Great Expectations, Limited Means: France and the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese War

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For the future historians of the Middle East, the successive shifts in the French response to the Israeli-Lebanese war of the summer 2006 might offer a good illustration of the ambitions and frustrations of a Western second-rank power meddling in regional politics at the beginning of the 21st century. At first, France joined the international western chorus condemning Hizbullah for its provocations; subsequently France supported a more nuanced Lebanese position before the U.N., before refusing to reinforce their support militarily and finally giving rise to an unexpected European common intervention. Such apparent hesitation will bear testimony to the growing intertwining of European and Middle East security policies as a consequence of the failure of American unilateral rule. This article proposes to analyze the successive postures of French foreign policy first as the effect of an international policy driven by a president anxious to seize the occasion to polish his tarnished political image, but also of a president who is torn between his orientation as an Atlanticist and a desire to maintain privileged relations with the Arab world generally and Lebanon in particular.

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To better understand the events of the summer 2006, this article will examine the French position within its historical context, looking first at the colonial experiment of the first half of the 20th century and more recently, at the French military interventions (UNIFIL and MF) during the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990. As heir to the Gaullist doctrine of a French “Arab policy”, Chirac has tried to re-assert French diplomacy in the Levant since the late 1990s. His policy is worth examining in comparison with the U.S. broader, then new, Middle East and North Africa initiative.

Can French policy with respect to the war in Lebanon trigger a strategic shift in the Middle East given that such policy would be essentially European, different from that of the United States and autonomous as to their means of implementation? And could such uncoupling of European politics from U.S. strategy in the Middle East reinforce the chances of success for the second UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL-Plus)?

FROM THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM TO THE DEFENSE OF LEBANON

In the first weeks of the war, France reacted both on the field and diplomatically, sending a double

message, one of reluctance to engage on the one hand and a message of alignment with the United States (and thus, of support for the Israeli position) on the other. From the first Israeli air raids, ministerial and even presidential declarations (Jacques Chirac's traditional speech of July 14 from the Elysée [the presidential palace]) and embassy activities in Beirut focused on the evacuation of some 15,000 French citizens and Franco-Lebanese. Ferry boats were dispatched from Larnaca, Cyprus and Prime minister de Villepin went on a highly publicized trip to Beirut harbor to greet the first evacuees who shouted "vive la France" for the television cameras. In the days that followed, French officials and media continued to express concern for expatriates caught by the Israeli blockade. A Special Forces operation to evacuate a French high school in Habboush (Nabatiye) thanks to a truce negotiated with the Israeli army constituted the most outstanding intervention of French troops positioned off the Lebanese coasts. In the meantime, only limited medical and humanitarian aid was reaching the Lebanese. The implicit message of this massive and hasty evacuation went against French declarations of sympathy while implicitly acquiescing in the prospect of a long and destructive war to which only Tel-Aviv and Washington could put a term. It was also a message of non-support for the Lebanese government of Fuad Siniora who endeavored throughout the conflict to maintain solidarity with all communities and all areas of the country; by choosing cautious withdrawal, France contributed to the frustration of civil society and the Christian populations, thus encouraging the emigration option.

This cautious withdrawal was accompanied at first by a conspicuous alignment with the American position at the G-8 summit in Saint Petersburg (17 July), at the meeting of the Lebanon Core Group in Rome (26 July) and finally at the Security Council (5 August). France basked in the glory of co-sponsoring, with the United States, UN Security Council resolution 1559 (2 September 2004) which called for and resulted in Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, but which also called for the disarmament of all militias. On July 12, the French government reiterated their call for an "indispensable" disarmament and held Hizbullah responsible for breaking the quasi-truce which had prevailed for several months on the Israeli-Lebanese border, allowing Israeli Foreign minister Tzipi Livni to declare that Israeli army's offensive only aimed "at enforcing resolution 1559"1 thus offering an image of a French-American-Israeli convergence. When, following a private meeting with George Bush on July 16, Jacques Chirac declared, "It is necessary to dissuade the forces which threaten the safety, stability and sovereignty of Lebanon", he repeated the exact words of the American president. He too seemed unaware of the complexities of the Lebanese domestic scene. He appeared to embrace the same Manichean vision of a democratic Lebanon allied with the West (that of the Christians, of Hariri and Junblatt) against its "destructors" (Islamist Hizbullah and Syria's allies). Chirac's concern for maintaining an image of French-American connivance in the fight against Islamic terrorism and on the Lebanese issue at the Security Council led further to the joint first draft of resolution 1701: a unilateral sentence against Hizbullah and a plan to send international forces under Chapter VII of the UN Charter in order to achieve the "disarmament of armed groups […] between the Blue line and the Litani river". 2 At the same time, the United States began bullying France into taking the lead of the peacekeeping force which was to be responsible for following up Israeli policy in Lebanon.

