with the Sykes-Picot agreements in 1916, the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the mandate system of the 1920s. (Picard, E., *Lebanon. A shattered country*, NY/London: H&M, 1996).

<sup>34</sup> In Arabic “nation” is translated with the noun *watan*, pl. *awtan*, whose root is connected with the idea of living in a place, of staying there, and therefore of fatherland. (*Vocabolario Arabo-Italiano*, Roma: IPO, 1999: p. 1710-1711; Wehr, H., *Op. Cit.*: p. 1079).

<sup>35</sup> For example Egypt gave importance to its Pharaonic past, Saudi Arabia underlined its Wahhabite roots, Morocco recalled its millenary independence, Turkey discovered its “Turkicity”. (De Poli, B., *I musulmani nel terzo millennio*, Roma: Carocci, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> See page 3.

<sup>37</sup> Picard, E., *Op. Cit.*

began there during the nineteenth century, when France started taking a more active part in Lebanese affairs, consequently creating greater divisions among the different communities<sup>38</sup>.

Lebanon has adopted a policy through which it has always tried to deal with all its groups and minorities, even though the results have not always been positive.

## 2.1. The Palestinian factor<sup>39</sup>

After Lebanon's independence in 1943 and as a consequence of the creation of the Jewish State in 1948 many Palestinians began to leave their homeland, seeking shelter in neighbouring Arab nations. About 750,000 Palestinians fled from what had become Israel: of which 100,000 arrived in Lebanon, taking refuge in camps outside Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre and Nabatiyye. 600,000 Jews from various Arab countries took their place. In the beginning the Palestinians were accepted, but soon they were seen as the cause of growing instability in the area. In an attempt to solve the refugee situation, the U.N. Council voted several resolutions<sup>40</sup>, but often they were not applied.

Fear and anger rose, Arab-Israeli wars broke out, one after the other, and the number of Palestinian refugees continued to increase.

As for Lebanon, being an already fragile, fragmented and politically-vulnerable country, the PLO<sup>41</sup> presence made the Lebanese situation even more complicated: the number of Muslims increased, calling into question the political system based on population percentages. The PLO began to operate in the refugee camps from where it launched several attacks against Israel, creating a sort of semi-autonomous régime within the State.

At the end of the sixties, Beirut tried to take control of the Palestinians, but this just aggravated the tension between Muslims and Christians on Lebanese soil.

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<sup>38</sup> In the nineteenth century, when the European Powers began to colonise the Middle East, France allied with the Maronites in Lebanon. Paris encouraged them to create an autonomous province, administrated by a Catholic governor, nominated with the consent of the European countries. In 1920 France obtained control over Syria and Lebanon and it was in that same year that Greater Lebanon was created. Through the Maronites, Paris could draw its own political and economic benefits. At the same time, however, socio-economic differences began to sharpen within the local population. The territory had been extended to the east and to the south, therefore incorporating more Sunnis, Shiites and Greek Orthodox, who differed from the Maronites in their strong positive feelings to Syria, but also for religious reasons. As a consequence, the country's principal problem became that of faith differences. For this reason it was necessary for Lebanon to be given an order that would co-operate with all its minority groups and in 1943, the year in which Lebanon officially became independent, the National Pact was stipulated: it established that the President had to be a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni and the President of Parliament a Shiite. Furthermore, all government assignments were to be shared among the different representatives of the various religious confessions. The point of reference in assigning these charges was the first and only census ever taken in Lebanon, in 1932, in which Christians were in the majority (51,2%) and Muslims the minority (48,8%). However, already after only about ten years, these figures were no longer reliable, and contrasts between Christians and Muslims became more bitter. (Tueni, Gh., *Une guèrre pour les autres*, Parigi: Lattés, 1985, and Picard, E., *Op. Cit.*)

<sup>39</sup> Picard, E., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Resolution 194, 1948 (which allowed Palestinian refugees to return to their homes or to be paid for the property which they had lost); Resolution 242, 1967 (which subordinated the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East – and which was therefore not accepted by the PLO); Resolution 338, 1973 (which called upon all parties to cease firing and terminate all military activity). <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm>

<sup>41</sup> Palestine Liberation Organization.

