



Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Bachelor in International Relations

Final Bachelor Thesis

UNIFIL's Role Amid the Escalating Israel-Hezbollah Conflict on Lebanon's Southern Border

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Abstract:

This Bachelor's Thesis examines the role of the UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force) in managing the Israel-Hezbollah conflict in southern Lebanon. Specifically, it addresses the changing dynamics along the border after the ongoing escalation caused by the Gaza war. For that purpose it analyzes comprehensively the mandate under which UNIFIL is deployed, as well as its strengths and weaknesses on the ground to tackle the deterrence strategy defining the hostilities between the Lebanese group and the Jewish state. It concludes that the escalating conflict between both surpasses UNIFIL's capacity to control the conflict and maintain peace due to a limited mandate dependent on the cooperation of a weak host state. With this, this dissertation assesses the risk of UNIFIL becoming secondary in keeping peace between Israel and Hezbollah, prolonging its "interim" role in the region.

Key words: UNIFIL, peacekeeping, Israel, Hezbollah, deterrence, conflict.

Este trabajo de fin de grado examina el papel de la misión de paz de la ONU en el sur del Líbano, la FPNUL (Fuerza Provisional de las Naciones Unidas para el Líbano), en la gestión del conflicto entre Israel y Hezbolá. En concreto, aborda la dinámica cambiante a lo largo de la frontera libanesa tras la escalada de tensiones provocada por la guerra de Gaza. Para ello analiza en profundidad el mandato bajo el que está desplegada la FPNUL, así como sus puntos fuertes y débiles sobre el terreno para hacer frente a la estrategia de disuasión que define las hostilidades entre el grupo libanés y el Estado judío. Concluye que la escalada del conflicto entre ambos supera la capacidad de la FPNUL para controlar el conflicto y mantener la paz, debido a un mandato limitado que depende de la cooperación de un Estado anfitrión débil. Con ello, este trabajo evalúa el riesgo de que la FPNUL pase a un segundo plano en el mantenimiento de la paz entre Israel y Hezbolá, prolongando su papel "interino" en la región.

Palabras clave: FPNUL, misión de paz, Israel, Hezbolá, disuasión, conflicto.

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1. Introduction.

1.1. Motives & Purpose.

Almost 75 years after the creation of the United Nations as the multilateral mechanism upon which the liberal world order is based, it seems as if the international system is partially sliding into Hobbesian anarchy. The Russian invasion of Ukraine clearly underlined this decline and served as a call of attention to the gradual fall of international relations into geopolitical rivalries, driven by competition and balance of power against cooperation and norm-based multilateralism. Yet, the challenge of cooperative frameworks by revisionist powers like China, Russia or Iran are leading to a return to deterrence-based strategies that reveal a world increasingly prone to conflict and instability. It is amid this context that this dissertation aims to examine the usefulness of these liberal mechanisms to provide an institutional architecture for the making of world politics and the peaceful resolution of conflict.

This dissertation will evaluate the role that the UN peacekeeping force plays in the management of a much-heated conflict today between Israel and Hezbollah in the southern Lebanese border. The United Nations interim force for Southern Lebanon (UNIFIL), is deployed throughout the southern territory of the country to ensure the “cessation of hostilities” between the parties and to assist on the long term resolution of a conflict that already lasts over 50 years. The renewed escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, has made the region appear on the brink of exploding into violence. The current hot spot for this to happen is Lebanon. The Hezbollah attack on Israel on October 8, in support of Palestinians in the Gaza war, raised the potential for a second front in northern Israel, significantly escalating the security threats for the Jewish state. The risk of miscalculation is real, bringing both parties to the “brink of what could be a wider escalation, one that could have devastating consequences for Lebanon and the entire region” as declared by Israeli military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari on 17 June 2024 (Reuters, 2024). Given the heightened chances for a re-emergence of violence in the form of an all-out war between Lebanon and Israel, it is relevant to study the conflict dynamics between the belligerents and the de-escalatory mechanisms that a peacekeeping force

1.2. Structure.

This dissertation is structured in six parts. The first part includes an introduction where the rationale and motives for the work are outlined, along with the structure and the methodology used for the research and analysis. The second part comprises the state of the art which walks throughout the history of UNIFIL, from its origins to the spark of the 2006 Lebanon War. Along with this, the state of the art describes the evolution of the conflict in south Lebanon, highlighting the rationale behind Israel's first two invasions of the country, the emergence of Hezbollah and the intertwined history of both actors until 2006. The third part of this dissertation outlines the theoretical framework used as base for the analysis. It presents the theoretical and legal bases of UN peacekeeping, unpacking the principles informing peacekeeping operations and the legal framework that defines their structure. Likewise, it explains the causal theories of peacekeeping developed by Fortna (2008) and Jakobsen (2020) through which it examines the different mechanisms used by peacekeepers to maintain and build peace in their operations.

The fourth section presents the objectives and the hypotheses of the dissertation, while the fifth develops the core of the topic in the analysis and discussion. This fifth part is subdivided in three sections, each of them developing one objective. The first subsection analyzes the UNSC resolution 1701 (2006) under which UNIFIL is deployed to provide a better description of the purpose and capabilities of the UN peacekeeping mission. The second subsection delves into the dynamics driving the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, illustrating the transformation it underwent after October 7. The last third section provides a comprehensive analysis of UNIFIL operations under 1701, overviewing the force's strengths and weaknesses through its operations on the ground and explaining the challenges and opportunities it faces upon the escalating conflict since October 7. The last section provides the conclusions of the study.

1.3. Methodology.

This dissertation uses a case study of UNIFIL to provide an insight into the mechanisms that UN peacekeeping missions provide for the maintenance of peace and the limits that these encounter on the way. It relies on qualitative secondary data, including academic books, articles, think tank publications, and news reports from regional and international sources. UN documents are utilized as primary sources to provide a detailed illustration of the

peacekeeping missions and the reality of their deployment on the ground. These documents offer crucial insights into the operational mandates, challenges, and real-world applications of UN peacekeeping efforts.

The theoretical framework underpinning this study draws from two books. On one hand, the *Handbook on Peacekeeping and International Relations* (2022) edited by Professor Han Dorussen offers a comprehensive overview of the evolution, key issues, and research avenues in peacekeeping. On the other hand, Virginia Fortna's *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War* (2008) delves into the mechanisms by which peacekeepers influence belligerents' decisions, either towards sustaining peace or escalating conflict. To complement Fortna's theory, this dissertation has relied on the chapter "Deterrence in Peace Operations: Look Beyond the Battlefield and Expand the Number of Targets and Influence Mechanisms" from the book *NL ARMS Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 2020: Deterrence in the 21st Century—Insights from Theory and Practice* by Peter Viggo Jakobsen. These foundational texts provide a nuanced understanding of the strategic and practical aspects of peacekeeping operations.

All of these have been complemented with articles and other resources such as podcasts from security and strategic studies think tanks such as the *International Crisis Group*, *Institute for National Security Studies* and the *Center for Strategic International Studies*. Likewise, other articles related to the history and evolution of UNIFIL have informed this dissertation.

2. State of the Art.

2.1. The Origins of UNIFIL.

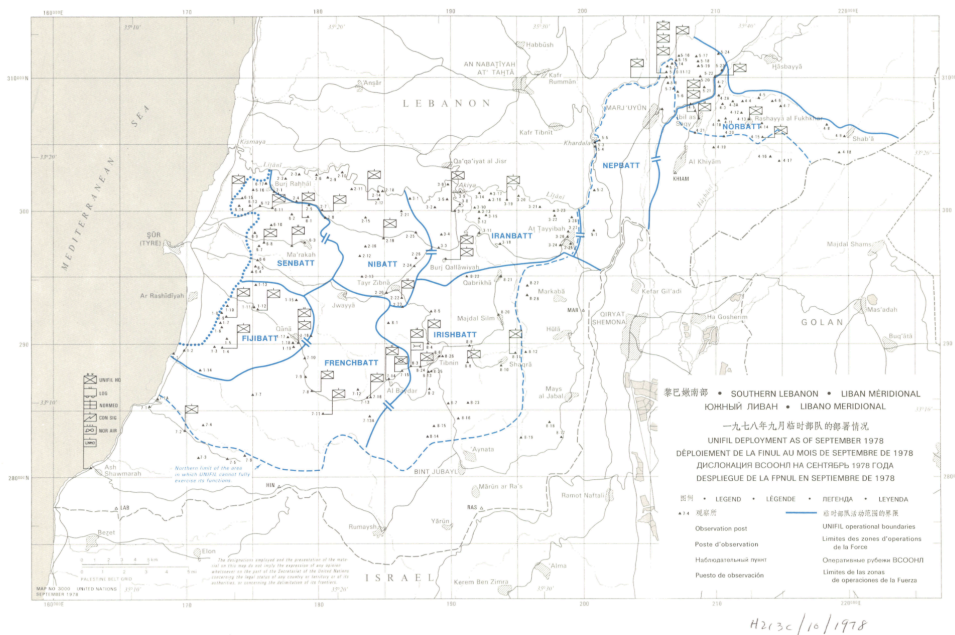
The origins of UNIFIL date back to 1978, when Israel invaded Lebanon as a measure to counter Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) attacks launched from the southern border of the country. Since the 1970s, the PLO has developed a military infrastructure throughout south Lebanon with the permission of the Lebanese Government since October 1968 after the signing of the Cairo Accords. The accords enabled the Palestinian militias in Lebanon to freely exercise their right of armed struggle against Israel "in accordance with the principles of sovereignty and security of Lebanon" (Blanford, 2011). Thus, after the massacre of Black September that ousted the PLO from Jordan, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian *fedayeen* network settled in Lebanon, where they launched constant attacks on northern Israel, which

were followed by several Israeli troop incursions, artillery shelling, and air strikes to Lebanon in retaliation (Chomsky, 2015). The situation worsened in 1975 when the rising tensions between the different Lebanese sects, exacerbated by the Palestinian armed presence in the country, sparked civil war that sank the Levantine country into a bloody conflict of 14 years until 1989 (Chomsky, 2015).

Lebanon's Civil War drew the country deeper into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the PLO consolidated a "state within a state" in the country, where it was able to operate freely against the Israelis (Salamey, 2013). The border skirmishes escalated into a full scale conflict when Israel launched Operation Litani on 14 March 1978 following the Coastal Road Massacre perpetrated by Fatah men days before, where they killed 38 Israeli civilians near Tel Aviv. With the intention of pushing the PLO and other terrorist groups beyond the Litani River, Israel invaded the southern part of the country through air strikes and a ground incursion that took the lives of 1,100 to 2,000 people and displaced between 100,000 to 250,000 people (Norton & Schwedler, 1993; Chomsky, 2015). The international community reacted on 19 March 1978 through the adoption of Resolutions 425 and 426 by the United Nations Security Council. Both resolutions aimed to provide a cessation to hostilities and a resolution to the conflict. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 425 (1978) called on Israel to "immediately withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territory" as it underlined the "strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries" (UN S/RES/425 (1978), art. 1 & 3). Important for this paper, the Council also mandated the deployment of UNIFIL with 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 effective authority in the area" (UN S/RES/425 (1978), art 3). The resolution 426 adopted by the Security Council approved, inter alia, the guidelines that were to be followed by the forces, which were authorized under a peacekeeping mandate to supervise, monitor and support the peaceful implementation of the resolution 425 (1978) in two stages. Firstly, to oversee the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanese territory to later establish and maintain an area of operation. Secondly, to "pacify" the area of operation in order to assure the "effective restoration of Lebanese sovereignty" (UN S/RES/426 (1978)).

