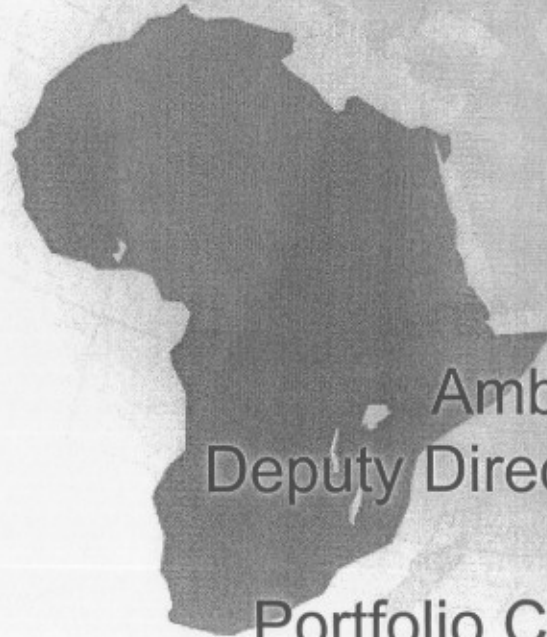


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THE ISRAELI-LEBANON CRISIS



Presented by:

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Deputy Director General: Asia and Middle
East

Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs

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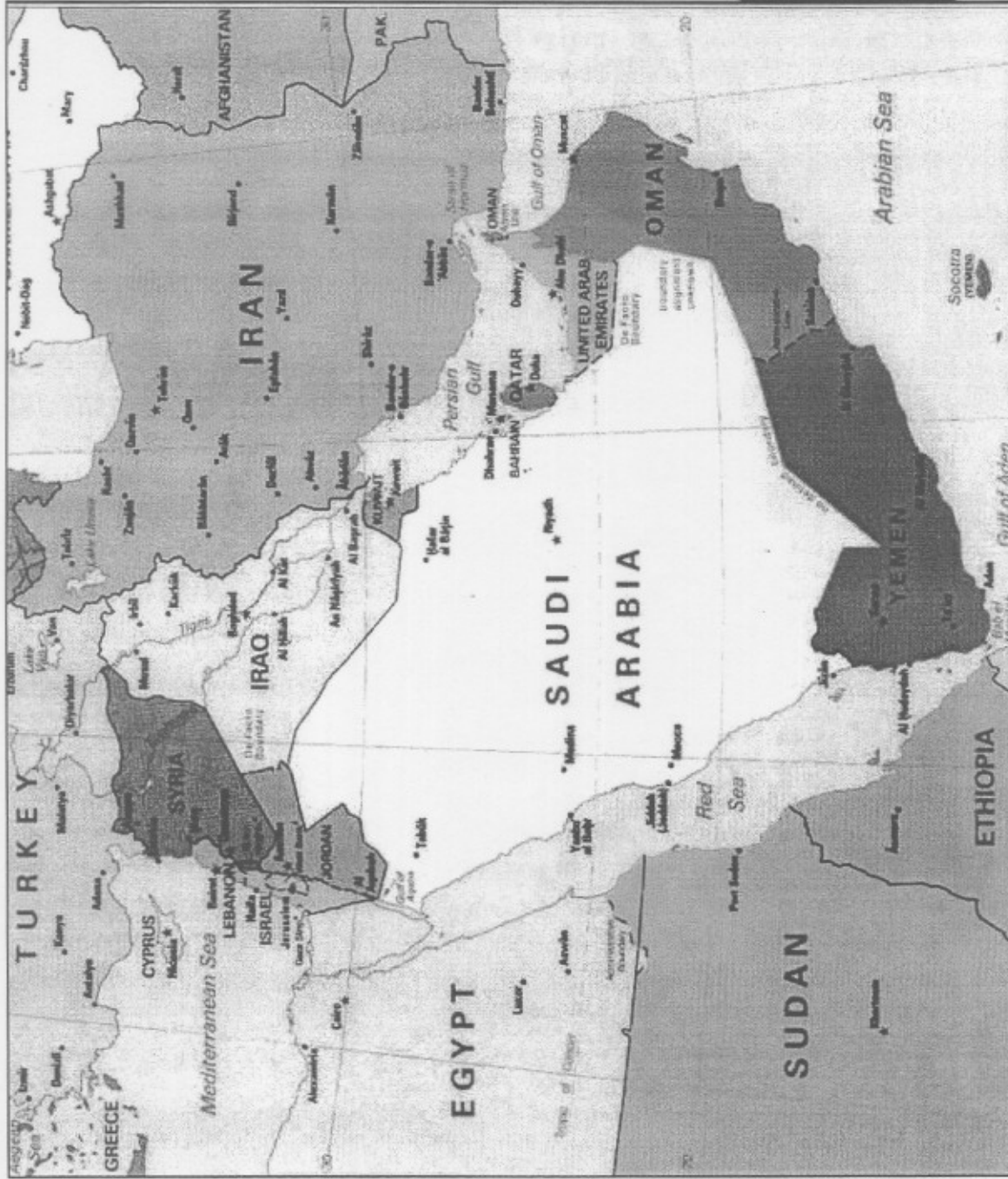
Overview

- The situation in Lebanon-Time line
- Origins of the crisis
- What next – possibility of a cessation of hostilities
- Source of the conflict
- Cessation of hostilities
- The Battle of Ideas
- South Africa's Policy on the Middle East
- Implications for South Africa. Do we react?



