



Fear Factor: Lebanon and the European Way of Peacekeeping

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The European-led United Nations peacekeeping force in Lebanon known as UNIFIL is proof positive, if any were needed, of why Europe is unlikely to ever be a global superpower. When the 13,400-member force was scratched together following last summer's 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah, Europeans said their kinder, gentler "soft power" approach to peacekeeping would teach the United States a thing or two about global politics. While the United States starts wars, Europe ends them, [or so they claimed](#).

But today Lebanon is on the verge of political collapse, a defiant Hezbollah has rearmed to the hilt and rumors of another war with Israel are rife. And as Lebanon slides further into chaos, UNIFIL itself has

become a tempting target, so much so that it now spends most of its time trying to protect itself.

Which raises the question: What, exactly, are the Europeans doing in Lebanon?

Not much, says UNIFIL. In what may be the understatement of the year, UNIFIL spokeswoman [Yasmine Bouziane](#) on August 29 said the UNIFIL mission "has not fulfilled its stated goals, including those dictated by UN Resolution 1701". Presumably taking aim at her European political masters, she continued: "It is at this time essential to remind that UNIFIL's primary mission is to restore security and stability to South Lebanon." Indeed it is.

But since the UN Security Council has just [extended UNIFIL's mandate](#) for another year, this might be a good time to survey the European state of play in Lebanon.

Hezbollah Spoiling for Another Fight?

Most analysts agree that UNIFIL's mission has been compromised from the start. Although [UN Resolution 1701](#), which brought an end to the Lebanon war in August 2006, is unequivocal in its call for an arms embargo, UNIFIL's rules of engagement were deliberately muddled by politics to prevent the force from actively looking for Hezbollah's weapons. The lack of a clear commitment to disarm Hezbollah is a shortcoming that Iran and Syria have been quick to exploit: They have rebuilt Hezbollah's arsenal while Europeans have stood by and watched.

As early as October 2006 [Terje Roed-Larsen](#), the special UN envoy for Lebanon, reported that "there have been arms coming across the border into Lebanon." In April, Walid Jumblatt, a senior Lebanese politician, told Al-Jazeera television that [Lebanese security agents](#) were helping Hezbollah guerrillas smuggle weapons across the porous border with Syria. In June, Roed-Larsen again warned the Security Council of an "[alarming and deeply disturbing picture](#)" of "a steady flow of weapons and armed elements across the border from Syria." And in July, The Jerusalem Post, citing Israeli intelligence, reported that Hezbollah has received [several hundred medium-range missiles](#) from Syria.

But weapons are not the only item on Hezbollah's shopping list. The group is now building an [independent wireless phone network](#) throughout southern Lebanon and in Beirut. [Underground cables](#) were recently discovered running parallel to those of the state phone system, a development that would naturally complicate intelligence-gathering on Hezbollah during a future war.

This may explain why Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's ever-pompous leader, has been especially cocky of late. In July he boasted that Hezbollah guerrillas possess an [arsenal of rockets](#) that can reach "any corner" of the state of Israel, including Tel Aviv. And in an August speech marking the one-year anniversary of his "divine victory" over Israel, he promised the Jewish state would face a "[big surprise](#)" in any future confrontation with Hezbollah.

Eurabian Appeasement?

Meanwhile, Europeans remain indifferent, indeed, duplicitous, vis-à-vis Hezbollah. On the one hand, Hezbollah has killed scores of Europeans in assassinations and bombings around the world. On the other hand, European officials refuse to join the United States, Canada and Australia in adding Hezbollah to its official list of terrorist organizations, a move that would deprive the group funding from Islamic "charities" in Europe.

Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, in June 2006 said there was no plan to add Hez-

zbollah to the terrorism list because the EU did not have enough information to determine whether the group should be deemed as such. Solana tries to justify himself by saying the issue is legal, not moral, in nature. But in March 2005 the [European Parliament](#) passed a resolution by 473 votes to eight stating there is abundant evidence that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization and calling for “all needed measures to put an end to the terrorist activities of this group.”

Just why are Europeans so ambivalent about doing the right thing? Fear, fear and more fear, according to experts at a June 20 hearing titled [Adding Hezbollah to the EU Terrorist List](#) sponsored by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives. Europeans are reluctant to call Hezbollah what it is because they fear reprisals against European interests at home and abroad.

Europeans are afraid that if they take a hard line against Hezbollah, their troops in Lebanon may be attacked. They are also afraid that Hezbollah (which is said to have operatives in every EU country) may activate sleeper cells to carry out attacks inside Europe. And Europeans are afraid of inciting the thousands of shiftless young Muslim immigrants in towns and cities throughout Eurabia. Indeed, the fear of angry Muslims is so pervasive that in practical terms Islam has already established a de facto veto on European foreign policymaking.

Fear also drives the European peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. In a predictable turn of events, European peacekeepers sent to Lebanon as neutral observers have been converted into Hezbollah’s primary protectors, largely because Hezbollah guerillas are now the primary protectors of European peacekeepers. [Say what?](#)

After an [attack in June](#) that killed six Spanish peacekeepers, Spain started cooperating with Hezbollah to determine who killed its soldiers. In fact, Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, a post-modern disciple of the ‘cult of engagement’ who also happens to be deathly afraid of negative public opinion polls, decided to recruit Hezbollah and even Iran to safeguard Spanish troops as a way to safeguard his own job.

Then the hapless Spanish Foreign Minister, [Miguel Ángel Moratinos](#), phoned Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and bizarrely praised Iran’s “constructive and effective role in resolving regional crises.” Moratinos also described as “positive” his relationship with Hezbollah. Indeed, after secretly meeting with [Spanish intelligence agents](#), who presumably promised that Spanish troops would look the other way as Hezbollah rearms for its next war against Israel, Hezbollah militants agreed to provide “escorts” to protect UNIFIL patrols.

Post-Heroic Europeans

So why did Europeans send troops to Lebanon in the first place? Be-

cause Lebanon was supposed to have been Europe's superpower moment. The United States, by staying on the sidelines in Lebanon, provided an opening for Europeans to prove themselves as honest brokers in the Middle East. And indeed, Europeans opposed sending a NATO force to Lebanon precisely because they said it would be too American.

But today's UNIFIL, like so many other things European, is [an empty shell](#). It was manipulated by pretentious Europeans who, resentful of American power and influence on

the world stage, think they can pretend their way to superpowerdom by acting a part.

Indeed, many Europeans, evoking the American experience in Beirut in 1983, assumed that Lebanon would prove how much better things would be if the world would just let Europe run things. Instead, Lebanon is showing the world what post-heroic Europeans are really made of. Because, if anything, Lebanon shows that fear is the great European Achilles' heel. Meanwhile, as Europeans look on, Hezbollah prepares for another war.

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