It took more than the firm rejection by the Siniora government of an unacceptable and above all unenforceable plan to bend the position of France and remind Jacques Chirac of the realities of Middle-Eastern political balances. Intense exchanges with the Egyptian president and Saudi rulers initiated by the Afrique du Nord-Moyen-Orient directorate at the Quai d'Orsay (French ministry of Foreign Affairs) together with a progressive shift in Hizbullah's stance convinced the president that there could be no military solution to the crisis and that means of persuasion would be needed in order for Hizbullah to reach the conclusion that it had no option but to give up its weapons. He therefore presented a three-step action plan in Le Monde (27 July): first, an "immediate and permanent" cease-fire to put an end to the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Lebanon; second, an

engagement of the international community towards both Israel and Lebanon – the latter being responsible for negotiations leading to the disarmament of Hizbullah; finally the use of a multinational force to support the deployment of the Lebanese army south of the Litani river up to the Israeli border.

Thus, the French representative to the Security Council accepted – cautiously, belatedly and unremarkably – to take into consideration Arab reservations about the first UN draft3 by making explicit reference to the Lebanese Prime minister's seven-step plan, including the decision to "deploy an armed force of 15,000 troops [..] as the Israeli army withdraws" and their insistence on "exercising full sovereignty". In order to be approved unanimously (including, therefore by the United States) the 11 August 2006 SC resolution 1701 remained imprecise and its implementation depended on a number of intricate conditions. As such, it was greeted as a victory for France and a reward for president Chirac's "ethical" position when he had claimed that letting the current situation persist would be "the most immoral attitude".4 There is nothing like "a good" international crisis to rehabilitate a president caught up in failures and scandals and at the end of his second term.5

In the days that followed rumors spread that the reinforced UNIFIL would include a large French contingent (up to 5,000 of the 15,000 men) and would be under French command.6 "France takes lead role on Lebanon" commented the BBC7 – a France known as "a friend and protector of Lebanon". What was the rationale behind such a sentimental cliché?

BETWEEN NOSTALGIA AND REVENGE

The relations between France and Lebanon (or, before the creation of the state, the population of Mount Lebanon) constitute a long narrative of history and myth.8 Even though there is abundance of serious works on the history of European imperialism and colonialism in the region,9 such narratives remain woven into an emotional veil of mutual stereotypes such as "Lebanon is France's oldest daughter" or France is the "tender mother (umm hanûn) of Lebanon". It is true that Lebanon is partly (but only partly)10 a French invention and that following the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire the country was detached from the province of Syria in 1920 by General Gouraud who established its boundaries, remaining under French mandate during a quarter of a century.11 In order to promote strategic interests arising in modern times since the intervention of the Second Empire in the war between Maronites and Druze,12 France argued successively for the protection of Christians (and Maronites in particular), for an acculturation of the Lebanese to state modernity, for the solidarity of the Western camp first in the face of the Arab and Muslim world and later in the confrontation with the Soviet camp, and finally for "francophonie" - French as a universal language. "Francophonie" bears a more geopolitical even ideological understanding than the mere sharing of the French language (which lost its status as Lebanon's second language to English in the mid 1990's)13. It is the latest twist in the special relationship which authorizes Paris to offer as much cultural and technical aid to Lebanon (4 million inhabitants) as it does to Egypt (70 million). The new trend encourages French diplomacy to focus not so much on Christians – at a time when high school and college education in English is rapidly progressing among Maronites – but to reach out to Tripoli's Sunnis and especially to Lebanese Shiites, of whom they assume many became French speakers thanks to their emigration to Western Africa.14