Yet, the implementation of UNIFIL's mandate proved to be more complex on the ground, leading to unsatisfactory results that already undermined the overall legitimacy and

credibility of the peacekeeping mission. In fact, since the beginning of UNIFIL's deployment, the force could not effectively comply with the mission to “establish and maintain an area of operation [upon the withdrawal of Israeli forces]” (UN S/RES/425 (1978)). After UNIFIL commander General Emmanuel Erskine brokered a ceasefire with Yasser Arafat in Beirut on 28 March 1978, the force was able to confirm the progressive withdrawal of the Israelis in the South. Nonetheless, at the last stage of withdrawal, the IDF refused to hand the territory along the border to UNIFIL and gave it to the Israeli proxy, the South Lebanon Army (SLA) (Parker, 1986). This Christian militia commanded by the Lebanese Army Major Saad Haddad took effective control of this area which came to be later known by UNIFIL as the “enclave” controlled by the “de facto forces” (Chomsky, 2015). Moreover, armed Palestinian and Lebanese fighters took and kept control of the port city of Tyre as well as an important bridge in the Litani River which left UNIFIL without effective control of the area. The inability of the force to even ensure its operational control over the area that had been entrusted under its mandate marked the beginning of a weak UNIFIL who lacked the cooperation of the belligerents (James, 1983).



Alan James (1983) recalls how UNIFIL's lack of enforcement over the parties posed the main challenge to the mission. The involved parties came to understand that the force had no

power to oblige them to comply with Resolution 425 (1978) (James, 1983). Norton (1983) notes that “all of the belligerents of south Lebanon quickly learned that they could often strong-arm UNIFIL without too high a penalty (Norton & Schwedler, 1993). Thus, UNIFIL became a “buffer” between the belligerents that technically had to be avoided, but which could be avoided strategically. Hostilities continued, and while UNIFIL’s personnel increased from an initial number of 4,000 personnel to 7,000 in 1982, the mission could partially perform its patrolling, observation, and checkpoints under restricted mobility conditions and while suffering harassment both from the SLA and Palestinian and Lebanese militias (James, 1983; Parker, 1986). It is pertinent to say, though, that UNIFIL fulfilled a relevant role in the provision of humanitarian aid to the affected local communities and displaced people in the south, while also providing a much needed area of protection and stability from the attacks of the parties.

The invasion launched by Israel in 1982 came to throw UNIFIL almost into irrelevance, not only on the basis of its inability to prevent and stop a widely known invasion by Israel, but also on the humiliating position it had to endure under Israeli occupation (James, 1983). In the morning of 6 June 1982, UNIFIL troops were “overrun or by-passed”, barely offering any opposition to Israeli troops after receiving the orders from their general commander to “stay in their positions, unless their safety was seriously imperiled.” Parker (1986) aims to justify UNIFIL’s lack of consistent action through the explanation given by the then under-Secretary General of the UN Brian Urquhart:

“The force in south Lebanon was not put in to repel the Israeli or any other army engaged in a massive military operation. It was not put there to fight a battle against an army twenty to thirty times the size of the UN force. It is not a question of failure but of the situation changing in such a way that the function of the existing force was not relevant to the situation which had occurred.” (Parker, 1986 p. 69).

Indeed, UNIFIL’s mandate already exposed its lack of authority and capacity within that context throughout the years of 1978 to 1982. The Israeli invasion simply demonstrated to the general public the weakness of its mission. Yet, the Security Council continued renovating the force’s mandate to maintain it as a starting base from which “the United Nations [could] assist in the restoration of the peace and of the authority of the Lebanese Government throughout Lebanon” (UN S/RES/425 (1978)). In practice, UNIFIL became an observer force

subject to the new occupation authority that the Israelis established in southern Lebanon, and whose tasks limited to monitoring the growing hostilities that Israel's presence instigated between the Lebanese and the IDF, as well as a valuable provider of humanitarian aid whose actions alleviated the weight of conflict for civilians and local communities (Murphy, 2012).

2.2. Operation Peace for Galilee: the Creation of a New Monster.

In 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon under the name of "Operation Peace for Galilee," as an intent to establish a "security zone" along its northern border and avoid the launch of rockets by Palestinian and other militias to its northern communities. Nonetheless, the operation brought unintended, dangerous consequences. In the wake of the invasion and the ongoing chaos of the Lebanese civil war, a new organization emerged to antagonize Israel. The Lebanese group Hezbollah — meaning the Party of God in Arabic — filled the vacuum left after the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon in September 1982 by becoming the main armed group in the country and organizing "the Resistance" against Israel's presence in Lebanon. In 1985, the group published its "Open Letter" manifesto outlining its identity as an Islamic group founded on the resistance against Israel's occupation of South Lebanon and driven by the destruction of the Jewish state and the "liberation of the venerable Jerusalem from the talons of occupation" (Blanford, 2011). The group gained notoriety for its central role in the resistance campaign that pushed Israeli forces south in 1985 where they reorganized along a security cordon that the Israelis denominated the "security zone" (Blanford, 2022).

This marked the beginning of a war of attrition between Hezbollah and Israel. Hezbollah engaged in continuous low-intensity warfare designed to wear down Israeli forces through frequent guerrilla attacks, including ambushes, rocket attacks, and improvised explosive device (IED) usage, targeting Israeli forces and their allies in the South Lebanon Army (SLA) (Blanford, 2011; Wahab, 2022;). Moreover, Hezbollah became to be known for its suicide bombing attacks against the occupying forces and its allies (which included Western nations such as the U.S. and France, as well as the South Lebanon Army), aimed at terrorizing and exhausting the Israeli stronghold in Lebanon (Blanford, 2011; Blanford, 2022). The Israelis responded to this harassment with aggressive military operations intended to neutralize Hezbollah's capabilities. This included airstrikes, artillery bombardments, and ground incursions aimed at Hezbollah strongholds (Murphy, 2012). The hostilities between both belligerents gravely escalated two times in 1993 and 1996.

In July 1993 Israel launched Operation Accountability in response to Hezbollah's rocket attacks into northern Israel with the objective of forcing the Government of Lebanon to restrain Hezbollah's activities through extensive artillery and air strikes. Both parties reached a U.S.-brokered understanding to prevent attacks on civilian targets by both sides (Wahab, 2022;). However, it did not cease hostilities; instead it led to another major escalation in mid-April 1996 when Israel launched Operation Grapes of Wrath. Similar to Operation Accountability, Israel aimed to force the Lebanese and Syrian governments to curtail Hezbollah's activities by targeting civilian infrastructure and areas in southern Lebanon. This mission turned out to be more brutal than Operation Accountability from three years before. The destruction of Lebanese infrastructure was significant and the Israeli shelling caused 120 civilian deaths and 500 wounded in UNIFIL area of operations (Murphy, 2012). Many of them resulted from the attack that Israel carried out over a UN compound at Qana where around 800 of them had taken refuge inside (Van Kappen, 1996).

These brutal operations highlight the developing relationship that was shaped during the mid-1980s and 1990s between Israel and Hezbollah. The strategy of attrition implemented by Hezbollah was successful when the Israeli forces finally withdrew from the security zone in south Lebanon in May 2000. The withdrawal was a major victory for the organization and was "the first time the Jewish state had been forced to yield occupied land by the force of Arab arms" (Blanford, 2011). Yet, this victory came at a high cost. This period exemplifies the intense and often brutal tactics employed by Israel to combat Hezbollah, resulting in significant civilian casualties and infrastructure damage. Furthermore, it highlighted the limitations of UNIFIL's mandate, which, despite providing humanitarian assistance and providing certain law and order in its area of operations, struggled to comply with its mission in a challenging environment dominated by more powerful forces than it.

2.3. The Lead and Outcomes of the 2006 Lebanon War.

Despite Israel's withdrawal in 2000, Hezbollah continued its struggle in the southern part of the country as the resistance against Israeli occupation. A growing number of Lebanese started to question the group's armed presence in the country given the Israeli pullout. As a response, Hezbollah justified the continued possession of weapons by claiming to be fighting against Israel occupation in disputed territories along the border as the Shebaa Farms area

(Blanford, 2022). In the meantime Hezbollah grew stronger militarily and politically within Lebanon. In the 2000 Lebanese parliamentary elections, Hezbollah saw its prestige rise as a result of its actions in Southern Lebanon and its resistance towards Israel. More established Lebanese political parties, especially Shiite ones, allied themselves with Hezbollah and the group won ten seats (Lebanese Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000). Backed by its growing presence in the institutions and with the support of Syria and Iran, Hezbollah expanded its arsenal and cemented its position in the southern part of the country antagonizing Israel. Renewed hostilities emerged between both parties, this time in the shape of a war of deterrence. The period 2000-2005 saw numerous skirmishes and cross-border attacks. Different violations of the Blue Line led to moments of increased tension, during which UNIFIL increased its patrols, and its Commander intervened personally with the parties on the ground to contain incidents (UNIFIL, "Background," n.d). In this line, the Secretary General brought attention to these events which "underscored the fragility of the situation and demonstrated how readily tensions could escalate" (UNIFIL, "Background," n.d). Hezbollah also supported Palestinian militant activities during the Second Intifada by attempting to smuggle weapons and aid into Gaza, thus maintaining its stance against Israeli occupation and bolstering its regional influence (Wahab, 2022).

This leads us to the origins of the 2006 War. In order to eliminate Hezbollah's position of "state within a state" in south Lebanon, Israel started the 2006 Lebanon War or the Second Lebanon War as a response to Hezbollah's cross-border raid on July 12, 2006, during which they killed three Israeli soldiers and kidnapped two soldiers (Cordesman & Sullivan, 2007). The war was intense and brutal, lasting over a month and taking the lives of 44 Israeli civilians on one side, and of an estimated 1,200 Lebanese on the other. Lebanon suffered widespread destruction of its national infrastructure, including residential buildings, roads, bridges, and public facilities, among them, the Rafik Hariri International Airport. The war finally confirmed what had become obvious over the 30 years of deployment of UNIFIL in South Lebanon: "It is clear that UNIFIL, with a very limited mandate, has only been able to play a peripheral role in the current crisis and many have rejected it for the newly proposed international force" (Security Council Report, 2006). This led the path to the reconfiguration of UNIFIL under a new mandate provided by the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006), that would expand the UN peacekeeping force's capabilities and enhance its scope of action to implement its mission. Yet, the post-2006 conflict of south Lebanon remained far from resolved.

3. Theoretical Framework.

This dissertation aims to examine the role that UNIFIL plays as a peacekeeping mission in the de-escalation and the management of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. Consequently, this theoretical framework provides a definition of the concept of peacekeeping within the *Liberal Theory* of International Relations and its relevance within the resolution of conflicts. For that matter, this section provides a thorough examination of the legitimacy of peacekeeping within the realm of international law, host-country consent, the use of force by peacekeeping troops, and the instruments it possesses to implement its final objective to stabilize post-conflict scenarios.

3.1. Peacekeeping: Theoretical and Legal Grounds in International Relations.

The theoretical basis of peacekeeping — understood as the “deployment of international personnel to help maintain the peace and security in the aftermath of a war” (Fortna, 2008, p. 5) — is grounded on the liberal approach to international relations that conceives the international system as a complex network of states and non-state actors who can achieve cooperation and collective security through the establishment and reinforcement of international norms, institutions, and legal frameworks (Ikenberry, 2011). Unlike the realist vision of world politics as a power-oriented system, the liberal school considers that global cooperation is possible in an anarchic system based on the presumption that cooperation, rather than coercion, satisfies the interest-maximization of states by providing absolute gains for all (Keohane & Nye, 1977). This is fostered and maintained over time through the gradual establishment of relationships that are built on trust and credibility between states (Keohane, 1984). As a last consequence of cooperation, states consent to restrict their sovereignty to work cooperatively through a set of international institutions and norms that promote dialogue and negotiation for the peaceful resolution of disputes (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

In this line, peacekeeping is modeled as an instrument of the international institutional system that facilitates the peaceful resolution of disputes between states. Its legitimacy is derived from its purpose to “safeguard international peace” from violent conflict and support state’s cooperation. This places peacekeeping within the realm of international law and under the authority of multilateral organizations that conform to the liberal, institutionalized world order. For this reason, peacekeeping is defined as “rule-based interventions in international politics” (Dorussen, 2022, p. 1), whose legal basis draws from the United Nations Charter as

the predominant multilateral institution of the international system, and its authority from the United Nations Security Council as the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security (UN Charter art. 24, para. 1). The principles and responsibilities that articulate peace operations are delineated in Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter which are concerned with the preservation of international peace. Most concretely, Chapter VI deals with the means for the peaceful settlement of disputes, while Chapter VII refers to the actions with respect to threats to peace, breaches of peace, and acts of aggression. These two chapters constitute the legal basis upon which any peacekeeping mission is defined and designed. While this dissertation uses the term “peacekeeping” as a general concept encompassing any peace operation, the UN Charter legally differentiates “peacekeeping” from “peace enforcement” missions. On one hand, peacekeeping missions are adopted on the grounds of Chapter VI of the UN Charter to maintain peace after an agreement between the belligerents has been reached. On the other hand, peace enforcement missions aim to restore international peace and security on the basis of Chapter VII of the Charter. Likewise, they outline the principles and responsibilities guiding peacekeeping, also known as the “holy trinity” of peacekeeping. Bellamy et al. (2010) termed the “holy trinity” of peacekeeping: consent, impartiality, and the conditions in the use of force. The next section will delve into them to explain the scope of action and limits of the peacekeeping missions.