## 2.2. The green line and internal boundaries

Due to internal disputes, to a political order that could not effectively dominate its territory, and due to external pressures and hostilities<sup>42</sup>, the Lebanese system soon collapsed, and in 1975 the 15-year-long Civil War began. Tension had increased between Lebanese Muslims and Christians, and the capital itself was divided into two parts by the Green Line which separated Christian East Beirut from Muslim West Beirut, going through Bishara al-Khuri, separating Basta from Ashrafiyye, going beyond Corniche Mazraa and the Mar Mikha'il crossing.

The name "Green Line", with which this area was known by Westerners, refers to the belt of greenery which emerged when grass and trees grew in the no-man's land of streets that had been destroyed, and left abandoned for years<sup>43</sup>. In Arabic this boundary was called *khutut al-tamass*, which literally means "confrontation lines"<sup>44</sup>; it is a perfect example of how a sociological factor can assume a spatial form, creating a physical and tangible boundary.

The 1975-1990 war turned identities into territories, causing a profound destabilization of fragile multicultural coexistence and creating a "geography of fear".

These divisions had been somewhat levelled and cancelled once the Civil War had ended, but instability rose again in 2005, when Rafiq Hariri was assassinated. Lebanon became even more unstable in November 2007, when the country found itself without a president. Violence filled the streets of Beirut on January 27th 2008, when seven Shiites supporting the opposition (Amal and Hizbullah) were killed fighting against the LAF<sup>45</sup> near Mar Mikha'il<sup>46</sup>. Then on February 2nd 2008<sup>47</sup>, one of the worst accidents took place on a symbolic level: some unidentified men, hidden behind rubbish bins, opened fire on two Lebanese soldiers.

On February 14th 2008, the capital appeared to be cut in two even physically<sup>48</sup>: on one side of what was once the Green Line, people supporting the majority and backed by the U.S., the E.U. and the Gulf States, gathered together to commemorate the third anniversary of Rafiq Hariri's assassination; on the other side instead, the massive funeral to commemorate Imad Mughniyah<sup>49</sup> took place, organized by Hizbullah.

These events represented signals of a growing split within the population, internal divisions that became dramatically evident in May 2008<sup>50</sup>. Fighting went on for one week, militiamen were shooting

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<sup>42</sup> The internal Lebanese situation was complex and instable because of friction within the various Muslim groups and between the Muslims and the Christians. Furthermore, thousands of Palestinians had arrived in Lebanon, often stopping in the South of the country from where they attacked Israel. Israel reacted and many Shiites from the South emigrated to the North. Syrian influence became stronger during the Civil War as did the U.S.'s. (Evron, Y., *War and intervention in Lebanon: the Israeli-Syrian deterrence dialogue*, London: Croom Helm, 1987).

<sup>43</sup> <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/900/910/919/beirut/greenline/moystad/index.html>

<sup>44</sup> *Vocabolario Arabo-Italiano*, Roma: IPO, 1999: p. 301, 1406; Wehr, H., *Op. Cit.*: p. 244, 907.

<sup>45</sup> Lebanese Armed Forces.

<sup>46</sup> <http://limes.espresso.repubblica.it/2008/03/10/hot-map-beirut-la-berlino-del-medio-orient/?p=516>

<sup>47</sup> <http://web.naharnet.com/default.asp 02/02/2008>.

<sup>48</sup> <http://limes.espresso.repubblica.it/2008/03/10/hot-map-beirut-la-berlino-del-medio-orient/?p=516>

<sup>49</sup> Imad Mughniyah (7/12/1962-12/02/2008) was a member of Hizbullah and considered to be the head of its security section, a senior intelligence officer and a founder of the organization. He has been associated with the U.S. Embassy bombings in 1983 as well as to the kidnapping of dozens of foreign nationals in Lebanon in the 1980s. Imad Mughniyah was killed on February 12th 2008, by a car-bomb in the Kfar Suseh neighbourhood of Damascus, Syria. Hizbullah and Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah himself immediately accused Israel of having planned the assassination. <http://limes.espresso.repubblica.it/2008/02/14/chi-ha-ucciso-mughniye-forse-non-israele/?p=480>

<sup>50</sup> Hizbullah's takeover of much of West Beirut began as a cost-of-living strike on May 7th 2008. Yet, the course of events exposed the true stakes: Lebanon has been in a crisis for almost four years and fighting began after the country's 17-month-long political crisis span out of control. The fighting was sparked by a government move to shut down Hizbullah's

furiously, blood and tears filled the streets, houses were destroyed and smoke was everywhere. Beirut airport and port were closed and whoever could manage, tried to leave the country. Hizbullah used its arms against other Lebanese citizens. The message was clear.: Hizbullah did not want to accept anyone's sovereignty over its own regions. It did not want to fall into the hands of those considered "the U.S.'s and Tel Aviv's puppets". Hizbullah used its arms to remind everyone that it will not give up its power, even if this means causing a "cantonization" of Lebanon, cantonizations where the region is separated into different religious communities<sup>51</sup>. Many families have already left mixed Sunni and Shiite areas either to go away for ever or to go to those areas where they feel safer and where they are surrounded by people who belong to the same religious community or to the same political group.

