

The March to War: Political Crises in Lebanon and Palestine

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Lebanon and Palestine are both unique lands on the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean and within the Levant; they are two ancient lands that have seen great armies and navies come and go in the course of history. Under various names and identities, both Lebanon and Palestine have seen more than their share of bloodshed and violence as different groups, interests, and entities have sought in the course of history to take control of their lands.

The populations of Lebanon and Palestine are now deep-rooted in a struggle within a broader geopolitical context that goes beyond the borders of their respective territories; one with far-reaching consequences.

The United States, Britain, Israel and their allies are now in a intense face-off against Iran, Syria, the Palestinians, and other independent regional forces, which stand aloof of the Anglo-American orbit.

It may appear that the military phase of the Anglo-American roadmap has been temporarily slowed, almost to a standstill or pause. With the seemingly lethargic pace of the schedule of the Anglo-American roadmap that is emerging in the Middle East, new steps are being taken in confronting the forces of resistance in the Middle East. One of these is the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group (ISG) report which essentially views the entire Middle East as an integrated zone of conflict, which requires a broader approach by the United States and its allies.

Lebanon: Birth Place of the [Project for the “New Middle East”](#)

Lebanon is one of the theatres in the Middle East, just as Palestine is another theatre, where indigenous forces are facing-off against forces propped up by foreign powers from outside the region. Lebanon is additionally linked through Anglo-American strategic planning with the situation in Iraq, the Palestinian Question, and the American threats directed against Syria and Iran. The current crisis in Lebanon and the [ongoing militarization of the Levant](#) is only one piece of a larger arrangement. Because of Lebanon’s geographic position in the Middle East, control of Lebanon is a vital step in guaranteeing Anglo-American ascendancy in the Middle East.

Beirut is currently a venue where foreign rivalries and contentions are being played out. Lebanon is one of several pressure points in the region, along with Iraq, Palestine, and Kurdistan, from which a [“New Middle East”](#) can be created to satisfy the objectives of the Anglo-American alliance and Israel. Lebanon can provide security to energy haulage and a vital component of a land bridge, which also includes Syria, for the [Baku-Tbilisi-Cehyan](#)

[\(BTC\) Oil Terminal](#) from Turkey to Israel.

Lebanon is strategically vital for providing the Anglo-American alliance and its partners with military positions to control the energy stream in the Eastern Mediterranean. For these reasons and several others, Lebanon also has significant strategic value for the interests of Israel, the United States, France, Syria, Britain, and Iran—including Russia and China, which is evident from their military involvement in the small Arab state after the Anglo-American sponsored Israeli siege of Lebanon. Russian interests are also highlighted by the Russian position at the United Nations with regards to Lebanon and the recently planned visit of the Lebanese Prime Minister to the Russian capital, Moscow.

The United States is currently supporting a client government in Beirut that serves Anglo-American and Israeli interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Besides [energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean](#), Lebanon can serve as a multi-facet bridgehead into Syria. Although Syria was hegemonic in Lebanon, current Syrian interests in Lebanon are linked to Syrian national security concerns in regards to real threats of various forms from the Anglo-American alliance and Israel; this includes regime change and the establishment of an international tribunal that appears to be targeting Syria. Lebanon is unquestionably a multi-level steppingstone for attempts of overwhelming Syria and also attempts at marginalizing Iran.

Lebanon and Palestine

The duplicity of the foreign policy of the United States and its allies is becoming crystal clear in regards to “democratization” in the Middle East. The goal is not to spread democracy, but to establish a series of puppet, client governments that serve Anglo-American financial, military, and strategic interests in the region. These governments for all intents and purposes are undemocratic in nature, but termed as “moderate.” The situations in both Lebanon and Palestine share startling similarities, although Palestinians face military occupation and the Lebanese face strengthening foreign induced sectarian tension(s).

In Palestine a majority government dominated by Hamas is under siege from the United States, Israel, and Fatah with the support of the European Union and most Arab governments. The Hamas-government is also desperately trying to create a “national unity government,” with Fatah and its leader, Mahmoud Abbas the Palestinian President. It is ironic that the political party with the majority in Palestine has been reduced to a position where it has to plead with Fatah—which has been holding out—to create a “national unity government.” Fatah under the influence of the United States and with the help of Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Arab Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf is attempting to utterly squash the Hamas-government of Palestine because of its resistance to Anglo-American objectives vis-à-vis collaboration with the Israeli government.

In Lebanon the National Opposition is demanding the formation of a “national unity government” to ensure that “the State” acts in the interest of Lebanon’s citizens rather than serving the interests of the U.S., France, and Israel.

In both Lebanon and Palestine the political entities and individuals rejecting the creation of “national unity governments” are collaborating with the United States and supported by the United States, Israel, Britain, and Saudi Arabia amongst others. In parallel, the groups trying

to create “national unity governments” in Lebanon and Palestine are indigenous forces resistant to foreign tutelage and supported by Iran and Syria for various reasons.