3.2. The “Holy Trinity” of Peacekeeping: the Issue of Consent and the Use of Force.

The term coined by Bellamy et al. (2010) as the "holy trinity" of peacekeeping refers to three fundamental principles that guide United Nations peacekeeping operations: consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate. They constitute the basic elements that a peacekeeping operation needs in order to ensure a conducive environment for peace and stability, fostering trust and legitimacy. Consent, broadly understood as the “acceptance of peacekeepers by warring parties to oversee the implementation of a peace agreement”, ensures the cooperation of the conflicting parties with the cessation of hostilities (Passmore et al., 2022 p. 47). It goes hand in hand with the principle of impartiality, the unbiased treatment of peacekeepers to all parties during the implementation of the mandate. Impartiality is essential for the cooperation of the parties as it builds a relationship of trust between the peacekeepers and the parties of the conflict, and underpins the legitimacy and credibility of the mission. In contrast, the use of force by

peacekeepers delineates the acceptable terms under which force is acceptable in a mission. It is the cornerstone of the implementation or “enforcement” of the mission, and its interpretation has evolved over time to cover a wider number of scenarios under which force is permitted. Consent, impartiality, and the proper use of force are key in the success of the mission. Genuine consent and impartiality lead to a higher likelihood of cooperation, and a proper usage of force gives an operation teeth and the ability to enforce the mandate (White, 2014; Helms, 2022; Passmore et al., 2022). To explore in depth the way in which these principles mold the nature and characteristics of peacekeeping, the following section will analyze consent and the use of force in more detail. These two pillars of the “holy trinity” of peacekeeping were selected because they distinguish peacekeeping from peace enforcement and have evolved over time, shaping a renewed understanding of modern peacekeeping and giving rise to "robust" peacekeeping.

3.2.1. Consent in Peacekeeping: the Pillar to Ensure Cooperation.

Consent is the first pillar needed for a peacekeeping mission to operate on the grounds of Chapter VI of the UN Charter and is the main differentiator between “peacekeeping” and “peace enforcement”. On the basis of the capacity of states to bring any dispute to the attention of the UN to “seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice”, the host state is responsible to grant the acceptance for the deployment of the peacekeeping troops to let them assist in the peace process (UN Charter art. 13, para. 1; White, 2014). Consent plays a more significant role as it determines aspects related to the mission as relevant as the terms of the mandate under which it is authorized and the composition of the force (Gray, 1996). Yet, consent constitutes a crucial aspect for the success of peacekeeping as the symbol representing the willingness of the parties of the conflict to restore peace. As Fortna (2008) emphasizes, the belligerents in a conflict (which she terms the *peacekept*) remain the critical players in the peace process because they are the “active decision-makers” and the ones who choose whether to maintain peace or return to war. Their cooperation, expressed through consent, is a crucial element facilitating the final success of the peacekeeping mission (Fortna, 2008 p. 8). Lack of consent “may lead to major obstructions to the fulfillment of the mission’s mandate, or a demand for complete withdrawal [...], as it may also pose major threats to the peacekeeping operation (PKO) providers, where mission objectives are thwarted, peacekeepers are put at risk, and the mission is drawn into a long and expensive deployment with no clear exit strategy (Passmore

et al., 2022 p. 46). Parker (1986) provides an example of this. Through his review on the violations of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 425 (1978) by the IDF and other warring forces in South Lebanon which was accompanied by disobedience to and harassment of UNIFIL peacekeepers, he reflects on the crucial importance of true consent or “political will” of *all* parties to ensure the fulfillment of the peacekeeping mission (Parker, 1986, p. 69). This is such given that consent stands as a clear indicator of the parties willingness to pursue peace (Passmore et al., 2022). For that reason, consent cannot be solely understood as the initial acceptance granted by the warring parties to the peacekeeping mission. Consent must be understood as a persistent and dynamic activity undertaken by the parties in their commitment to cooperate with the peace mandate (Passmore et al., 2022).

Securing the consent of the warring parties presents different challenges that undermine or endanger the operation. Passmore et al. (2022) develop a compilation of the academic literature reviewing the conditions and threats under which peacekeeping missions struggle to gain and keep consent. Among the favorable conditions fostering consent are the mutual desire of the parties to maintain peace, their relative strength and interests in gaining legitimacy, external pressures, and private selfish interests. However, to lock the commitment of the peacekeepers, PKOs must navigate and manage the restrictions imposed by the parties when giving their consent. Obstacles to this include the changing dynamics of power or expectations of the parties throughout the life of the mission, shifting external pressures, and the overall operational credibility (and popularity) developed over time by the PKO. Today an increasing number of peacekeeping missions are forced to operate without the consent of all belligerents. This has resulted in the establishment of so-called robust peacekeeping missions which will be described in the next section along with an elaboration on the concept of use of force.

3.2.2. Use of force: an Expanded Definition.

The non-use of force, with the exception of self-defense, has always been a characteristic feature of peacekeeping missions, especially under the operations of UN peacekeepers. However, the failures and overall ineffectiveness of certain missions – especially during the 1990s’ UN missions of Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda or Sierra Leone (White, 2014; Helms, 2022) – led policy makers to re-evaluate the traditionally passive, defensive approach on the use of force by peacekeepers, to adopt a more flexible, proactive conception of it. Originally, the use of force in peacekeeping missions — those authorized under Chapter VI of the UN

Charter — was narrowly restricted to the soldier’s personal defense, the defense of their “comrades and any person entrusted in [their] care, [or while] defending [their] post, convoy, vehicle or rifle” (UN, 1995). This conception was closely linked to the idea that peacekeepers were deployed in line with the belligerents’ consent to support through monitoring and mediation the maintenance of a fragile post-conflict peace (Fortna, 2008). Only peace enforcement missions have the mandate under Chapter VII to use force for purposes beyond self-defense, something reflected in the deployment of substantial military and the fact that consent of the belligerents is not required (Helms, 2022). Nonetheless, the emergence of new conflict dynamics that involve non-state actors and new kinds of warfare presented a new set of challenges for peacekeepers that were deployed in scenarios where there was no peace to be kept, but to make (Jakobsen, 2020; Helms, 2022). Often UN forces confronted these situations without the appropriate equipment, troop size and legal instruments to implement their mandates. This led to a gradual reconceptualization of self-defense, which evolved “from individual self-defense inherent to military personnel, to freedom of movement and defense of positions, to the defense of the mandate and the protection of third parties” (Tzagourias, 2006). Documents such as the Brahimi Report of 2000, which provided recommendations for improving the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations, and the UN Capstone Doctrine from 2008 — or the “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines” —, loosened the requirements for the legitimate use of force of PKOs. These developments expanded the definition beyond pure self-defense to include the use of force for the protection of civilians and the defense of the mandate.

3.2.3. “Robust” Peacekeeping.

The conflicts of the last thirty years have necessitated a new generation of peacekeeping missions, which strengthen their "peace oversight" role with a deterrent element that safeguards the mandate from external spoilers. This responds to the increasing number of conflicts where peacekeepers are deployed to preserve a fragile and unstable peace, often under challenging conditions such as operating without the consent from all belligerent parties. (Passmore et al., 2022). Therefore, while these modern missions still procure peace through the monitoring of ceasefires or the separation of combatants, their mandates grant them enhanced provisions on the use of force to confront the difficult circumstances on the ground. These missions have come to be known and studied as “robust” peacekeeping missions.

The UN defines robust peacekeeping as “[t]he use of force by a United Nations peacekeeping operation at the tactical level [...] to defend its mandate against spoilers whose activities pose a threat to civilians or risk undermining the peace process” (Helms, 2022). Also commonly referred to as “Chapter VI-and-a-half” missions, robust peacekeeping missions are established under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. This means that, like traditional peacekeeping operations, they need the consent of at least the host country for deployment. However, the language of their mandate allows for more assertive measures in the use of force that resemble a mission deployed under Chapter VII. Clauses such as “to use all necessary means” and its derivatives are indicative of the peace “robustness,” but fall subject to a restricting understanding on the use of force than in peace enforcement missions. Unlike peace operations authorized under Chapter VII to use force at the strategic level, “robust” peacekeeping missions may exercise force at a tactical level. Helms (2022) explains this by saying:

“The authority to use force at the tactical level requires that an event or series of events trigger a situational response; the use of force is not part of an operation’s overarching strategy or a mechanism for pursuing objectives beyond the defensive.” (Helms, 2022, p. 15)

This tactical approach is driven by the deterrent purpose that robust peacekeeping mandates serve, aimed to raise the cost of aggression for external spoilers seeking to undermine the mission. As Jakobsen (2020) explains, “the robust peacekeeping school advocates the deployment of peace forces mandated, capable and willing to use force beyond self-defense to deter aggression” (Jakobsen, 2020, p. 330). Nevertheless, the coercive means available under robust mandates still need to account with the consent and cooperation from the parties at the strategic level in order to succeed in the achievement of the mission’s goals (Jakobsen, 2020). With this, the whole intent of “robust” peacekeeping is to enhance the missions by providing them a more proactive and offensive mandate which creates deterrence.

3.3. The UN Peacekeeping Mandates: Types & Measures.

UN Peacekeeping operations are deployed “on the basis of mandates from the United Nations Security Council” (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.). Mandates are tasks assigned to UN peace operations that encompass the legal and operational architecture of their mission

adjusted to the circumstances that they aim to address along with the environments where they will operate. Helms (2022) highlights that each individual mandate is directly written on the authorizing resolution text of the Security Council or incorporated through a reference to another document that usually is a Secretary General's report. Nonetheless, all of them "communicate operational objectives, designate which means may be used to achieve them, and ascribe priorities for resource allocation" (Helms, 2022 p. 13). Peacekeeping mandates are the main unit of analysis among scholars to measure the effectiveness of the peacekeeping missions over time since it allows them to contrast the bureaucratic, often hopeful, official planning with the and results on the ground. For that reason, much attention is paid to the legality from which they draw – whether they are consent-based mandates authorized under Chapter VI, or peace enforcement missions mandated under Chapter VII —, the language that is employed, and the characteristics that define their type of mandate. Analyzing the mandates allows scholars to evaluate each peacekeeping mission's potential strengths and also the limits that constrain them. This allows investigating the likelihood of success of missions to maintain and build peace where they are deployed. Along these lines, Helms (2022) summarizes the conclusions drawn by academia in three main points. Firstly, according to Fortna (2008), consent-based mandates generally have better outcomes than peace enforcement missions to halt violence and maintain the peace between belligerents. As explained above, consent tends to be a safeguard of peace as it reflects a higher level of political compromise by the belligerents to maintain peace and less willingness to restart violence. Secondly, the language employed in the mandate remains a fundamental qualitative element of analysis to explore the "robust" capabilities granted to the mission, so it can be deduced the "proactive" and "offensive" character that will define it. In this line, Beardsley and Gleditsch (2015) propose the analysis of operational size (or troop size) to differentiate "robust" (operations populated by more than 1000 troops) from "observation" operations, which yield a lower authority than the former. Additionally, Helms (2022) highlights the optimistic results found by different authors on the capacity of missions with the specific mandate to protect civilians (POC mandates) to reduce the violence in the area of deployment. Lastly, Helms (2022) draws attention to the relevance of identifying and studying the specific characteristics that define the mandate by a certain mission type (Helms, 2022). The type of mission is relevant because it can determine the mandate's degree of impact on the ground. Based on this idea of mission categorization Fortna (2008) differentiates between observational missions, interpositional missions, multidimensional missions, and peace enforcement missions in her book *Does Peacekeeping Work?* (2008).