Would such redeployment of Franco-Lebanese relations towards the country's Muslim communities prove sufficient grounds to renew a solid alliance? Not when taking into account both the nostalgia of some and the hostility of others. The nostalgia of the old Lebanese elites holding on to the idea of privileged relations; the nostalgia of both "rightwing" and "leftwing" French, who cling to the image

of a Christian and/or secular Lebanon, and choose to ignore its demographic and social changes since the end of the civil war. As for the sentiment of hostility, it has been progressively growing between France and Arab and Muslim societies as a result of the never-ending Palestinian agony, as it has grown between the Arab world and the West as a whole. Gone is the time (December 1968) when General de Gaulle raised Lebanese (and Arab) approval by declaring "unacceptable" the principle of retaliatory Israeli attacks against the Beirut airport.15

Since then, the Western world generally, and France in particular have tolerated a number of Israeli interventions contrary to international law. UNIFIL, the observation force created in April 1978 by UN Security Council resolution 425 following the first massive invasion of the country by Israel, has watched powerlessly for 22 years as the fighting continued between the Lebanese resistance and the occupying army. Its French contingent remained confined to logistic and humanitarian tasks. Lives were lost in the crossfire and the force's legitimacy was tarnished by its inaction.16 France scored only once in the eyes of the Lebanese when they co-sponsored with the United States the April 1996 agreement between Israel, Lebanon and Syria following the 1996 Israeli Operation Grapes of Wrath.17

During the second phase of the Lebanese civil war, following the 1982 Israeli invasion and as a consequence of the political and military support given to Saddam Hussein since the 1970's (Chirac was Prime minister and leader of the Gaullist party) and especially in the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988),18 the relationship between France and the Shiite community, namely the Lebanese Shiites, deteriorated. In 1982, after another Israeli invasion, some 800 French troops joined an equal number of U.S. Marines and 400 Italian troops to supervise the evacuation of the PLO from Lebanon. This Multinational Force (MF) operated in close co-operation with the regime of President Amin Gemayel. They had to confront Shiite militants, in particular the then nascent Hizbullah. Attacks (58 French paratroopers killed in the Drakkar building in Beirut on 23 October 1983) were followed by reprisals (against Hizbullah barracks on 17 November, 1983 in Baalbek), by kidnappings of civilians and terrorist attacks even on French soil between December 1985 and September 1986.19

Following the end of the civil war, France was not particularly successful in mending fences with the Lebanese Shiite militant groups and their Iranian patron: their boldest move was to invite Hassan Nasrallah, the head of Hizbullah, to participate in the Francophone Summit in Beirut in October 2002 but, the following year, Chirac's relationship with Hizbullah deteriorated because of France's ban on headscarves in public schools. In a letter to Chirac, Sayyid Hussein Fadlallah threatened with "likely complications" when the ban was approved in 2004. Then came the ban on al-Manar, Hizbullah's television channel, accused of anti-Semitic propaganda.20 On the whole, French policies towards Lebanon during that phase of reconstruction were thus based on an ambivalent set of memories, built around idealized friendliness and unresolved hatred and resentment. New imperatives on the French national scene further constrained the Chirac administration's great expectations.

FRENCH DOMESTIC SCENE AND LEBANON: LITTLE SENSE, TOO MUCH SENSIBILITY

As mentioned earlier, the "right-wing/ left-wing" division in the French political life tends to blur when it comes to foreign policy. It even disappears sometimes, when faced with a serious crisis: thus it was that French political actors spoke with a rare unanimous voice against American unilateralism at the outset of the Second Gulf War, in March 2003, and the episode briefly revived ambitions for an independent French policy in the Middle East. Most of the time however, the consensus is weak. We may note a historical proximity between the socialist Party and Israel (the generation who visited

the kibbutzim in the 1960's is now in the lead) and François Mitterrand's declared sympathy with the Labor Party leaders,21 and no one has forgotten Lionel Jospin's trip as a Prime minister to Israel and Palestine in February 2000, when he spoke of Hizbullah as a "terrorist organization".22 At the same time, within the Gaullist party, the ambition of an "independent French Arab policy" quickly faded, weakened by the contradictions between ideology (opposition to "fundamentalism", for example) and business requirements. Moreover, French actors showed little skill to impose themselves amid the backstage plots thriving in the Middle East political arena.23 In 2006, Jacques Chirac's ministers and potential successors to the presidency (elections are scheduled for April 2007), Nicolas Sarkozy, Interior minister, and Dominique de Villepin, Prime minister, are both inclined to compete for Israel's sympathy in order to attract Jewish voters: Sarkozy telephoned his support to his Israeli counterpart in Tel-Aviv as early as July 12. As for Villepin, he gave new momentum to cultural and military cooperation in 2002 when he was minister of Foreign Affairs.24