After these days of fierce battles during which almost 70 Lebanese citizens died and more than 200 were wounded, a tense calm came<sup>52</sup>. The Arab Delegation arrived in Beirut, and on May 21st<sup>53</sup> the inter-Lebanese agreement between the pro-Western majority and the pro-Iranian opposition was reached in Doha<sup>54</sup>. This agreement stipulated that on May 25th 2008, Michel Suleiman be elected President of the Lebanese Republic, that a National Unity Government, in which the opposition has veto power, be formed immediately, and that a new electoral law be elaborated, in view of the parliamentary elections in 2009. This certainly is a step forward, although Lebanon is still far from having solved all its internal crises<sup>55</sup>. About a month ago people were fighting and dying in the streets, now the opposition's permanent sit-in in Down Town Beirut (there since December 1st 2006) has ended, and shops, restaurants and banks have opened again. However, communal animosity has intensified and the craving for revenge is powerful. Sunnis, taken aback by the loss of West Beirut during the fighting, are likely to adopt more radical positions and seek to bolster their own military standing<sup>56</sup>. With the Doha agreements no side has apparently imposed itself on the other, but the agreement stands as a draw that the opposition considers a victory. Now dialogue has returned and the hardest part lies ahead: delicate topics must be discussed and once again events have confirmed the strong interaction between local, regional and international dynamics: internal politics are being dragged into wider contests (between Saudi Arabia and Iran, between the U.S. and Syria), while foreign actors are being pulled into Lebanon's domestic struggles, therefore going well beyond their own borders.

(Contd.)

telecommunication network and remove Beirut Airport's security chief for alleged ties to the Shiite movement. Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah said the government's move was a "declaration of war" against the organization and demanded that the government revoke it. Hizbullah-led opposition fighters seized control of several West Beirut neighbourhoods from al-Mustaqbal movement militiamen, loyal to the American-backed government, in street battles that saw many casualties; the areas seized by the opposition were then handed over to the LAF. This was the worst violence in Beirut since Lebanon's 1975-1990 Civil War. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/05/09/mideast/Lebanon.php>  
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5442&l=1>

<sup>51</sup> Lebanon is witnessing a radicalization of internal divisions: political and community borders already existed before the May 2008 fighting, but after this date these boundaries have become more tangible. The South and Southern Beirut are in the hands of Hizbullah, the Druze Shuf Mountains "belong" to Walid Jumblatt, Tripoli is faithful to Hariri's family, but it is also a stronghold of the Islamic Fundamentalist Policy (two blocks that have become closer since these battles), Western Beirut is controlled by Hariri's family, Eastern Beirut and Mount Lebanon are divided between those who support the pro-government Geagea group and those who support his rival Aoun.  
<http://limes.espresso.repubblica.it/2008/05/24/libano-un-passo-avanti-nel-passato-2/?p=636>

<sup>52</sup> <http://web.naharnet.com/default.asp> 13/05/2008.

<sup>53</sup> On the same day dialogue between Tel Aviv and Damascus starts again, thanks to the mediation of Ankara.  
<http://limes.espresso.repubblica.it/2008/05/23/libano-un-passo-avanti-nel-passato-1/?p=635>

<sup>54</sup> <http://limes.espresso.repubblica.it/2008/05/23/libano-un-passo-avanti-nel-passato-1/?p=635>

<sup>55</sup> The new government should comprise 30 ministers. According to the political distribution, the loyalist bloc takes 16 seats, the opposition takes 11 and the President takes 3 ministers. In terms of confessions, the government should be made up of 6 Maronite, 6 Sunni, 6 Shiite, 4 Orthodox, 3 Druze, 3 Catholic and 2 Armenian Ministers.  
<http://www.almanar.com.lb/NewsSite/NewsDetails.aspx?id=45686&language=en> 7/06/2008