The Road to Damascus goes through Beirut: the March towards the “New Middle East”

The Anglo-American military roadmap can not go forward until both Palestine and Lebanon are pacified; this means that the Opposition and Resistance Movements of both states must be defeated. The international tribunal on the assassination of the late Rafik Al-Hariri, former Prime Minister of Lebanon, has been established precisely with that purpose in mind. It is worth mentioning that Rafik Al-Hariri was not in an official position or in the post of prime minister at the time of his assassination and that a single tribunal is being established for one individual outside of officialdom, when thousands of people, including government officials, have been murdered or have been killed because of American, British, and Israeli war crimes or actions; but no tribunal has been established to bring justice for their deaths.

The investigation into the assassination of the late Al-Hariri has been politicized and is being fashioned into a pretext for furthering the Anglo-American roadmap in the Middle East and the creation of the [“New Middle East.”](#)

U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice sums up the “game plan” in regards to the international tribunal:

“The Hariri tribunal has got to go forward. First of all, it’s under Security Council resolution. (...) Third, it’s a matter of showing that people who assassinate leaders can’t do so with impunity. The Hariri tribunal has got to go forward and I’ve heard no one in the March 14th coalition [the Future Movement and its political allies] suggest anything to the contrary,” and that “the future of Lebanon is not an issue for negotiation with anybody [signifying Iran and Syria, but also including the people of Lebanon themselves too].”

Those “people” who will be shown that they can not act “with impunity” will most probably turn out to be Syria and the forces in Lebanon that are resistant to American and Israeli objectives.

Israel has also been continuously charging that [Syria is preparing for war](#), while NATO, besides its position off of the [Syrian coast](#), has also started creeping into the [Persian Gulf](#) with a [“Persian Gulf Initiative,”](#) targeted at Iran, Syria’s ally. It is unmistakable that Lebanon and Palestine are two theatres of a broader chess game unfolding in the Middle East that must be won before the Anglo-American roadmap can progress or think of progressing towards [Syria and Iran](#) and the redrawing of the Middle East. Just as in the past, religion and patriotism have been used as both places of refuge, such as in the case of Fouad Siniora’s government in Lebanon, and pretexts; in both Lebanon and Palestine religion, self-identity, and patriotic emotions are being used and misquoted as a tool of manipulating the local populations. It will be in Lebanon and Palestine that the pace onwards towards the [“New Middle East”](#) will be determined. Thus the march towards possible war in the Middle East shifts forward from the direction of the Levant, with its besieged populations.

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MAP OF THE “NEW MIDDLE EAST”



[Map: click to enlarge](#)

Note: The following map was prepared by Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Peters. It was published in the Armed Forces Journal in June 2006, Peters is a retired colonel of the U.S. National War Academy. (Map Copyright Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Peters 2006).

Although the map does not officially reflect Pentagon doctrine, it has been used in a training program at NATO's Defense College for senior military officers. This map, as well as other similar maps, has most probably been used at the National War Academy as well as in military planning circles.

ANNEX: U.S. Secretary Condoleezza on Lebanon and the broader Middle East

The following are segments of an interview of U.S. Secretary Condoleezza Rice in which she covers American foreign policy and the political crisis in Lebanon. Although many of the State Secretary's statements are categorically misleading and deceitful, she emphasizes in diplomatic language that the United States will not surrender Lebanon from its sphere of influence. Her comments highlight the pivotal importance of Lebanon for the United States and its objectives in the Middle East—this is of course because of Lebanon's strategic value.

Ms. Rice also demonizes all forces opposing the domination of the United States in the region and labels them as extremist forces. She additionally demands that the street protests stop in Lebanon and depicts the [mass protests](#), which has involved more than a quarter of the Lebanese population, in Beirut as illicit. In contradiction to what Ms. Rice

claims, the [street protests](#) in Lebanon are a genuine sign of democratic expression and the will of the Lebanese people against foreign domination and manipulation of their country.

In reality, the United States has been supporting mass protests and calling them expressions of democracy only when they are in the favour of U.S. foreign policy and economic objectives; the United States has supported or covertly initiated street protests or “velvet revolutions” in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and as recently as early-2005 supported the Cedar Revolution or Intifada-al-Istiqlal (also called the Arab Spring) in Lebanon itself. Secretary Rice and the White House labeled the 2005 street protests as an “expression of democracy and the peoples’ will,” while they have called the current protests in Beirut as “non-peaceful” and “undemocratic.” Ms. Rice also claims that Syria is using extremist forces to oust the Lebanese government.

In respect to the Palestinians, the international principles that Condeleezza Rice also talks about in regards to the Hamas government of the Palestinians are in essence the principles of collaboration and accepting foreign manipulation—which is the road that Fatah and Mahmoud Abbas have accepted. Finally, Condoleezza Rice neglects to mention that the United States is helping arm Fatah and Mahmoud Abbas’ presidential guard and would support Fatah if they take undemocratic control of the occupied Palestinian territories and surrender further land and sovereignty to Israel.