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THE SITUATION IN LEBANON-TIME LINE INTO THE CONFLICT

- The conflict involves Israel and Hezbollah party's military wing in Lebanon.
- It is crucial to note that there exists a nexus between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the current situation in Lebanon. The precipitating factors to the conflict on the two sides is that nexus (ie.the capturing of the Israeli soldiers by Hamas and Hezbollah respectively).
- In response Israel sent soldiers on a rescue mission in Lebanon. These efforts were followed by heightened IDF airstrikes in Southern Lebanon aimed at targeting Hezbollah operation points. Retaliatory attacks by the latter were witnessed, the target being the northern towns of israel.
- As a result, Israel intensified its troop involvement in southern Lebanon. Ground forces were dispatched and thus attacking Hezbollah strongholds in border towns. Strong Hezbollah resistance was encountered by Israeli forces, which have to date, made only limited progress.
- More than 1000 Lebanese and 68 + Israelis are reportedly killed in the hostilities, with heavy damage to infrastructure in Lebanon, as well as substantial damage in the Israeli of city Haifa.



Origins of the crisis

- Arguably, the root cause of the current aggravation is the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict, notably the absence of positive changes in Palestinian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli relations. Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and Israel's failure to withdraw from the occupied territories are some of the issues at the heart of the conflict.
- On the other hand Israel wants to secure the release of its captured soldiers and destroy the "terror infrastructure" in Lebanon.
- A point to be noted is that Israel was never open to the idea of negotiations with Hezbollah. Their immediate and immense attack on the latter clearly indicate Israel's resolve to hopefully and finally remove the Hezbollah threat from its northern border.
- Other arguments suggest that Hezbollah could have acted out of pressure from their main sponsor Iran. To date there is no indication that either Tehran or Damascus would benefit from the conflict.
- Hezbollah could have acted in solidarity with Hamas in the hope that the capture of the two Israeli soldiers would enhance their bargaining power for prisoners swap. Evidently this proved to be a tactical error.



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What Next - Possibility of a cessation of hostilities?

- Prior to the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1701 the following were the views held by analysts on the situation:
- Many analysts believed that some Israeli and USA policy makers saw this as an opportunity to deal with Iran. **This strategy could include the following phases**
- **Phase 1**
- Israel was expected to continue its assault and stranglehold on Lebanon through its air and sea superiority by destroying or capturing key strategic targets.
- These targets included critical infrastructure such as roads, rail, telecommunications, airports and oil depots, as well as Hezbollah command centers.
- Israel could also target key leaders of Hezbollah **for capture or assassination** to isolate them from followers – many members of Hamas government already detained by Israel.



What Next - Possibility of a cessation of hostilities

- Israeli destruction of Hezbollah rocket locations, terrifying the Lebanese population in process.
- The targeting of routes to and from Syria under the claim that Israel is cutting off Hezbollah supply lines while at same time putting Syria on "notice".
- Take control of airspace, sea-lanes and ports around Lebanon to ensure no movement in and out of the country. Ground invasion.

Phase 2

- This phase would see Israeli efforts to drive a wedge between the pro and anti-Syrian factions in Lebanon. Air distribution of pamphlets in Lebanon testifies to this.
- The consequences were however the opposite, with Hezbollah popularity increasing and the moderate Arab Governments facing insecurity



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Cessation of hostilities-UN brokered peace

- United Nations Security Council discusses the situation in Lebanon.
- A cease fire in Lebanon and Gaza is the main objective and the task will prove to be a difficult one.
- The long history of the Arab-Israeli confrontation shows that there is no military solution to it. Dialogue, not war and unilateral decisions is the only solution.
- On August 05 amidst the ongoing attacks, Lebanon rejected a draft UN Resolution proposed by the US and France that called for “full cessation of hostilities” between Israel and Hezbollah, saying it did not adequately address Lebanese concerns.
- As consensus on a draft Resolution was delayed, Lebanon proffered to send 15,000 troops to the south when Israel withdraws. Fighting continues and the Arab League accused UN for failing to act decisively.



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Cessation of hostilities-UN brokered peace

- 11 August 2006 UNSC Resolution 1701 calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities was adopted. The Prime Ministers of Israel and Lebanon together with Hezbollah indicated that they will abide by the UN-backed ceasefire.
- **NB. On August 06, US State Secretary mentioned that there will be violence in the Middle East “for sometime to come” even after the adoption of a UN Resolution aimed at ending the conflict.**
- Momentum is gathering to deploy a UN monitoring force in southern Lebanon. Discussion on the composition of the Peacekeeping force is underway.
- Israel made it clear that a complete withdrawal would not be effective until 15000 Lebanese troops are deployed in the south together with a UN force.



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South Africa's role on relief efforts to Lebanon

- Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad met with interfaith leaders with a view to developing an aid-relief strategy for Lebanon.
- DFA sponsored Relief flight and R1.2 million.
- Gift of the Givers and the Maronite church contributed approximately 40 tons of relief supplies.
- With Palestinians already the majority in Jordan, Israeli actions focused on avoiding return of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon and Syria.
- SA Mission in Damascus on standby to offer the necessary assistance.
- Islamic Relief, represented by Mr Cassim Khan is currently in Lebanon assisted by their UK office with coordination of relief efforts.
- Jordan to assist in delivering supplies directly to Beirut.



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Challenges confronting relief efforts

- Damaged infrastructure
- The precise number of displaced persons in Lebanon.
- The prevailing security situation.
 - risk of continued fighting
 - high number of unexploded bombs.



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