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5442&l=1>

### 2.3. The Shebaa Farms issue

As we have already suggested, the geo-political Lebanese borders are delicate and complex, and most of the problems concerning them have still not been resolved. The Shebaa Farms are located in a small but disputed area of the Golan Heights, on the border between Israel, Lebanon and Syria. The area measures about 22 kmq and is located southwest of the Lebanese village of Shebaa, east of the al-Ghajar village and northwest of the Druze village Majdal Shams. While under the French Mandate, in the 1920s and 1930s, the local population considered themselves as part of Lebanon and paid taxes to the Lebanese government. However, already at that time there was confusion regarding its actual location. During the 1930s and 1940s the region was considered as Syrian territory. Once the French Mandate ended, in 1946, the Farms were considered Syrian. Some residents, though, continued to consider themselves Lebanese. The Lebanese government showed little interest in the issue, so Damascus continued administrating the area. In 1967 many of the Shebaa Farms workers lived outside the Syrian-controlled region, in the Lebanese village of Shebaa, so, when Israel occupied the Golan Heights and annexed the Farms, the landowners were not able to go back and farm their land.

Lebanon had not been involved directly in the conflict: in fact Israel considered the Shebaa Farms as Syrian. However problems arose in 2000, when Israeli troops withdrew from South Lebanon and the U.N. announced that U.N. Security Council Resolution 425<sup>57</sup> had finally been respected. At that moment, Hizbullah announced that the war in the name of Lebanese freedom had not ended and that it would continue as long as the Israeli soldiers did not leave the area, thus legitimizing the resistance. One must not forget, though, that this region is included in U.N. Security Council Resolution 242<sup>58</sup>, which calls for the withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in 1967, but not in Resolution 425, which calls for the withdrawal of Israel armed forces from South Lebanon.

At the Arab League meeting in Cairo, in 2000, even Syria stated that the farms are Lebanese, and therefore resistance in the area had its *raison d'être*. However, Bashar al-Assad has not presented any documents to the U.N. to prove it, and Damascus refuses to demarcate its borders with Lebanon before the withdrawal of Israeli troops<sup>59</sup>. Despite U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701<sup>60</sup> in 2006, which called for the cessation of hostilities between Hizbullah and the IDF<sup>61</sup>, the issue regarding Lebanese sovereignty over the Shebaa Farms still remains open, and no military, political, or diplomatic solution has yet been found.

### 2.4. The al-Ghajar village issue

Another complex Lebanese border issue is the one regarding al-Ghajar. This Alawite village is on the border, cut in two by the Blue Line between Lebanon and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Before the 1967 Six-Day War, this village was in Syria. When Israel occupied the Golan Heights, al-Ghajar remained in a “no man’s land” for a couple of months, as Lebanon refused to take control of the village, for it still was in Syrian territory. During this period, half the population (about 350 people) left for elsewhere in Syria, while al-Ghajar fell under Israeli rule. In 1981 most villagers agreed to become Israeli citizens under the Golan Heights Law. In the meantime, after 1978, when Israel invaded and occupied South Lebanon, the village began to expand northward into Lebanese territory, and by 2000 al-

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm> This Resolution was issued on March 19th, 1978, five days after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon during Operation Litani.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm> The Shebaa Farms are in fact in the UNDOF (U.N. Disengagement Observer Force) area of operation, not in the UNFIL area.

<sup>59</sup> Between 1950 and 1967 in the Shebaa Farms area there was the Syrian not the Lebanese army. Anyway it is useful for Damascus to have the Shebaa Farms be considered Lebanese, in order for Hizbullah to have a legitimate cause and so to put pressure on Israel. <http://limes.espresso.repubblica.it/2008/05/24/libano-un-passo-avanti-nel-passato-2/?p=636>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm>

<sup>61</sup> Israeli Defence Forces.

Ghajar was divided by the Blue Line. Thus, the northern part of the village fell under Lebanese control when the IDF withdrew, but in 2006, the Israeli troops returned, and remained on the Lebanese side, despite agreements to hand the village over to UNIFIL. Residents on both sides of the village have Israeli citizenship, even though those in the northern part often hold a Lebanese passport as well.

There is an IDF checkpoint at the entrance to the village from Israel and a fence surrounding the entire village, but there is no fence dividing the Israeli and the Lebanese sides of the village. Often, due to its indefinite situation, al-Ghajar is involved in smuggling operations<sup>62</sup> and for this reason UNIFIL Spanish troops and OGL observers<sup>63</sup> patrol the area continuously in order to prevent any border clashes, disorder or unwelcome instability along the Blue Line.