This may explain the tacit consensus on Middle East politics – from the intellectuals to the business world, not to mention the military, some of whom have been struck by the "Vietnam syndrome" following tours-of-duty in UNIFIL or in the MF.25 The academic world specializing in Arab politics were required to take time out.26 Diplomats at the Quai d'Orsay are kept in the dark.27 Rather than to a strategic debate, the Lebanese crisis gives rise to political jockeying and the pursuit of corporate interests. The only resistance to the consensus on Chirac's Middle East policy comes from the fringes of the political spectrum, among unrelenting pro-Arabs: anti-Semitic right-wing extremists, anti-imperialist left-wing extremists and Islamist militants,28 all of whom are de facto excluded from the decision arena. What's more, the war of the summer 2006, like the 1982 invasion, occurred during the French "grandes vacances" [summer holidays], which is to say, during a period of widespread social and political indifference. A few isolated and contradictory demonstrations organized by Palestinians and Lebanese in Paris (all in support of Lebanon, but not all of them supporting Hizbullah) complete the picture of a lazy if indifferent French polity.

Add to this that Jacques Chirac has personally followed Lebanese affairs since 1998, but excluding the subject from parliamentary debate. Throughout the summer of 2006 the president remained omnipresent by means of solemn pronouncements and extraordinary cabinet and summit meetings. He seemed to be managing the crisis "from the gut", as suggested by an editorial in Libération,29 which invited comparison to Chirac's criticism of George Bush in 2003 for relying on his "gut feeling" in dealing with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Even if monopolization and close management of Foreign policy by the president is nothing new – Mitterrand also monopolized this "regalian" function30 – Chirac has put a great deal of feeling into Arab politics. It is well documented that he established France's foreign alliances according to his personal affinities and does not hesitate to mix public policy and business interests, a style of patronage recognized as common practice among Middle Eastern states and not altogether unfamiliar to "Northern democracies", whatever they may claim.31 An example of such practices might be the special protection he granted to Hafez al-Assad's son and heir, Bashar, who was received at the Elysée when his father was still alive and whose unsuccessful efforts at political, economic and administrative reform, were successively welcomed by an obliging French diplomacy during three years (2000-2003). Afterwards, Chirac's personal resentment against Bashar and his determination to exclude his protégé not only from the Lebanese scene, but also from regional negotiations, revealed the same impulsive and emotional behavior that hampers the management of a rational foreign policy.32 Another example would be the close ties that the French president established with Rafic Hariri and later, following the father's assassination, with his son Saad. Without going so far as to repeat the charges of corruption made in relation to the two men, the Saudi-Lebanese billionaire and the French politician, we should at least acknowledge for better or worse, that Chirac's perceptions of post-war Lebanon and French policy in that country were influenced by the market driven and ultra-liberal ideas of Rafic Hariri.33 How could such emotionally driven policy, harshly labeled "limited and anecdotic"34, fit with the vast

projects of the American power in the Middle East?

FROM BAGHDAD TO BEIRUT AN ATTEMPT TO AT TRANSATLANTIC RECONCILIATION

In taking the lead against American unilateralism in Iraq in 2003, France secured for herself esteem among the international community. However, it was not able to convert it into political gain on the ground, especially in the Middle East. Conscious of the fragility of the anti-war coalition (Germany was already covertly supporting American forces in Iraq), France very quickly sought to call for a "Euro-American partnership" in order to "promote security" in Iraq, "renew the peace process" in the Middle East and fight"terrorism and its proliferation".35 The underlying objective was to defuse the"war of civilizations" between the West and Islam by playing honest broker between the American super power and Arab regimes frustrated by American unilateralism and Washington's unconditional support for Israel. Three years later, in view of the lasting American entanglement in Iraq and the standoff between America under Bush and Iran under Ahmadinejad, there seems to be little room for alternative policies in the region. As a result, there is a clear danger for France to appear as Washington's partner implementing strategic complementarities: the United States and the United Kingdom in Iraq, and France in the Levant (Syria and Lebanon) as in colonial times or during the Cold War.