- Observation missions are formed of small, unarmed groups that monitor and report on specific conditions of peace agreements, such as cease-fires or withdrawals of troops.
- Interpositional missions, in contrast, rely on lightly armed troops to monitor, but also to act as “buffers,” to separate opposing forces, and assist in delicate tasks such as disarmament of belligerents.
- Multidimensional missions combine military and civilian efforts to implement comprehensive peace settlements, including elections, human rights, and development.
- Peace enforcement missions use substantial military force to ensure compliance with cease-fires, with a mandate to use force beyond self-defense, regardless of losing consent from conflicting parties.

3.4. A Causal Theory of Peacekeeping: Mechanisms to “Keep” Peace.

Having reviewed the theoretical and legal framework that structures peacekeeping and informs the design of peacekeeping mandates upon a series of principles and conditions, it is necessary to study the mechanisms that make peacekeeping “work.” For that purpose, this dissertation will employ Fortna's (2008) causal theory of peacekeeping to identify the peacekeeping tasks that contribute to the maintenance of peace, and utilize the analytical framework developed by Jakobsen (2020) to explain the complex multi-actor and multi-factor relationships that enhance — or undermine — peacekeeping.

Fortna's theory elaborates on different instruments that peacekeeping and consent-based missions possess to shape belligerents' decisions. She argues that “[o]nly by considering the perspective of the peacekept — their incentives, the information available to them, and their decision making — can we understand whether and how peacekeeping makes a difference” (Fortna, 2008, p. 3). With this, she agrees with the literature on the deterministic power that belligerents themselves have over the ultimate decision to maintain peace or resume the violence, but challenges the assumption that peacekeeping only succeeds in those scenarios where “there is a real peace to keep” and a strong “political will” of the parties to preserve it (Fortna, 2008, p. 77). Based on the evidence in her work, Fortna argues that “peacekeeping does have an independent effect on the prospects for peace—but it is important to take this charge seriously” (Fortna, 2008, p. 77).

Fortna's causal theory of peacekeeping assumes that the belligerents involved in conflict are rational actors who act purposely to further their goals and defend their interests, carefully balancing the potential gains and costs of making peace versus resorting to war. This approach is grounded in the framework of the Bargaining Model of War, a theory increasingly relied upon in peacekeeping studies (Dorussen, 2022). According to this model, wars result from failed negotiations due to information asymmetries, commitment problems, or indivisibilities (Fearon, 1995). Following on this, Fortna argues that peacekeeping missions can play a crucial role in the bargaining process by influencing the decisions of belligerents, encouraging them to achieve their political objectives without resorting to war. They do it by making aggression more costly, disrupting spirals of fear and reducing the uncertainty about the other belligerents intentions, preventing and controlling incidents vulnerable to quickly escalating into full-out war, and preventing policial abuse.

- a) Raising the costs of aggression through the employment of a credible soft or hard deterrence strategy. Fortna argues that peacekeepers might persuade parties to cooperate and stick to peace in exchange of legitimacy or economic benefit such as recognition of their cause or aid. Otherwise, peacekeeping missions can maintain the peace through deterrence based on a credible use of force (as in Chapter VII missions) or a reputation cost by positioning them at the "spotlight of international attention" (Fortna, 2008, p. 89). With the latter, peacekeepers act as a "moral barrier" that represents aspects such as international humanitarian law that must be respected in order to prevent an increase of international pressure in the conflict in response to the outrage of public opinion (Fortna, 2008, p. 89).
- b) Reduce the uncertainty and fear of belligerents through mechanisms such as regular monitoring of compliance of the parties, facilitating the communication of the parties and allowing to provide a clear public sign of peace commitment between belligerents. These three elements reduce the uncertainty of the peacekept about each other's actions and intentions by balancing the information asymmetry between them and tackling their security dilemma.
- c) Preventing and controlling incidents such as accidents or local violations from escalating into wider violence by acting as a "buffer" between parties, mediating on the ground and providing clear and direct communication channels to avoid misunderstandings and foster cooperation. Moreover, Fortna argues that peacekeepers provide an alternative option to violence in situations that involve perceived

transgressions. All of this provides a “calming effect” on the conflict area through the maintenance of mechanisms of law and order provided by the peacekeeping force.

- d) Lastly, preventing political abuse and assisting in peacebuilding can be achieved through structural economic and security reforms that uphold justice. Fortna highlights several effective mechanisms for maintaining peace and fostering long-term stability in post-conflict situations, including monitoring elections, overseeing and training police and security forces, and disarming militias to transform them into political groups. These measures not only help maintain peace but also contribute to a more enduring and stable post-conflict environment.

In addition to Fortna’s (2008) causal theory, Jakobsen (2020) provides a novel analytical approach to better understand the conditions under which peace operations can prevent violence and facilitate conflict resolution. Criticizing the narrow focus given by the literature of peace operations to the use of military deterrence solely in the battlefield, he argues that peacekeeping must be a comprehensive action of deterrence, inducement and persuasion targeting *all* actors involved in the conflict in order to be successful. For that, he identifies combatants (the belligerents directly involved), combatant allies (those actors who materially support the belligerents), combatant supporters (those actors who support diplomatically the belligerents at regional and global institutions), and bystanders (those third party actors that have the means to support the peace mission, but lack any political will to mobilize to do so). Likewise, he lists a series of instruments (Table 1) that peace operations must strategically combine to effectively influence their incentives and shape their decisions to support peace.

PERSUASION: Information, Education and Training	INDUCEMENT: Promises & Rewards	COERCION: Threats and Punishment
1. IHL and human rights training, education and information campaigns.	1. Legitimacy derived from cooperating with internationally recognized organizations.	1. Threaten to name and shame all types of actors contributing to undermine deterrence in order to mobilize local,

<p>2. Campaigns aimed at banning weapons systems, stopping the proliferation of small and light arms, the use of child soldiers and so on.</p> <p>3. Explain combatant objectives are best achieved by means of negotiation and will be undermined by use of force.</p> <p>4. Inform combatants about their IHL obligations and humanitarian principles in order to gain access to civilians in need.</p> <p>5. Provide information about atrocities and violations to advocacy groups, journalists, governmental organizations and governments.</p> <p>6. Appeal to all actors</p>	<p>2. Humanitarian assistance to civilians enabling governments and armed groups to divert resources to military capacities or gain support from the local population.</p> <p>3. Payment for accommodation, services and local staff benefiting the local economy and thereby governments and armed groups.</p> <p>4. Direct payment to combatants for protection and humanitarian access.</p> <p>5. Promise silence on human suffering and violence in exchange for compliance.</p>	<p>regional and global pressure on them to stop.</p> <p>2. Threaten to issue calls for diplomatic, economic, or military measures against all types of actors contributing to deterrence failure at the local, regional and global levels.</p> <p>3. Threaten to suspend or terminate humanitarian operations and peace negotiations.</p> <p>4. Threaten to punish aggressors/deny them their objectives politically, economically and militarily.</p> <p>5. Threaten to use force to enforce compliance with international demands at tactical or strategic levels.</p>
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<p>undermining deterrence in a given conflict to take steps to stop the use of force.</p>		
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Table 1. Peacekeeping Operation Toolkit. Adapted from: *Jakobsen, 2020*

For that purpose Jakobsen proposes the following questions as effective guidelines to develop the peacekeeping strategy and drafting the peace implementation plan.

- 1) Who are the principal combatants, how much military capability do they have, and how can they be influenced to refrain from using it by means of persuasion, inducement, and coercion?
- 2) Who are the principal combatant allies, how do they support the combatants, and how can their support be stopped by means of persuasion, inducement and coercion?
- 3) Who are the principal combatant supporters, how do they support the combatants and, how can their support be stopped by means of persuasion, inducement, and coercion?
- 4) Who are the principal bystanders with a capacity to influence the combatants, their allies and supporters, and how can they be influenced to act by means of persuasion, inducement and coercion?

4. **Objectives & Research Questions.**

This dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of UNIFIL’s mandate under UNSCR 1701 (2006) within the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in the Lebanese southern border with Israel. Firstly, it intends to analyze the mandate outlined in the United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1701 (2006), under which the Council authorizes the enhancement and extension of UNIFIL’s deployment in South Lebanon. With this, the dissertation seeks to unpack the different principles and capabilities characterizing the peace operation and delineating the mission it is entitled to fulfill. Moreover, it aims to categorize the mission under the type model developed by Fortna (2008), while it identifies

the elements that enhance UNIFIL as a “robust” peace operation. Secondly, the dissertation looks to delve into the conflict dynamics of Israel and Hezbollah since the end of the 2006 Lebanon War and after the implementation of UNSCR 1701 (2006). With this, it will look into the rules of engagement agreed by both parties over the last 18 years, to compare the changing dynamic after the renewed escalations following the Hamas attack of October 7 in Israel. Furthermore, considering this new context, the dissertation aims to analyze the challenges that the UNIFIL mission faces upon the renewed escalations by evaluating its strengths and weaknesses through an overview of the mission under the mandate of resolution 1701 (2006). The research questions to be addressed in this dissertation are as follows:

- a) Can UNIFIL be characterized as a “robust” peacekeeping mission? To that end, what operational capabilities are entitled to the force for the fulfillment of its mandate?
- b) What drivers have determined the conflict dynamics between Israel and Hezbollah since 2006? What has changed after October 7?
- c) To what extent has UNIFIL been able to fulfill its mission? What are the strengths and weaknesses of resolution 1701 (2006) and how have they impacted and determined its implementation? What kind of mechanisms can support UNIFIL’s efforts of de-escalation upon renewed fighting in its area of deployment?

4.1. Hypotheses

To elaborate on the objectives and answer the research questions posited above, this dissertation aims to address the following hypotheses. Firstly, UNIFIL can be classified as a peacekeeping mission whose enhanced operational capabilities place it in the “robust” category. Following from this, the complexity and challenges posed by the fragile and unstable peace mission it is entitled to complete, provides UNIFIL with a comprehensive mandate that places it as a multidimensional mission on the model developed by Fortna (2008). Secondly, the main driver determining the conflict dynamics between Israel and Hezbollah is the armed presence of the Lebanese group in the southern area of the country, where Israel had once occupied as a “security zone.” This poses a national security threat to Israel which has arranged a new strategy to neutralize the group in its northern border. Given this, the attack of October 7 posed a new escalation of hostilities that includes a dangerous

change in the conflict dynamics from the part of Israel which perceives the northern border as an increasingly vulnerable and risky potential war-front.

Lastly, a limited mandate under UNSCR 1701 (2006) has constrained UNIFIL capacity to fulfill its mission despite having “robust” capacities. Its deployment under a Chapter VI mandate, based on the consent (and cooperation) of the host nation for deployment, marginalizes the UN force to a peripheral role of support that has provided some measure of calm and stability at the tactical level, but has prevented it from creating a long-term solution for the conflict in Lebanon via a strategic-level operation. This has relegated UNIFIL to having a secondary role in the conflict with few real means to de-escalate the renewed violence in southern Lebanon.

5. Analysis and Discussion.

5.1. Section I: The Background of UNSCR 1701 (2006).

On 11 August 2006, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1701. The document aimed to secure a UN-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah that would provide a durable, long-term solution to the conflict between both parties given the threat that the situation constituted to international peace and security (UN S/RES/1701 (2006) para. 9-10). The month-long war that started on 12 July 2006, led to Israeli airstrikes and artillery shelling on Hezbollah military targets and Lebanese civilian infrastructure, as well as a ground invasion of south Lebanon and an air and naval blockade. Likewise, Hezbollah launched rockets into northern Israel and engaged in guerrilla warfare with the IDF. All of this caused the death of 43 Israeli civilians and 117 IDF soldiers. On the Lebanese side, more than a 1,000 civilians were killed during the fighting, along with around 180 Hezbollah fighters (Crooke & Perry, 2006).