### 3. Beyond borders: the blue line, UNIFIL and Italian participation

When considering Lebanese borders and border issues, in South Lebanon the tension related to the geo-political border (the Blue Line) is accompanied by the ease with which NGOs, the IOs and the military often go beyond the social and cultural borders and differences, creating a bridge with the local Lebanese.

On March 14th, 1978, Israel invaded Lebanon during Operation Litani, in reaction to a Palestinian terror operation in Israel that ended with close to 40 civilian deaths. The IDF's aim was to widen the buffer zone between Israel and the Palestinian guerrillas in South Lebanon, as far as the Litani River. On March 19th, 1978, the U.N. intervened. The U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 425<sup>64</sup> and decided to send a U.N. Peacekeeping Force to Lebanon (UNIFIL)<sup>65</sup>. One of UNIFIL's main objectives was to be a barrier against PLO infiltrations into Israel. The first UNIFIL troops arrived on March 23rd, 1978, whereas the IDF withdrawal took place on June 13th, after having created a 19-km-deep buffer zone in which the SLA<sup>66</sup> commanded.

However, only in the year 2000 did the IDF effectively withdraw from Lebanese soil, while the SLA was being dismantled and the detainees held at al-Khiam prison were being freed.

On June 7th, 2000, the Blue Line was formally established. The Blue Line is a demarcation line<sup>67</sup> – *not* a border – between Lebanon and Israel established by the U.N. for the purpose of determining whether Israel had fully withdrawn from Lebanon. Even after its creation, this demarcation line was very often violated (Lebanese shepherds let their cattle cross the fields as far as the Jewish State, and

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<sup>62</sup> On February 3rd 2008, there were some disorder in the village: a Lebanese citizen was killed by the IDF, who accused him of being a drug-smuggler and of having opened fire first, while the Lebanese side denied the man had any arms with him, accusing the IDF of having shot voluntarily. <http://web.naharnet.com/default.asp 03/02/2008>.

<sup>63</sup> Observer Group Lebanon, part of the UNTSO (U.N. Truce Supervision Organization), whose unarmed military officers were first deployed in 1948 to monitor the armistice agreement that ended the first Arab-Israeli war. [http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/pub/year\\_review06/lebanon.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/pub/year_review06/lebanon.htm)

<sup>64</sup> Resolution 425 called for strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries; it called upon Israel to *immediately* cease military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territory; it decided – in light of the request of the Government of Lebanon – to *immediately* establish under its authority a U.N. *interim* Force for South Lebanon (UNIFIL) for the purpose of confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its authority in the area. <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm>

<sup>65</sup> Interview with T. Göksel, Spokesman to UNIFIL in 1979, where he served for 24 years and became Senior Adviser in 1995; now he teaches international politics in several Lebanese Universities. Interview 9/11/2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

<sup>66</sup> South Lebanon Army, Israel's proxy. (Evron, Y., *Op. Cit.*).

<sup>67</sup> A demarcation line is a boundary around a specific area, commonly used to denote a temporary geo-political border, often agreed upon as part of an armistice or cease-fire. (Agnes, M., *Op. Cit.*: p. 833).

Israel built the technical fence<sup>68</sup> which often went beyond the Blue Line) and tension remained tangible on both sides, giving rise to several other bloody clashes which caused the U.N. Security Council to vote for Resolution 1559 in 2004<sup>69</sup>. This unstable situation was only kept under control with great difficulty, until it exploded in 2006, when the Second Israeli-Lebanese War took place<sup>70</sup>.

At the end of this war, due to the disastrous situation in Lebanon, the U.N. decided to increase its help to the region, and thousands more men were sent to Lebanon, going from about 5,000 troops to about 13,000, out of which 2,500 were Italians<sup>71</sup>.

In 1978 UNIFIL was created with promises of a short mandate and of support<sup>72</sup> from the U.S., but then the force found itself with no support either from the national government, the U.S. or the U.N. Nevertheless, UNIFIL turned out to be a resistant force, able to hold its ground despite suffering more than 100 fatalities in action<sup>73</sup>. The real success was to be found in how the force had been able to become a part of the land, how it managed to establish close links with the population who had no state services, and how it helped the people rebuild their lives.