In Lebanon, France, pressed by its usual local interlocutors,36 endeavored to accelerate the departure of the Syrian armed forces while consolidating a pro-Western coalition led by Rafic Hariri, able to replace the pro-Syrian regime of president Lahoud. Indeed, the unanimous adoption of SC resolution 1559, the "Cedar Revolution" (March 2005)37 in the wake of the dramatic assassination of Hariri, and election in June of a Parliament dominated by the Hariri coalition,38 appeared to mark a peaceful democratization process, against a backdrop of French-American reconciliation. Since SC resolution 1559, the U.N. appointed an international commission of enquiry to investigate the Hariri assassination; then passed SC resolution 1680 introduced by France (17 May 2006), requiring Syria to delimit its borders with Lebanon. In the meantime, French-American anti-terrorist co-operation was fully operational.39

The "New Middle East" was on the move. For eighteen months, American and French ambassadors haunted the corridors of the Grand Serail, the seat of Lebanese government. In Beirut, they were mocked as the "high commissioners" in reference to the French ruler under the mandate. Washington and Paris followed closely the "national dialogue" opened in April 2006 to tackle Lebanon's major political issues, one of which is the disarmament of Hizbullah. While diplomats in the US embassy kept a pro-active and optimistic tone (a kind of "democracy if I want where I want"), the mood became somber in the Résidence des Pins (the French embassy in Beirut) as the window of opportunity opened by the so-called Cedar Revolution closed inexorably40. Still, at the time of the kidnapping by Hizbullah of two Israeli soldiers, Washington and Paris shared the same indignation and the same analysis of the belligerent influence of Damascus and Teheran in the Lebanese-Israeli crisis.41 The first draft of Security Council resolution 1701 reflected this persistent transatlantic consensus. Even so, unlike the United States, France was aware of the Lebanese stalemate. But it was not in a position to antagonize the regional players behind the scene at the cost of its own security, energy supply and public image.
First and foremost was Iran, whose potential to play a "stabilizing role" in the Lebanese-Israeli war was publicly underscored by minister of Foreign Affairs Philippe Douste-Blazy in the wake of his meeting in Beirut (31 July 2006) with his Iranian counterpart, Manouchehr Mottaki. Although his declaration surprised and shocked many, it was in line with French policy towards Iran. Beginning with the terrorist and counter-terrorist war of the 1980s, and even more since the negotiation of the

Agreement of April 1996, the French government has been convinced that Teheran holds the key to peace in southern Lebanon, if not in Palestine. Without a political guarantee from Iran, sending troops to secure peace in South Lebanon might lure France into a confrontation with Hizbullah in the name (and place) of the Israeli army. Hizbullah spiritual leader, Muhamad Hussein Fadlallah himself, warned against such a scenario.42 Rather, Paris thought of taking advantage of the looming crisis over the development of Iran nuclear power, to open a line of negotiations in which the future of the Iranian nuclear power would be balanced against the disengagement of the Islamic Republic in the Levant. Secret contacts intensified during August 2006, as the deadline approached for Iran to respond to Security Council proposals. However, to date, there is no evidence of any political guarantee secured by France from Iran for its participation in the UNIFIL-Plus in Lebanon.

Then, there was a possible threat from Syria, a regime France has deeply antagonized by promoting SC resolutions 1559 and 1680 and its intimate support to the new anti-Syrian Lebanese majority - Hariri, Junblatt and the 14-March Coalition. Here the recent wave of booby-trapping cars in Beirut in 2004-2005 combined with the unveiled threats by Syrian minister of Foreign Affairs, Walid Moallem43 and president Bashar al-Asad reignited again memories of the civil war (namely assassination of ambassador Louis Delamare in Beirut in September 1981) 44. But unlike its policy towards Iran, French strategy towards Syria remained aligned to the American determination to isolate Damascus, in spite of contrary advices from both its ambassador in Damascus and its German and Spanish partners.45

On the whole however, second thoughts about the regional balance of power drifted France apart from its American ally. Between the first draft of SC resolution 1701 (5 August) and the second draft (11 August), French diplomacy retreated. It differed from the American position by supporting the Lebanese government's refusal to place the UNIFIL-Plus mission within the framework of chapter VII of the UN Charter, and its insistence on remaining sovereign in the maintenance of peace on its national soil. In so doing, France reaffirmed its Westphalian doctrine, somewhat discredited following the end of the Cold War, of respect for national sovereignty.46 In the meantime, by providing support for the Siniora government, France worked on avoiding the escalating spiral toward unilateral intervention in which the American administration openly wished to involve it along with Germany and Spain who also had escaped the Iraqi trap, with a risk of further deepening the rift between the West and the Arab and Muslim world.