Upon the end of the 2006 Lebanese War between Hezbollah and Israel, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1701 on 11 August 2006 to terminate the violent conflict between the parties. The resolution calls for *all* parties to cease hostilities, addressing both Hezbollah and Israel directly (UN S/RES/1701 (2006) para. 1). Additionally, it orders the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and the “full respect of the Blue Line” and “strong

support [...] for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders.” Upon these conditions, the Council requests that the Government of Lebanon — with the assistance of UNIFIL — deploys its forces throughout southern Lebanon as indicated in paragraph 3 of the resolution to exercise its full sovereignty over the area “so that there will be no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon.” Therefore, UNSCR 1701 stands, not only as a resolution intended to halt the violence derived from the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, but also aims to set the conditions and proper responsibilities of the parties to build a proper resolution of it. Paragraph 8 defines the initial terms upon which this long term solution ought to be built by outlining six main aspects: 1) a full respect of the Blue Line by both parties; 2) the delineation of an area free of armed personnel, assets and weapons, except for those deployed by the Government of Lebanon and for UNIFIL’s assistance; 3) the disarmament of all militias in Lebanon so “there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese State;” 4) the dismantling of foreign forces that do not have consent of the Lebanese government; 5) the prohibition of arms smuggling inside Lebanese territory; and 6) the handing over of the maps of Israeli landmines to the United Nations to begin the demining process. On these grounds, UNSCR 1701 delineates the operational area of UNIFIL’s assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) between the Litani river and the Blue Line Figure, as shown in Figure 2.

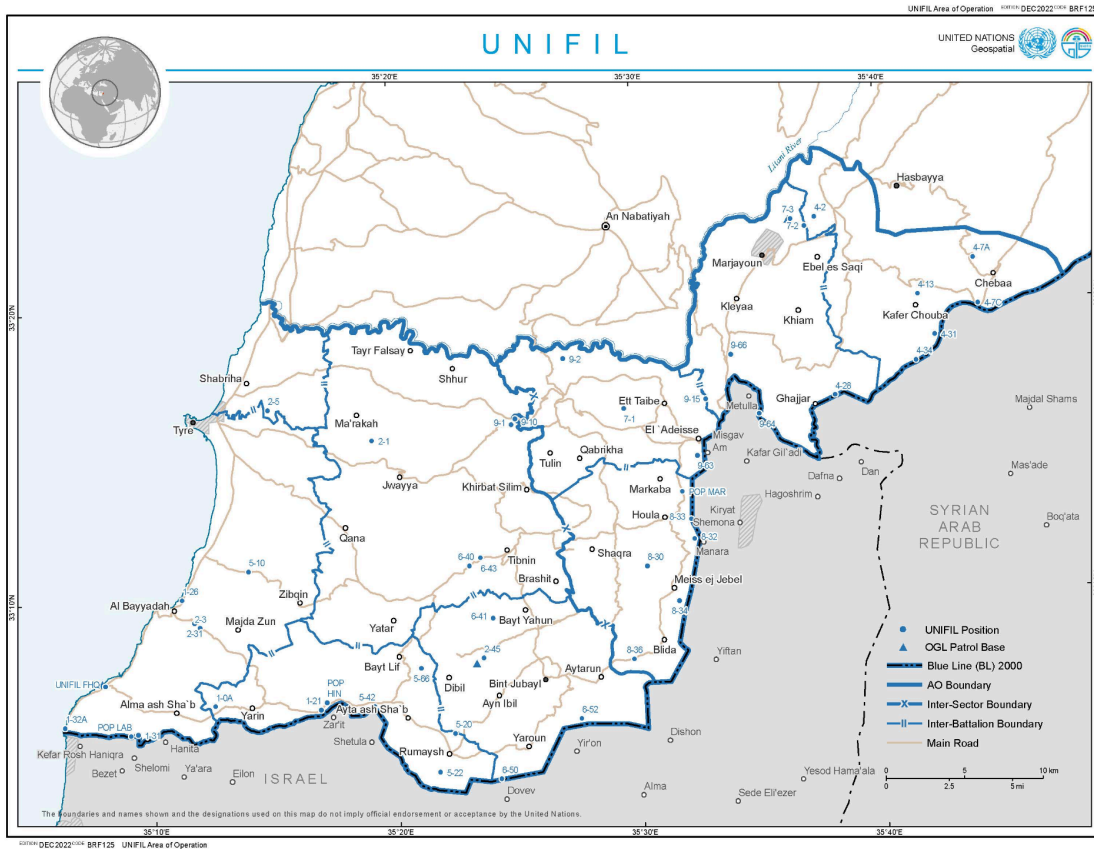


Figure 2. Map of UNIFIL’s Area of Deployment. Source: *United Nations Geospatial Section.*

UNIFIL’s peacekeeping mandate comes from UNSCR 1701. Because of this, UNSCR 1701 maintains significance today in its capacity to constitute and define UNIFIL’s mission. On one hand, the resolution imposes on UNIFIL a wider and more comprehensive scope of responsibilities that expand beyond an “observer” or “interpositional” role (Fortna, 2008). The force is tasked with coordinating and supporting the Lebanese government so that it can extend its effective control over the southern area of the country. It does this by providing assistance to the LAF, allowing the force to carry out the responsibilities that are described in paragraph 8 of the resolution. Moreover, paragraph 11(d) mandates that UNIFIL “help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.” This leaves UNIFIL with the mandate to carry out a wider set of activities than other UN peacekeeping operations as it is destined to re-establish the sovereignty of a weak government whose authority has been supplanted by an effective militia in the southern area of the country, where it operates freely as “a state within a state.” Given these additional

tasks, UNIFIL can be characterized as a “multidimensional” mission that, despite lacking a combination of military and civilian personnel, is entitled to “implement a comprehensive peace settlement” (Fortna, 2008, p. 7).

In addition to defining and at times redefining UNIFIL’s mandate, UNSCR 1701 “enhances” UNIFIL’s capabilities to strengthen the force into what is called a “robust” peacekeeping mission. While resolution 1701 is adopted by the UN Security Council under the terms provided by Chapter VI on the “peaceful settlement of disputes”, it also provides the force with certain elements that would assimilate to a “peace enforcement” mandate authorized under Chapter VII. For a start, paragraph 11 orders the mission to “enhance the force in numbers, equipment, mandate and scope of operations.” In terms of numbers, this order corresponds with the increase of the force’s size up to a maximum of 15,000 troops. This stands in sharp contrast to the troop capacity authorized under resolution 425 (1978) which originally amounted to 4,000 troops and reached a peak of 7,000 troops in 1982. The substantial increase in personnel and capabilities reveals how the UN has been willing to increase the capacities of UNIFIL to guarantee that the mandate has sufficient support and strength to accomplish its mission.

This strengthening, however, is clearly reflected in the strong language employed by the Security Council in paragraph 12. In it, the Council gives UNIFIL permission “*to take all necessary action* in areas of deployment of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities, to **ensure** that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind, to **resist** attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council” (UN S/RES/1701 (2006) para. 12, emphasis added) and to protect the mission’s security and freedom of movement of personnel, along with civilians in danger of imminent physical harm. This language enables UNIFIL to make use of force at the tactical level, not solely for self-defense and the protection of civilians, but also to protect the implementation of its mandate as discussed previously by Helms (2022). This constitutes a transformative element for the strengthening of UNIFIL, which in its previous years had no choice but to remain passive towards the obstacles to its mandate. In addition to this, UNSCR 1701 grants it the capacity to take a more proactive and offensive role for the implementation of its mandate. Therefore, the reinforced asset capabilities provided by paragraph 11, backed by the authorization to use force at the tactical level for purposes beyond self-defense as provisioned in paragraph 12, categorizes the enhanced UNIFIL — also called UNIFIL II —

under a “robust” peacekeeping mandate and justifies its characterization as a “Chapter VI-and-a-half” mission (Elron, 2007; Murphy, 2012). This robust mandate allows peacekeeping forces to effectively respond to complex conflict environments, such as those characterized by insurgencies or fragile political transitions in which consent of all parties is impossible. It does so by enabling the enhanced usage of force to maintain peace and security. However, it also acknowledges that full peace enforcement, involving extensive military operations or prolonged occupation, is not a suitable option for a peacekeeping force.

5.2. Section II: The Conflict between Israel & Hezbollah.

5.2.1. UNSCR 1701 from the Point of View of the Parties

While the adoption of UNSCR 1701 was accepted by both parties of the conflict, neither welcomed the resolution without reservations. Still, both Israel and Hezbollah considered it to be an effective means to end the fighting that had taken thousands of lives and caused a costly destruction of infrastructure. In Israel, the resolution was particularly well-received as a positive framework that could lead to a more stable and secure northern border. In fact, Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert defended it as a measure that “had quieted Israel's northern border” (Eran, 2008). Nonetheless, certain sectors of the Israeli government remained skeptical over the lack of robust and concrete mechanisms through which southern Lebanon would be freed of armed groups, specifically, Hezbollah. These concerns had been expressed during the negotiations of UNSCR 1701 drafting, as Israeli officials aimed to place the resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to provide UNIFIL with “enforcement” capabilities. The Lebanese government did not accept this which led to the compromise of situating the mandate as a “Chapter VI-and-a-half” operation (Murphy, 2012). Murphy (2012) brings attention to the vagueness of certain aspects of the implementation of UNSCR 1701, highlighting the problem of Hezbollah’s disarmament under its framework:

“The resolution did not expressly say *who* should disarm Hizbollah, but the implication was that it should be the Lebanese Armed Forces, with assistance from the reconfigured UNIFIL. The ‘modalities’, to use UN terminology for such action, are not explained. *Nor was there any disarmament, demobilisation or re-integration programme proposed.* Israel had high expectations for UNIFIL in terms of disarmament of Hizbollah, however, these were never realistic.” (p. 391, emphasis added)

Hezbollah, on its part, did not oppose the Lebanese government's decision to accept the resolution, although did not accept the disarmament of its soldiers (Al Tamimi, 2006). Thus, while it initially agreed to disarm its forces south of the Litani River after the ceasefire, it continued with its "defensive operations" over time, rebuilding and fortifying its military infrastructure in the south where it developed a new line of defense and "completed a massive, unprecedented recruitment, training, and rearmament drive" (Eran, 2008). In the face of this, UNIFIL forces did nothing but acted just as an "observer" force. This occurred for two reasons. First, "dismantling Hizbullah" was "not the direct mandate of the UN" to use the words of then-Secretary General Kofi Annan. Rather, UNIFIL's mission was to offer assistance so that the Lebanese government could disarm the organization (Hoffman, 2006). Secondly, UNIFIL lacked any support both from the local population in the south and from the Government of Lebanon to pursue any action against Hezbollah hostile activities. As the main provider of social services in the south and a key party sustaining the coalition governing in Lebanon, UNIFIL could not count on the cooperation of any to implement the elements of the resolution opposed by Hezbollah (Hijazi, 2024).. As a dramatic example of this stands the statement made by Lebanese Defence Minister Elias Murr on 14 August 2006 that "the army won't be deployed to south Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah" (Associated Press, 2006). As a consequence, despite the reconceptualization of UNIFIL under UNSC 1701, Hezbollah engaged in a new dynamic of re-armament with impunity. This ushered in a new phase of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict and their war of deterrence.

5.2.2. Israel and Hezbollah and their War of Deterrence

As Edan wrote two years after the implementation of UNSCR 1701, "[a]lthough the resolution ended the fighting [between Hezbollah and Israel], it did not end the conflict, [making] future violence between the two sides inevitable" (Edan, 2008). Since 2006, different authors have stated that the "Lebanese border has been relatively quiet" (Schweitzer et al., 2022), yet the dramatic military buildup on both sides belies the falsity behind that "quietness" and reveals a reality that resembles a "calm before the storm." For almost twenty years, both parties have prepared to inflict a fatal blow to each other and, for that same reason, have understood the devastating consequences that a first attack would bring as retaliation. For that reason, Samaan (2014) argues that the solution for them "has been to bargain deterrence, meaning to deter the other party from attacking its homeland by pledging a full-scale retaliation." (Samaan, 2014, p. 5). This has thrown them into an informal

deterrence dialogue aimed at building a careful “balance of terror” that dissuades them from engaging into the full-scale war that many believe is inevitable (Blanford & Orion, 2020). Yet, any miscalculation in the inner logic defining the dynamic rules of engagement of the relationship threatens to unravel a far more destructive war than the one they faced in 2006.