After the 2006 war, UNIFIL was expanded and heavily armed. UNIFIL 2 (for this was what it had become) was composed of almost 30 nations, Such a numerous participation is not an ideal setup, because differences in training, doctrine, equipment, communication and language are involved. However, European countries (Italy, Spain, France and Germany) became the key components in the multinational force and therefore acted as a brake on the Israelis.

UNIFIL's area of operation (between the Litani river and the Blue Line) was divided into two sectors –Sector West and Sector East<sup>74</sup> – where Italy and Spain respectively are in charge (see map).

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<sup>68</sup> South of the Blue Line, but often along the Blue Line itself, the Jewish State has built the technical fence, to protect Northern Israel: beyond the technical fence, there is a strip of fine red sand, continuously patrolled by the IDF and which is smoothed daily in order to see if anyone has managed to cross the Blue Line and therefore penetrate Israel.

<sup>69</sup> In this resolution, the U.N. Security Council reaffirmed the strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon; calling upon all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon and calling for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm>

<sup>70</sup> On July 12th, 2006, some Hizbullah militiamen crossed the Blue Line, attacked an IDF patrol, killed three soldiers, wounded two and kidnapped two. The two soldiers that had been kidnapped were taken to Lebanon. It did not take Israel long to react and attack via air, land and sea. The precise goal was to change South Lebanon's reality, weakening and consequently annihilating the Party of God, striking its infrastructures but also civilians, inside and outside UNIFIL's area of operation. The airport of Beirut, ports, power plants, the main routes connecting Lebanon to Syria, Beirut's southern suburbs and several villages in the south of the country were all attacked. Israel's objective was to isolate and paralyze Lebanon. Hizbullah answered the attack by launching rockets on the northern part of Israel and causing several casualties. Finally, on August 11th, after weeks of stalemate during which diplomatic efforts had not been able to obtain a truce between the different sides in order to allow the opening up of humanitarian corridors to help the Lebanese population, the U.N. Security Council voted for Resolution 1701. In this resolution, the U.N. Security Council called for a full cessation of hostilities; called upon the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL to deploy their forces together throughout the South and called upon the Government of Israel to withdraw; emphasized the importance of extending the Government of Lebanon's control over all Lebanese territory; reiterated its support for the full respect of the Blue Line, for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. It also authorized an increase in the strength of UNIFIL to a maximum of 15,000 troops. <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm> (Mermier, F., Picard, E., (edited by), *Liban. Une Guerre de 33 Jours*, Editions La Découverte, Paris, 2007).

<sup>71</sup> Since February 2007 the Italian General Claudio Graziano has been the Commander of the force. <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unifil/facts.html>

<sup>72</sup> Butler, L., "Mr. UNIFIL reflects on a Quarter Century of Peacekeeping in South Lebanon. An Interview with Timur Göksel", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXVI, 3, 2007: p. 50-77, kindly passed on to the present writer by T. Göksel.

<sup>73</sup> Göksel, T., "UNIFIL – Peacekeepers in the Line of Fire", Heinrich Böll Foundation, Beirut: Middle East Office, July 2007: p. 1-8, kindly passed on to the present writer by T. Göksel.

<sup>74</sup> Because of Sector East's position (on the border with Israel, the Golan Heights and the Shebaa Farms, and including the al-Ghajar village), the operations under Spanish control are extremely delicate. In fact, it was in Sector East that UNIFIL 2

UNIFIL's principle aim now is to support the LAF, while deploying its forces in the South for the first time. It has simultaneously to assure its help in monitoring the area, giving humanitarian aid, observing the Blue Line and controlling the cease-fire, while maintaining an open dialogue and frequent contacts with all sides.

Initially, however, the major European countries and the U.N. did not realize that the force could not deploy its troops in South Lebanon unless Hizbullah agreed. Hizbullah did agree, but its consent was built on three conditions: first, that the U.N. force could stay only in support of the LAF, not as an independent actor; second, that UNIFIL and the LAF could not search for Hizbullah's weapons, but could only confiscate them, should they come across them; third, that UNIFIL's area of operation would be limited to the area between the Litani river and the Blue Line.

During military missions in complicated areas, it has always been evident that the first step in guaranteeing as much safety and security as possible for the local population and for the soldiers themselves, is to be able to set up a relationship with the local inhabitants. Only in this way can the mission survive, achieve its goals and not become a target. For this reason the CIMIC unit is extremely important: in 1997 NATO thought it necessary to officialize this function, which is that of *Civil and Military Co-operation*<sup>75</sup>.