French strategy in Lebanon had to reconcile differences arising between its diplomatic posturing on the eve of a United Nations deployment and its realistic evaluation of the forces on the ground, in particular in southern Lebanon.47 For the French military, the perspective of facing a strong Hizbullah militia capable of withstanding the Israeli onslaught for 4 weeks awakened the worst memories of 1982-1983. Add to this the direct knowledge of the weaknesses of the new Lebanese army that UNIFIL-Plus was supposed to assist48 and the spectacle of looming dissension within the Siniora government with regard to the mission of this army, notwithstanding the risk of an ever-present danger of a strike by Israel. A closer reading of resolution 1701 revealed that the text was obscure, even silent on the matter of political or military objectives of deployment as well as on the means (the "rules of engagement") by which these would be achieved.49 Although Lebanon is not Somalia nor even Afghanistan, France opted to set political and security preconditions to its involvement on the field.50 While raising the ire of its American ally in Lebanon, its cautious strategy resulted in an unexpected and innovative European commitment.

THE SEARCH FOR A COMMON EUROPEAN POLICY

As mentioned previously, there is hardly an indication that France did receive "political guaranties" from Middle Eastern actors beyond the Israeli and the Lebanese governments. In the meantime Kofi Annan made it plain that the UN force would not disarm Hizbullah and would only police the

Lebanon border with Syria if asked by the Lebanese government, thus confirming the lack of "political agreement" demanded by Jacques Chirac in his interview with Le Monde. the Secretary General could neither expound the precise mandate to the 25 Foreign ministers of the European Union he met in Brussels nor the new rules of engagement for the "strong, credible and robust forces" the UN wants to send rapidly in beyond a shortening of the chain of command, the use of heavy weaponry, and the fact that the force has a single commander on the ground at all times.51 And yet, in the end Douste-Blazy, like his fellow ministers, expressed his country's satisfaction and its willingness to send as many as 2,000 troops in the coming weeks.52

Indeed, the Europeans are taking a considerable risk by stepping into in the UNIFIL-Plus shoes for a failing French commitment. With some 7,000 soldiers – approximately half the forces required – South Lebanon will be their biggest common operation ever: in their take over from NATO in Bosnia in 2004, they sent 6,500 troops. However, this innovative move can be interpreted in two different ways and only the observation of UNIFIL-Plus on the ground will tell which one was right. The optimistic interpretation is that the French semi-withdrawal offered a long awaited opportunity for the EU to undertake in Lebanon and the Middle East a policy less flamboyant but better suited to the capacities of the Europeans, conceived from a regional "multipolar" and Euro-Mediterranean perspective, whose independence with respect to the United States will grant legitimacy in the region. From such perspective, the dramatic war on Lebanon of the summer 2006 might lead to dearly needed multilateral peace negotiations under UN auspices.

ENDNOTES

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2 The Daily Star (Beirut), 7 August 2006, "Text of the UN Security Council Draft Resolution".

3 Haaretz, 7 August 2006.

4 Presidential declaration of August 9, 2006.

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21 Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam Bey, Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: la France et le conflit israélo-arabe (Paris : Éditions de la revue d'Études palestiniennes, 1992) ; Jean-Pierre Filiu, Mitterrand et la Palestine : l'ami d'Israël qui sauva par trois fois Yasser Arafat (Paris : Fayard, 2005).

22 This earned him a 'stoning' upon arrival at Bir Zeit University and a heated lecture from Chirac who reminded him that French foreign policy is the prerogative of the president, not the Prime minister.

23 Olivier Roy, "Sur la 'politique arabe de la France'", Maghreb-Machrek, 132, (April/June 1991), p. 15-21.

24 Alain Gresh, "Middle East: France Rejoins the Pack", Le Monde Diplomatique (English version), June 2006.

25 Which incited some French officers, beaten by the "Viets" to seek revenge on the Algerian "fellaghas". See Benjamin Stora, La gangrène et l'oubli : la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie (Paris: La Découverte, 1998).

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27 Both the Ambassador and the Conseiller culturel on station in Lebanon in July 2006 had served with Jacques Chirac at Elysée Palace. They keep direct connection with the president's diplomatic advisor, Maurice Gourdault-Montagne.