Following the 2006 Lebanon War, Hezbollah defied the conditions of disarmament conditioned by UNSCR 1701 and restored and reinforced its military capabilities into what Schweitzer et al. (2022) describe as “a fighting force with military frameworks, advanced and precision weapons, and a broad, diverse, and advanced order of battle” (Schweitzer et al. (2022, p. 17). With the aid and counsel of Iran, Hezbollah was able not only to maintain, but also upgrade its organization based on guerrilla and terrorist tactics. It soon became an advanced and sophisticated military force in possession of an extensive arsenal of destructive firepower composed of different rocket and missile types with capacity to reach any point of Israel’s territory. Moreover, thanks to its participation in the Syrian civil war, Hezbollah had a highly trained force of 30,000 fighters and 10,000 to 20,000 reservists, among which some thousands are specifically trained to infiltrate Israel’s territory and capture communities “in order to shock and awe the Israeli public and produce a “victory image” of conquering sovereign Israeli territory” (Blanford & Orion, 2020; Schweitzer et al., 2022, p. 21). As part of its strategic and tactical planning, Hezbollah has made sure to rebuild its military infrastructure in the south, an initiative that has included hiding weapons and different military assets and an extensive network of tunnels that infiltrate into the northern region of Israel (Blanford & Orion, 2020). This type of military buildup below the Blue Line is a clear violation of UNSC 1701, but constitutes one of Hezbollah’s main elements of its “deterrence equation” against Israel. This is explained by Hezbollah’s unchanging perception of Israel as “aggressive, unpredictable, and aspiring to exert influence in Lebanon” that must be deterred through a strong “resistance” in the south in order to maintain a credible balance of power. (Blanford, 2022; Schweitzer et al., 2022, p. 8).

Nevertheless, Hezbollah’s deterrence doctrine has been shaped by a series of constraining elements. While the organization has been able to upgrade its military capabilities to become a dangerous and credible rival against the Jewish state, its institutionalization and integration into the Lebanese socio-political system has made it increasingly dependent on domestic issues and subject to internal discontent against the organization. The group joined the Lebanese parliament in 1992 as part of a new organizational strategy through which it could

strengthen its standing in Lebanon to defend its “resistance priority” against Israel. However, as Hezbollah became more entrenched inside the political system and within society as the “caretaker” of the Shiite community in Lebanon, it has needed to account for the increasing responsibility towards its constituents (Blanford, 2022). In many ways, these increased responsibilities in the domestic realm have required the group to restrain its “resistance” strategy against Israel. Hezbollah has had to carefully moderate its deterrence doctrine while facing growing dissatisfaction across all society sectors over the armed group’s destabilizing effect on the country and its loss of legitimacy due to its responsibility in the economic and political crisis that has bogged down Lebanon since 2019 (Nassar and Hokayem, 2023). Taking this into consideration, Ish Maas (2017) (recalled in the article of Schweitzer et al., 2022) explains how Hezbollah’s deterrence doctrine is based on risk-aversion, a proclivity towards retaliation, and the consideration of three principles: reactivism—responding to Israeli actions while letting Israel set the context; proportionality—ensuring responses are proportional to the Israeli actions; and clarity—maintaining strategic clarity in its actions.

For Israel, this war of deterrence represents a dangerous piece of a wider regional game threatening its existence. The current conflict between Israel and Hezbollah is framed within the regional war of attrition launched by Iran through its proxy-coalition, the “Axis of Resistance,” which aims to continuously harass and destabilize the Jewish state through a mix of military, political, and proxy warfare tactics without engaging in direct confrontation (Blanford & Orion, 2020; Schweitzer et al., 2022). Out of this coalition, Hezbollah plays a central role as its “spearhead” and Iran’s most valuable instrument to defend its interests vis-à-vis Israel given its proximity to it and the formidable organizational and military structure it has built over the years (Schweitzer et al., 2022; Nassar and Hokayem, 2023). Most importantly, Iran’s military aid and counseling has transformed the Lebanese group into the most dangerous conventional military threat for Israel’s national security (Blanford & Orion, 2020). Iran’s supply of precision missiles to Hezbollah has enabled the organization to strengthen its destructive power — which already contains an arsenal of 130,000 to 150,000 surface-to-surface rockets and missiles in its arsenal according to estimates (source) —, to be able to reach any target in Israel’s territory (Israel Defense Forces, 2019).

Given this explicit threat that is magnified by the increased military capabilities of Hezbollah, Israel’s defense and intelligence policies have been focused on the preparation of a war against the organization. A sizable chunk of Israel’s defense work has been directed towards

obtaining information about Hezbollah's strategies and operations, uncovering plots, targeting its military assets, and conducting training exercises to prepare its forces to fight in Lebanese territory (Blanford & Orion, 2020). Among these activities it is worth highlighting the deep and continuous intelligence operations performed by the IDF through overflights into Lebanese territory. These missions are meant to provide warning signs of possible Hezbollah attacks and battlefield preparations by spotting Hezbollah arsenals and points of entry to its tunnel network. It should be mentioned that the Israeli overflights constitute a violation of UNSC 1701. In June 2022 and June 2023, UNIFIL recorded 520 Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace, totalling 650 hours of overflight time (UN S/2023/522). Likewise, more violations are recorded over Israel's construction of a wall to prevent infiltrations of Hezbollah fighters over disputed territories such as the northern town of Ghajar (UN S/2023/522). Despite the efforts to maintain a military strength gap, Israel's actions are mostly aimed at harming Hezbollah's buildup efforts through its "Campaign Between Wars" or the CBW.

The CBW, explained in the 2015 and 2018 editions of the IDF Strategy, aims to dismantle the enemy's military buildup efforts by targeting weapon transfers routes, military assets and senior officials of the Axis of Resistance like Hezbollah (Blanford & Orion, 2020). An illustrative example of this campaign is the killing of Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, who, while killed by a U.S. strike in Baghdad in the first days of January 2020, was first targeted by Israel and almost assigned in October 2019 (Al Jazeera, 2019). Attacks such as this one were performed by Israel across Syria where Hezbollah operatives and different weapons assets were stationed amid the chaos of the civil war. However, the Lebanese-Israeli border remained relatively calm on Hezbollah's retaliations against Israel. This is explained by the rules of engagement developed between the parties who transferred their war of deterrence to a quiet northern front along Israeli, as long as Israel refrains from acting into what Schweitzer et al. (2022) term the Lebanese "sphere of immunity" (Schweitzer et al., 2022, p. 21).

Both Hezbollah and Israel have agreed to engage in a war of deterrence to maintain a fragile peace until the next war sparks. Within their possibilities and constraints, they have delineated over time their rules of engagement to maintain a tit-for-tat strategy that preserves their balance of power across the border: Hezbollah follows a risk-averse strategy based in reactionary, but proportional and clear operations to avoid an Israeli unprecedented

escalation; Israel carries out operations beyond the northern front designed to weaken Hezbollah's buildup network across the region while strategically avoiding attacks deep in Lebanon. Yet, this deterrence logic is vulnerable to miscalculations from the parties or exogenous factors which could cause a rapid escalation from spiraling into an all-out war that would involve a far-reaching more destructive conflict than the war lived in 2006 (Blanford & Orion, 2020).

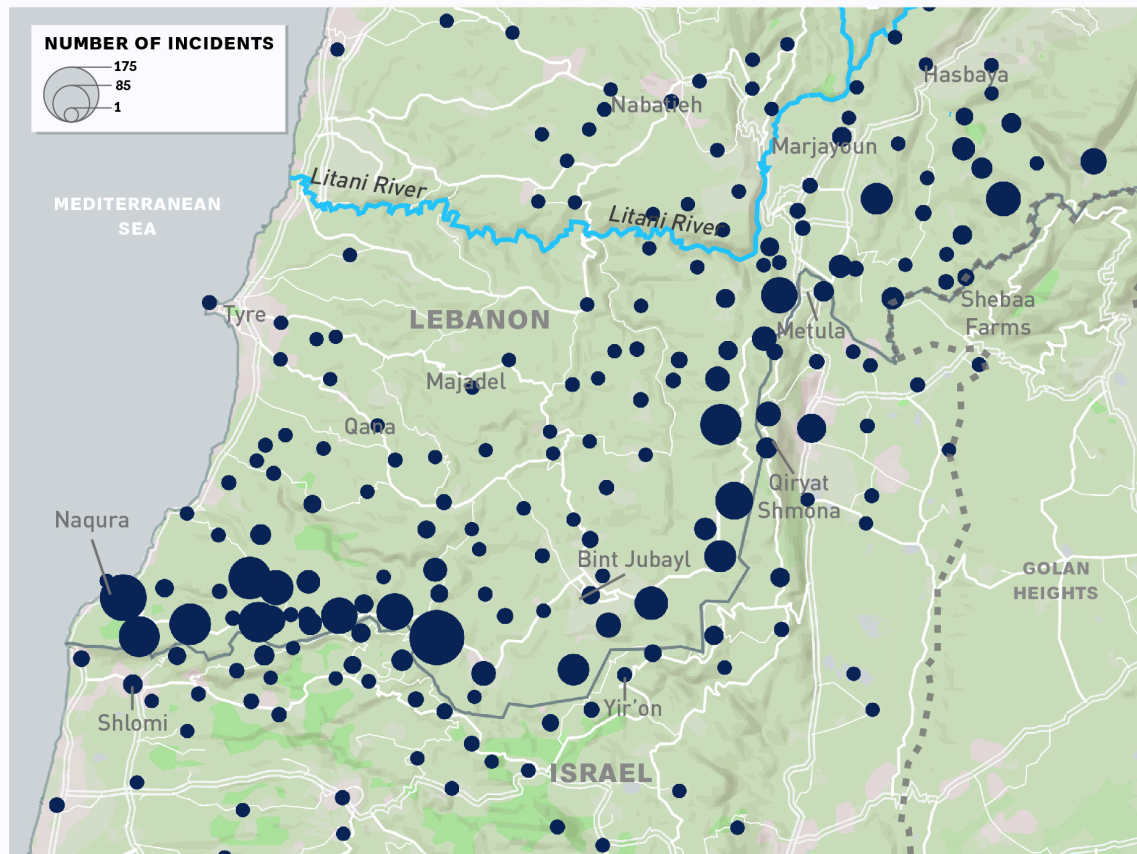
5.2.3. Israel vs Hezbollah after October 7: A potential Peace for Galilee 2.0.

The calm before the storm was dangerously disturbed after the attack of Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023. The early morning of that Saturday morning caught many Israeli communities near the border with Gaza asleep when Hamas terrorists crossed the border and stormed in their houses and killed 1,200 people, taking over 200 hostage back to Gaza. The event shocked Israel and the world and was one of the deadliest days of Israel's history. The attack led to the ongoing war in Gaza which has accounted for tens of thousands of Palestinians killed by Israel bombings in the Strip. The Hamas-led attack was an exogenous factor that led to an escalation in the northern border. On October 8 Hezbollah launched a series of guided rocket attacks and artillery shells against Israeli positions in the Shebaa Farms region and other areas along the border "in solidarity with the Palestinians" (Reuters, 2024). Since then, both parties have been locked in a war of attrition aimed at targeting military infrastructure and other assets that undermined their strategic capabilities in the event of war (Hashem, 2024).