The objective of CIMIC activities is to give support to the military, create a bridge (and so demolish cultural and social boundaries) between the civilian side and the military side, and provide support to civilians.

In 2002 Italy promoted the creation of the CIMIC Group South (CGS) and then undertook its leadership. In February 2004 Greece, Italy, Portugal and Hungary together with the representatives of NATO Supreme Command in Europe signed the Memorandum of Understanding, in which they ratified a series of duties. In June 2006 Romania also joined CGS.

In Lebanon the CIMIC unit within UNIFIL 2 was established in November 2006, shortly before Italy took command of the force; its objective is to support the mission, creating a bridge between the civilian side – which means the local authorities, local population, local organizations, IOs, foreign NGOs and GOs<sup>76</sup> – and the military side, in order to have the necessary coordination and cooperation in the area of responsibility (AoR)<sup>77</sup>. The CIMIC unit is the first one to make contact with the population (and therefore is also the most vulnerable unit) and does this through several activities, such as front desk, *liaison*, and assessment<sup>78</sup>. This means it creates a *liaison* with the civilians in order to evaluate and “draw a map” of the general situation and understand what effects the situation could have on military operations. The CIMIC unit aims to carry out reconstruction plans rapidly through the Quick Impact Projects, which fill gaps that could have negative effects on the mission. By improving the population's life standards, the approval of the peacekeeping force grows, and consequently the risk of hostile acts against that force diminishes.

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was attacked for the first time: on June 24th 2007, a car-bomb struck a Spanish patrol between Khiam and the Blue Line, killing six soldiers. Initially the attack was attributed to Fatah al-Islam (an extremist Sunni faction whose HQ is in Tripoli), however no one claimed responsibility for the act of aggression. Hizbullah seems to have started an inquest on its own, therefore, it would seem the Party of God is not involved in what happened. However, one wonders how a group from outside the area could manage to plan such an attack and put it into effect, in a region which is patrolled by 13,000 UNIFIL troops, 10,000 Lebanese soldiers and Hizbullah. Consequently, one wonders if Hizbullah was really unaware of the fact, or if an alliance between Shiite and Sunni groups against ‘the Israeli-American axis’ was at the bottom of it. <http://limes.espresso.repubblica.it/2007/06/28/lunifil-2-sotto-attacco/?p=164>

<sup>75</sup> Di Pace, C., “Il NATO CIMIC Group e la funzione CIMIC nelle PSO”, *Informazioni della Difesa*, 3, Roma, 2007: p. 12-17.

<sup>76</sup> International Organizations; Non-Governmental Organizations; Governmental Organizations.

<sup>77</sup> Solastri, M., “L’impegno dell’Unità CIMIC a Livello Tattico”, *Rivista Militare*, 3, Roma, 2007: p. 54-63.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with LTC T.Tolla, Chief J9, UNIFIL HQ, 12/11/2007, Naqura, Lebanon.



It is evident that the presence of CIMIC units is essential, but peace-keeping contingents often look too for support from various NGOs, IOs or GOs in the field, because it is necessary to co-operate in order to maximize pre-existing potentialities in the area and to avoid using soldiers and military means when not absolutely necessary. Moreover, it is frequently easier for civilian organizations to create a bond with the locals.

For instance, as Rosario Sapienza explained<sup>79</sup>, Italian Co-operation for Development has been in Lebanon since the 1980s and since the 2006 war it has increased its presence, reinforcing its good relations with the Lebanese. Italian Co-operation receives money from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs helping to direct it to different IOs or Italian NGOs. A large part of its funds has been given to the ROSS<sup>80</sup>, which operates through Italian NGOs in the territory, which in turn also work together with local organizations. The purpose of Italian Co-operation is to help bring peace and stability to the region, developing and improving the quality of life from the social, economic and environmental points of view. NGOs operate in a different way from multinational forces, because their objective is not to satisfy all the populations requests in order to live peacefully together, but rather to stimulate the people so that they become able to attain local development and maintain it autonomously.

It is essential for NGOs and IOs to communicate with the CIMIC units in order to avoid useless and expensive overlapping, but at the same time not all organizations are willing to work together bond with the military forces, because they fear that their good relationship with the population could be endangered<sup>81</sup>.

One must not forget, however, that UNIFIL is composed of almost 30 nations, therefore it is impossible for all contingents to have the same kind of relationship with civilians and to be accepted in the same way by all.