28 These militant groups should not be confused with the vast majority of French Muslims of Arab origins whose opposition is motivated by economic and social frustration. See Vincent Geisser, La nouvelle islamophobie (Paris: La Découverte, 2004).

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33 For a radical critique of the political economy of Hariri’s Lebanon and of French policies towards him, see Georges Corm, Al-I’mâr wal-maslaha l-‘amma fî iqtisad ma ba’d al-harb wa siyasatuh [Reconstruction and public good in post-war economy and politics](Beirut: Mu’assasa al-Abhath al-Madaniyya, 1996).

34 Joseph Bahout, presentation at the seminar “Européens et Américains face aux crises du Moyen-Orient” organized by the Institut Français des Relations Internationales, Paris, 5 September 2005. See http://www.ifri.org/frontDispatcher/ifri/publications/publications_en_ligne_1044623469287/publi_P_publi_mmm_seminaire_euromesco_1150472707764

35 Dominique de Villepin, statement before the Chamber of deputies, Paris, 30 April 2003. http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/cr-cafe/02-03/c0203051.asp

36 Rafic Hariri, Marwan Hamadeh (Walid Junblatt’s advisor in the Druze PSP and Ghassan Twaini’s brother in law), and probably, Ghassan Salameh, former minister of Culture in Hariri’s government,currently professor at the prestigious Institut d’Études Politiques in Paris. General Michel Aoun claims that he lobbied the United States Department of State in the same sense.

37 Only in the West do people refer to the “uprising for independence” (intifâdat al-istiql?l) of 14 March 2005 in this way. This label is a politically abusive and counter-productive reappropriation which serves only to underscore the sensationalized and ephemeral character of the event.

38 Sateh Noureddine and Laurie King-Irani, “Elections Pose Lebanon’s Old Questions Anew”, Middle East Report, 31 May 2005. http://www.merip.org/mero/mero053105.html.

39 Dana Priest, “Help from France key in Covert Operations”, The Washington Post, 3 July 2005.

40 See Agnès Favier, “La spirale de la crise dans le Liban libéré (2004-2006), Institut Français des Relations Internationales, Perspectives Moyen-Orient / Maghreb (juin 2006), http://www.ifri.org/frontDispatcher/ifri/publications

41 See minister of Foreign Affairs Philippe Douste-Blazy's press conference in Haifa, 23 July 2006. http://fr.ambafrance-il.org/popup.asp?t=agenda&h=Agenda&ind=456

42 Interview in Al-Manar, 7 August 2006.

43 Declaration during the Beirut conference of Arab ministers of Foreign Affairs, 7 August 2006.

44 15 August 2000, see http://www.sana.org/eng/21/2006/08/15/57835.htm

45 Miguel Angel Moratinos, Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, returned from Damascus on 4 August bearing a Syrian request for a comprehensive and lasting peace in exchange for the pacification of its Lebanese allies and clients.

46 See Richard Falk, Law in an Emerging Global Village: A post-Westphalian Perspective (New York: Transnational Publishers, 1998).

47 In spite of repeated official denial, there was looming tension between policy-makers in the Elysée who favored a robust and publicised armed intervention, and the ministry of Defense whose evaluation of the risks on the ground was pessimistic. The interview of Michèle Alliot-Marie, minister of Defense, to the public TV Antenne 2, on 18 August, gave a strong signal of France's second thoughts.

48 Elizabeth Picard, "Authoritarianism and Liberalism in the Reconstruction of the Lebanese Armed Forces" Fourth Annual Meeting of the Mediterranean Social and Political Research Forum, European University Institute, Florence, 2003, http://www.iue.it/RSCAS/Research/Mediterranean/mspr2002/Index.shtml

49 Etienne de Durand, "Le piège de l'interposition", Le Figaro, 14 August 2006.

50 These preconditions are referred to by president Chirac in his televised statement of 24 August announcing further French engagement in the UNIFIL-Plus. He refers to "a number of guarantees from the parties to the conflict" and states that France has "received assurances from Lebanon and Israel". Then he states, "We have obtained the necessary clarification from the United Nations regarding the chain of command […] and the rules of engagement". See http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/

51 Press conference of UNSG Kofi Annan in Brussels, 25 August 2006. See http://www.eu2006.fi

52 Ewen MacAskill and David Gow, "EU to Commit Biggest Force in its History to Keep the Peace", The Guardian, 26 August 2006. http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes/

P.S.

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