Both parties have shown restraint in their exchanges, yet the daily tit-for-tat between Israel and Hezbollah "continues to escalate in slow motion" (International Crisis Group, 2024). The parties have slowly increased the scope of bombardments, initially from small, usually uninhabited areas, to strike deeper into their territories. By mid-May, Israel had repeatedly targeted Baalbek and Hermel in the northern Beqaa Valley as well as Saida on the coast, while Hezbollah has restricted its attacks to an area 10 km south from the border, occasionally launching projectiles targeting southern sites such as Nahariyya in the occupied Golan Heights (International Crisis Group, 2024). Similarly, the Lebanese group has gradually introduced more sophisticated weapons "such as guided anti-armour rockets, attack drones and air defense missiles apparently capable of taking down advanced Israeli drones."

With this, both parties have redefined their rules of engagement but sticking to a strategy of deterrence (International Crisis Group, 2024).

Violent Incidents Related to the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict (October 8, 2023-March 15, 2024)



Note: Incidents were included if they involved the IDF in Lebanon, Hezbollah or an unidentified Lebanese armed group in Israel, or both the IDF and Hezbollah or an unidentified Lebanese armed group in Syria.
Source: "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project," ACLED.

CSIS | TRANSNATIONAL THREATS PROJECT

Figure 3: Map of Violent Incidents Related to the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict from October 8, 2023 to March 15, 2024. Source: Center for Strategic International Studies 2024.

Despite the seemingly carefully calculated conflict, the regional instability and political radicalization in Israel brought by the war in Gaza threatens to destabilize the equation of deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah. On one hand, the mobilization of Iran's Axis of Resistance in the region has raised the tensions between Iran and Israel, drawing the attention of the Israeli cabinet at the perspective of a second front in the north that would divert resources from the Gaza War. Throughout the development of the war in Gaza, Hezbollah has

engaged in escalation by introducing new weapons and tactics that have been accompanied by increasingly aggressive messages threatening a potential war. Moreover, the Israeli strikes within Lebanese territory against senior leaders of the organizations aligned with Iran such as Hamas' Saleh al-Aroui or Hezbollah's Talib Sami Abdullah have endangered further escalation putting the situation in the "brisk of war" (Ebrahim, 2024). In this situation, Hezbollah has demonstrated a risk-averse attitude towards Israel's attacks, but is feeling greater pressure as the organization has looked for save-the-face responses that would not risk an unforgiving escalation (Nassar and Hokayem, 2023). On the other hand, Israel's internal politics have radicalized along the new security perception of its neighborhood. A report on the issue published by the Center of Strategic and International Studies in March 2024 notes that the psychological impact and trauma generated by Hamas' attack has increased the uncertainty and has eroded the tolerance of Israelis against the threat that Hezbollah poses on the northern border, especially when taking into consideration its close relationship with Tehran and its ties to Hamas (Jones et al., 2024). Many Israelis now fear Hezbollah's Radwan force, a commando group made out of highly skilled soldiers specifically trained to infiltrate into Israel's northern territory of Galilee to attack, kill, and kidnap Israeli civilians from their local communities (Schweitzer et al., 2022). Pieces of propaganda that resemble too closely the Hamas attack footage that shocked the whole country on October 7. In fact, the slogan: "It's either 1701 [Hezbollah removed from the border] or 10/07 [a similar disaster waiting to happen]" has become popular (Wimmen & Wood, 2024). Furthermore, the displaced civilians from the northern communities in Israel increase the pressure on politicians to "improve the security situation" so that they may return home. All of this has significantly reduced the risk tolerance of Israel whose perception of Hezbollah has increased to that of an existential threat. Nonetheless, the cost of a full-out war remains high, keeping both parties locked in a risky game of deterrence where the dynamic of the conflict follows the logic of: "You expand, we expand. You escalate, we escalate" as said by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. Yet, the stakes of a wider escalation remain there, waiting for a mis-step from any of the parties that could "return Lebanon to the Stone Age" (Fabian, 2023; Jones et al., 2024).

5.3. Section III: A Comprehensive Analysis of UNIFIL II.

5.3.1. UNIFIL II Mission Profile: The Daily Operations

The adoption of UNSCR 1701 (2006) dramatically increased the troop size of UNIFIL from around 2,000 soldiers to over 13,000 better equipped and experienced elements, whose first elements arrived in Lebanon on 15 September 2006 (UNIFIL, “Background,” n.d). The deployment significantly enhanced the security situation in the region as the forces have helped to stabilize post-war Lebanon and maintain a relative calm in the southern border with Israel. According to Elron (2007) the larger size of the force enabled it to increase the number of daily patrols “from just a handful to around 400” and to better demarcate and monitor the Blue Line separating Lebanese and Israel territory (p. 93). Fourteen years later, in 2020, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman stated that UNSCR 1701 (2006) increased troop ceiling from 2,000 to 15,000 had helped to decrease Hezbollah strikes across the Blue Line, contributing to more calm on the Israeli-Lebanese border.

As of 18 March 2024, UNIFIL's force consisted of a total 10,272 peacekeepers from 49 troop-contributing countries who are stationed in its area of operations in south Lebanon, between the Litani River and the Blue Line. Its area of deployment is divided in two sectors and its headquarters are found in the town of Naqoura, located 22 km south of Tyre as shown in Figure 4. Within this area, UNIFIL is responsible for the monitoring of hostilities which it carries out through daily vehicle, foot and air patrols and observation posts where it records, documents and later investigates different incidents such as projectile trajectories or fire exchanges across the Blue Line. Likewise, UNIFIL maintains permanent and temporary checkpoints to monitor movement and unauthorized activities such as arms smuggling. In relation to this task, since October 2006 the force counts on a Maritime Task Force (MTF), the first and only peacekeeping marine force among UN missions, to secure the Lebanese coastline and prevent the unauthorized entry of arms or related material by sea into Lebanon (UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, n.d). These operations are carried out with close cooperation with the LAF under the mandate of UNIFIL to assist the Lebanese army to implement all the mandates outlined in UNSCR 1701 (2006). In line with this, UNIFIL has been counseling and coordinating with the LAF within the Strategic Dialogue framework aimed at facilitating a gradual transfer of responsibilities to the Lebanese force since 2010.

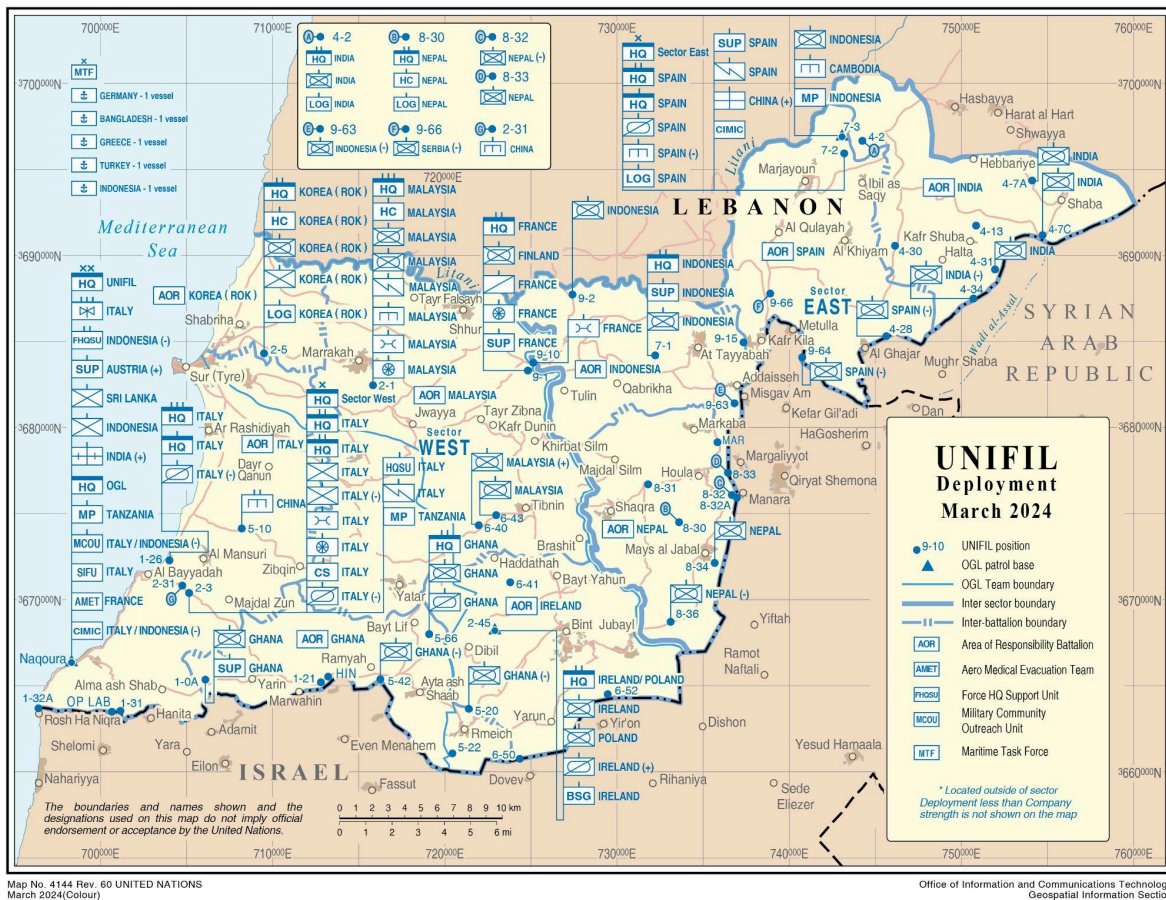


Figure 4. Map of UNIFIL’s area of deployment March 2024. Source:United Nations Geospatial Section

These operations have had a meaningful impact by helping to prevent uncontrolled escalations between the parties. This impact has come about through two main ways. First, UNIFIL has contained and snuffed out incidents at the ground level, preventing them from intensifying and spreading. Second, UNIFIL has worked to establish effective channels of communication between the parties involved which has prevented honest misunderstandings from escalating violently. To give a few examples, incidents such as accidental crossings of the Blue Line by farmers, shepherds, other civilians and even Lebanese and Israeli soldiers have been peacefully resolved as misunderstandings given the blurred and overlapping areas along the line. These scenarios are commonplace as illustrated by the fact that between 21 February to 20 June 2023, UNIFIL observed 372 violations by shepherds and farmers crossing south of the Blue Line (UN S/2023/522 para.13). Moreover, the role of UNIFIL in

trying to demarcate a clear and visible line with the famous “blue barrels” has enabled it to mark a clear sign that informs the belligerent parties on the borders their separation. This action from UNIFIL has decreased the ambiguity that has led to misunderstandings in the past. Beyond working to remedy small-scale disagreements, UNIFIL has used its mediatory role to regularly engage with Israel and Hezbollah at bilateral and multi-level meetings. This has enabled the force to decrease the tensions and build useful communication channels through which they can resolve disagreements, transmit messages and formulate creative solutions to reduce the risks of escalation (Orion, 2016). Fabi (2020) explains how this agreed Liaison and Coordination mechanism comprehends various levels that include regular meetings and a hotline between UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander and the designated LAF and IDF generals, as well as meetings and contacts carried out by the Liaison Branch and Political staff (Fabi, 2020). Along with this, UNIFIL regularly organizes a Tripartite forum between the LAF and the IDF, which serves as a vital confidence-building mechanism by addressing key security and military operational issues, including the implementation of resolution 1701, Blue Line violations, and findings from UNIFIL investigations (UNIFIL Operations, n.d). All of these actions have been effective ensuring that the parties did not fall into a spiral of fear that could quickly escalate into a full-blown conflict. Yet, as it is highlighted by Orion (2016), UNIFIL’s perceived success over a superficial “calm” border can be mostly attributed to a restraint coming from the belligerents, Israel and Hezbollah. The following section will review the weaknesses that UNIFIL’s mandate presents in regards to the underlying failure of the force to implement the mandates given in Resolution 1701 (2006).