Some people, such as the mayors of Nabatiyye<sup>82</sup> and Aytarun<sup>83</sup> are grateful for the presence of various NGOs and UNIFIL in Lebanon. The municipalities have been able to build excellent relationships with some NGOs, especially some Italian ones (UCODEP<sup>84</sup>, UPP<sup>85</sup>, INTERSOS<sup>86</sup> for example), which have managed to integrate well in Lebanese society and which have helped to set up important projects for the young, the elderly, the environment and for infrastructures. As the mayors of Srifa<sup>87</sup> and of Qana<sup>88</sup> said, UNIFIL troops are not seen as mere "soldiers". The Italians especially have been able to create a strong bond with the population. They are always willing to help, winning hearts and minds, without forgetting what their mission is. However, one cannot deny that many Lebanese do have some doubts concerning UNIFIL: as Kassem Aleik<sup>89</sup> put it, one does not forget that UNIFIL's troops have only been deployed in South Lebanon and not on the other side of the Blue Line; everybody knows the strong bonds there are between the U.N. and the U.S., and between the U.S. and Israel, therefore, one often wonders whether UNIFIL can actually be a neutral and impartial force. Still, the above-mentioned mayors also underlined how useful UNIFIL has been in maintaining peace and perhaps in discouraging Israel from further attacks. But at the same time, no one feels sure that

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with R.Sapienza, ROSS Emergency Program, Tyre Office Coordinator, 11/11/2008, Tyre, Lebanon.

<sup>80</sup> Riabilitazione, Occupazione, Servizi e Sviluppo.

<sup>81</sup> This clearly emerged during some of the interviews done in Lebanon in autumn 2007.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Mustafa Bedreddine, 13/11/2007, Nabatiyye, Lebanon.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Selim Mourad, 13/11/2007, Tyre, Lebanon.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Luca Lo Conte, project coordinator UCODEP, 12/11/2007, Tyre, Lebanon.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Giulia Rivoli, project coordinator, UPP, 16/11/2007, Beirut, Lebanon

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Guido Pietrosanti, project coordinator, INTERSOS, 13/11/2007, Tyre, Lebanon.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with 'Ali Aham 'Aid, 14/11/2007, Srifa, Lebanon.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Muhammad Jamil 'Atiye, 15/11/2007, Qana, Lebanon.

<sup>89</sup> Jihad al-Binaa Development Association President. Interview 6/11/2007, Beirut (Rwais), Lebanon.

Israel will not strike again and they all agree that, should the Jewish State attack again, no multinational or international force will block the Lebanese from answering Israeli aggression; no external force will stop the Lebanese from protecting and defending their land.

NGOs, IOs and UNIFIL represent an important economic resource for the country and many are convinced that the European presence can act as a brake on Israeli politics and as a buffer between the two sides, north and south of the Blue Line. At the same time, however, the people do not have total faith in the multi-national force. When UNIFIL 2 first deployed its troops, many of its men searched houses in order to confiscate Hizbullah arms, spreading fear and anger, but when the IDF planes fly over Lebanon, going well beyond the Blue Line, Tyre and the Litani River, therefore violating Resolution 1701, UNIFIL 2 does not respond with strength.

Especially during and immediately after the 2006 war, the population felt that in effect only Hizbullah had protected the nation. In fact, during those 33 days a feeling of “Lebanicity” emerged, a feeling that went towards eliminating all political, cultural and social borders. The desire to help the other, whoever he was, was stronger than all the differences. However, once the war was over, divergences and communal divisions reappeared: on the one side some accused Hizbullah of having been the cause of the war, on the other, many considered Hizbullah the real winner. Soon sectorial habits returned and the internal equilibrium began to vacillate again.

Despite the Doha agreements of May 21st 2008, the efforts to form a National Unity Government are deadlocked over key portfolios, including the defence and interior ministries, and as a consequence stability is still lacking.

Therefore, one can observe how a bridge between NGOs, IOs, UNIFIL and the Lebanese people is being built. This involves, of course, trying to go beyond cultural, social and political differences and borders. Complex international issues still remain; however, Lebanese border problems are not to be found only beyond the indefinite and controversial national borders, but also within them, down the invisible but enduring borders which threaten a cantonization of Lebanon. To transcend these, it would be necessary to seek national consensus and dialogue, because external help is not sufficient for the creation of a stable and lasting Lebanese union, free of international interference.

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