5.3.2. UNIFIL II Enhancement: Structural Weakness

Despite the enhanced provisions given to UNIFIL under UNSCR 1701 (2006), the peacekeeping mission continues to be plagued by legal and operational weaknesses within its mandate that prevents it from implementing a long term solution in south Lebanon. The most prominent failure among them has been the inability of UNIFIL to assist the Lebanese armed forces to guarantee an area of operations free of arms except for those of UNIFIL and the LAF as described in paragraph 8. Despite the resolution and UNIFIL’s deployment, the force’s area of responsibility continues to contain armed groups that occasionally restart hostilities against Israel. Hezbollah is at the center of this and has taken a stronghold in south Lebanon where it “has beefed up, broadened, deepened, and increased its military deployment” (Orion, 2016). The Shiite organization has built a reinforced defensive and

offensive military infrastructure network in preparation for the next war against Israel, much of it is deployed in the area of responsibility of UNIFIL (Blanford & Orion, 2020). Likewise, the LAF and UNIFIL were not only unable to disarm the group, but also became witnesses to the growing and increasingly sophisticated arsenal that it has been able to amass through the smuggling of weapons sent from Iran across the porous Syrian border and other ports of entry like the Rafik Hariri International Airport and the Port of Beirut (IDF, 2020). In this regard, Orion (2016) refers to the tens of thousands of ships that underwent “monitoring” by the MTF over the decade-long mandate, in which only one was found carrying weapons, while the rest passed with Government authorization (Orion, 2016). One should question, though, how could UNIFIL, operating under a “robust” mandate authorizing “to take all necessary action [...] to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind [...]”, not avoid by any means the development of Hezbollah’s buildup over the years (UN S/RES/1701 (2006) para. 12). There are two answers for this question.

In the first place, UNIFIL could not restrict any of Hezbollah’s operations given that it lacked proof of them happening. For instance, in the last Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) during the period from 21 June 2023 to 20 October 2023, the Secretary General documented the arrest of hundreds of individuals due to drugs and people smuggling, yet regarding the “allegations of arms transfers”, “the United Nations is not in position to substantiate them independently,” such as it was highlighted by Orion (2016) (UN S/2023/522 para. 36). Similarly, regarding the capacity of UNIFIL to document and officially report military assets and infrastructure from Hezbollah, the force has been unable to do so given their status as “private property” (Blanford & Orion, 2020). These “locations of interests” are inaccessible to UNIFIL without LAF official authorization, and they include Green Without Borders sites – locations associated with a Lebanese environmental organization suspected to be a disguise for Hezbollah military outposts —, tunnels crossing the Blue Line, and observed unauthorized firing ranges within the area of responsibility of UNIFIL (UN S/2023/522). These types of loopholes found by the organization enable it to operate under a “civilian cloak” that cannot be reported by UNIFIL as comprising a “hostile activity” to be acted upon. The reason explaining these undercover operations, though, is directly linked with the second reason of UNIFIL’s inaction towards Hezbollah: the lack of cooperation of the Lebanese Government to implement UNSCR 1701 (2006).

While considered a “robust” peacekeeping mission, UNIFIL is deployed under a mandate drafted within the framework of Chapter VI of the United Nations. This means that the UN force is deployed in an extremely complex situation where it must implement a multidimensional mission aimed at disarming militia groups while contending with the lack of the Government of Lebanon’s consent (Elron, 2007; Orion, 2016). Consent, in fact, is inherently entrenched in the core mission of UNIFIL which is to “assist” the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to “exercise its full sovereignty” over *all* Lebanese territory. Nonetheless, despite being a cooperating partner willing to conduct joint patrols and training exercises and mediate in favor of UNIFIL when troops encountered restrictions on their freedom of movement, the LAF and the Government of Lebanon consistently restrict UNIFIL’s swift investigations on “observed unauthorized weapons or “observed unauthorized launching sites” by denying them access or by objecting to the expansion of patrol routes (UN S/2023/522 para. 15). In short, UNIFIL operations are restricted by a fragmented Lebanese state whose sovereignty has been undermined and is exercised by a host(age) state. The government is dependent on Hezbollah because it has become a key piece in the political landscape of Lebanon and is able to force a political deadlock within the Government Cabinet when it considers it necessary. At the same time, the Lebanese government can be coerced by Hezbollah due to the military capacity of the group within the country whose strength significantly overpasses that of the official government forces (Blanford, 2022). Consequently, the central role of the Government of Lebanon to provide a long-term solution to the conflict in south Lebanon is paralyzed by the power held by Hezbollah within it. Through the institutions, the group is able to continue with its operations with impunity, circumvent the law and accumulate power within the vacuum of a weak state (Nassar and Hokayem, 2023). All the while UNIFIL remains off to the side, powerless to provide any resolution to the conflict and fulfilling only a “buffer” role that provides some “calming effect” on the area to avoid unnecessary escalations. Yet, underneath the fragile calm in the southern border lies a lack of desire on the part of both parties to engage in another war. It is clear that Israel and Hezbollah would rather continue their war of deterrence according to the new rules of engagement than engage in an outright war.

5.3.3. UNIFIL II Paralysis: The Assessment amid Renewed Escalation.

The previous conclusions lead us to assess the role that UNIFIL can play in the management if the current war of deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel were to erupt into an all-out

war. Trapped in a deterrence war between two belligerents destined to renew fighting at some point, and handicapped by a partner that is unable to fully cooperate in the implementation of its mandate, UNIFIL confronts a nearly-impossible peace mission. The current risk scenario, vulnerable to exogenous factors that could tilt the balance in favor of escalation, threatens to paralyze UNIFIL and relegate it to a peripheral role as it did in the past with previous resurgences of conflict in 1982 and in 2006. It must be questioned, then, what instruments does the peacekeeping force possess to tackle the challenges presented today, and what mechanisms does UNSCR 1701 (2006) provide to manage what many call an “inevitable” war (Orion, 2016; Blanford & Orion, 2020; Jones et al., 2024)? Taking into account the theories of peacekeeping success described above, it is interesting to analyze the extent to which proper peacekeeping tools could be employed within the scope of UNSCR 1701 (2006) to address the current escalatory risks present in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. In the same manner, by considering the current strategic political situation between Israel and Hezbollah, as well as the diplomatic efforts undertaken by countries like the U.S. and France, this dissertation will employ Jakobsen’s (2020) multi-actor approach to explain the options and instruments that UNIFIL could use to strategically influence the decision-making of the different stakeholders in the conflict.

UNIFIL's capacity to directly intervene and stop exchanges of fire remains very limited due to its lack of military deterrence and the dangers posed by active combat and movement restrictions, as noted in the Secretary General's report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) during the period from 21 October 2023 to 20 February 2024. Besides a marginal mediation role on-ground and liaison negotiations, UNIFIL serves more as a “moral authority” in the area than a *force* able to compel and dissuade parties from engaging into conflict. Nevertheless, the sole moral presence of the mission in south Lebanon already presents a viable instrument to bring back relative calm to the area. UNIFIL’s presence remains a symbolic reminder of the overarching international architecture of norms and institutions that conform the global order (Dorussen, 2022). It is therefore a symbol on the battlefield of the present legitimate system that exists for the peaceful resolution of disputes, and a first-hand witness on the violations that the parties commit despite the UN Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). Considering this, UNIFIL can persuade all parties involved in the conflict to stick to the peace process by bringing the conflict under spotlight in the public debate (Fortna, 2008; Jakobsen, 2020). As Jakobsen (2020) argues, peacekeepers can increase the reputation costs of using force resorting to communication and

advocacy campaigns that publicize the humanitarian aspects provoked by the conflict, and that have a constraining influence on the use of violence to achieve political goals. Having direct contact with the events happening on the ground and having first-hand intelligence on the behavior of belligerents, UNIFIL could tackle the “court of public opinion” to obtain a general mobilization and push actors in the conflict — combatants, supporters, allies, and bystanders — to halt the rising violence or bring an end to escalations. However, there are many instances of past conflicts that demanded urgent third party intervention but were not solved by it.

Not to say that this presents a definitive or effective solution — the conflict in the southern border and the rising tensions between Hezbollah has been widely covered by the media in the West, showing concerns over a potential spark of a regional war — but offers an immediate, tangible solution for emergency situations where the tit-for-tat spills into wider violence. The structural weaknesses limiting UNIFIL scope of action to effectively deter the conflict remain. But most importantly, the underlying cause of it persists, making the region incredibly vulnerable to the possibility of war. As long as the Lebanese Government is unable to exercise its full sovereignty in the country’s border with Israel, and therefore, permits Hezbollah’s armed presence in what Israel called 40 years ago the “security zone”, the Jewish state will feel constantly under threat of an imminent war that does not consider as an “if” but a “when” (Nassar and Hokayem, 2023).

6. Conclusions.

This dissertation has attempted to illustrate the role that the UN peacekeeping forces of UNIFIL play in the management of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in south Lebanon. The first hypothesis suggested that UNIFIL was enhanced in the aftermath of the 2006 Lebanon War to be upgraded to a robust peacekeeping mission while entrusting it a comprehensive mandate that made it a multidimensional mission. The study of the text of UNSCR 1701 (2006) reveals that the reconfigured mandate of UNIFIL II expanded its operational scope to fulfill the purpose not solely of maintaining peace, but also to assist in providing a long term solution. The new resolution gave the UN force the task of supporting the Government of Lebanon in establishing its full sovereignty in the south, calling for close cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces to implement a comprehensive peace development. This identifies UNIFIL II as a “multidimensional” mission responsible

for maintaining peace as well as peace-building. Moreover, the challenging aspect of this mission of facing opposing actors on the ground led the Security Council to authorize a “robust” mandate under which UNIFIL II could operate strictly under the consent of Lebanon as host state but had flexibility to use force when the integrity of the mission was under direct threat. Thus, the first hypothesis can be considered valid. However, it must be noted that the ground implementation of the mandate did not present an effective outcome of UNIFIL’s mission.

Regarding the second hypothesis, the analysis confirmed that the armed presence of Hezbollah is the main driver maintaining hostilities alive between belligerents. The growing military buildup of the Lebanese group in the south of Lebanon has become the major national threat of Israel, second only to Iran’s nuclear program (Blenford & Orion, 2020). Israel has acted in consequence with its so-called “Campaign Between Wars” aimed at strategically neutralizing Hezbollah’s military capabilities within Lebanon and across the region. Yet, conflict has been contained and both parties have avoided an all-out war that would surely be long and destructive. Alternatively, they have opted for a strategy of deterrence via a tacit agreement over a series of rules of engagement that prohibit any major attack on civilians in Israel or in Lebanon. The war in Gaza has irrevocably changed the dynamics of the conflict, creating a new uncertain scenario deeply vulnerable to rapid and uncontrolled escalations. The spark of the war provoked a response by Hezbollah as part of its Palestinian-solidarity policy, but the group has demonstrated its will to maintain the status quo and maintain deterrence. However, the regional instability along with the psychological trauma and political radicalization resulting from the events of October 7 have deeply transformed the security perceptions and calculations in Israel as it relates to its neighborhood. As a consequence, Israel has increasingly threatened to engage in outright war against Hezbollah, partly to maintain its deterrence credibility, but also to begin redefining its rules of engagement with the Lebanese group. Thus, it is unclear what kind of strategic landscape Israel will choose regarding Hezbollah and its presence in south Lebanon.

Lastly, in light of the third hypothesis, the analysis has shown that despite the enhanced provisions given to UNIFIL II under UNSCR 1701 (2006), the peacekeeping mission continues to be plagued by legal and operational weaknesses that prevent it from implementing a long-term solution in south Lebanon. UNIFIL's mandate to assist the Lebanese armed forces in ensuring an area free of unauthorized arms in south Lebanon has

been largely ineffective, with Hezbollah maintaining and deepening its military presence in the region. Further, it has been argued that the UN force's efforts are further hampered by the lack of cooperation from the Lebanese Government and the complexity of the operational environment. While UNIFIL can develop comprehensive strategies that combine all instruments at its reach to influence all actors involved in the conflict, without a more robust mandate that addresses the root causes of the conflict — disarmament of Hezbollah in the area delimited between the Litani River and the Blue Line — it will be unable to provide a sustainable peace. Under current UNSCR 1701 and in cooperation with a weak government in Lebanon, UNIFIL II risks becoming secondary at keeping peace between Israel and Hezbollah, to prolong its “interim” mandate another 46 years.

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