U.S. Secretary Condeleezza Rice Interview with Agence France Presse (AFP):

[Interview With Sylvie Lanteaume and David Millikin of Agence France Presse](#)

Source: State Department of the United States of America

**Washington, District of Columbia (D.C.),
December 11, 2006**

QUESTION: Well, I’ll begin very briefly on Baker-Hamilton since I think that’s quite a topic of conversation. Has the possibility of opening unconditional direct talks with Syria and Iran, as recommended by the Baker-Hamilton report and many others in the region and beyond, been definitively taken off the table as the Administration finalizes its Iraq policy review?

SECRETARY RICE: I think that we do not think this is an issue of whether you talk to Iran or Syria, but what you’re likely to get. **The fact of the matter is that Syria is engaged in a policy that is being demonstrated right now in the streets of Lebanon, where there is an attempt to bring down the Siniora government using or supporting extremist forces in Lebanon. There has been no cooperation with the international community’s demand for an international tribunal, which is really what an awful lot of this is about. And Syria is engaged in policies that are if not 180 degrees, 170 degrees antithetical to the interests of mainstream forces in the Middle East. And we are not the only ones who recognize this. The French recognize this.** Read what Jacques Chirac has said about talks with Syria. **Look at the isolation that Syria is experiencing from moderate Arab states like Saudi Arabia and others.**

So the Syrians, if they want to stabilize Iraq, if that is in Syria’s interest to stabilize Iraq, and I assume that people — that countries understand their interests. If it’s in Syria’s interest to stabilize Iraq, then they’ll do it. If it’s not in their interest to stabilize Iraq, then they won’t or

they're looking for compensation, and I do not want to get into a circumstance in which we're talking about compensation. And I just want to take one moment here to say something. **Our friends in the Middle East, the struggling democratic forces like those of Prime Minister Siniora and the March 14th coalition in Lebanon, need to understand that we are fully and completely, along with the international community, in support of them and their goals and their legitimacy in Lebanon. And we understand what forces are trying to undo that, including Syria and Iran. And in no way is the United States going to get into a situation where it is even a conceivable notion on the part of Syria or Iran that the future of Lebanon would somehow be compromised for other interests of the United States. We're simply not going to get into that situation.**

(...)

QUESTION: In Lebanon, Madame Secretary, a compromise seems to be taking shape with Arab League support and it would give Hezbollah and its allies a blocking minority in the government. Is it something that would be acceptable?

SECRETARY RICE: We are following the discussions. I talked with Amr Moussa when he was here. There has to be a Lebanese solution to this problem and I think we have to let the Lebanese deal with it. **You know, Prime Minister Siniora is the elected leader of Lebanon and he should not be “brought down” by these [forces that are trying to undo](#) what is a democratic process. We would hope that the Lebanese would respond to the desire to find a compromise. But you know, the [Hezbollah demonstrations](#) that really, as Siniora called it, were really aimed at a kind of [coup need to stop](#). But if the Lebanese can come to a resolution of this, then you know, obviously they can come to a resolution of it. I trust Prime Minister Siniora to do what's right for Lebanon.**

QUESTION: And would—the Hariri tribunal would be—would it be a price acceptable

SECRETARY RICE: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: The existence of the Hariri tribunal.

SECRETARY RICE: **The Hariri tribunal has got to go forward. First of all, it's under Security Council resolution. Secondly, it's a matter of justice. Third, it's a matter of showing that people who assassinate leaders can't do so with impunity. The Hariri tribunal has got to go forward and I've heard no one in the March 14th coalition suggest anything to the contrary.**

QUESTION: **On the Middle East, President Bush and Tony Blair both spoke last week about the need for a renewed push on the Israeli-Palestinian front.** You've gone to the region seven times, I believe, as Secretary of State in the last two years, but the situation has deteriorated over that same period. What do you plan to do differently now to make — to get this thing moving?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, let's look at this question of deterioration. But in order to do so, if you don't mind, I have to go back a little bit. And I'm going to confine this to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. **I won't speak to the questions of the broader Middle East and the importance of democracy there, although it is extremely important.**

(...)

You also had in that same period an election which brought Mahmoud Abbas to power, but shortly, not too long after that, an election that brought Hamas to power, then a period of time in which the international community united around a set of principles to say to the Palestinian Government, the Hamas government, you must recognize Israel's right to exist, you must renounce violence and et cetera. And the international community and **Mahmoud Abbas came together around that set of principles.**

(...)

QUESTION: Well, if I can just carry that forward a bit, I mean, President Abbas has been given the green light by his movement to—

SECRETARY RICE: Can I just say one other thing?

QUESTION: Sure.

SECRETARY RICE: How long have American Secretaries of State been shuttling back and forth trying to get a Palestinian state? Has it ever worked? You have to ask: Are the fundamentals better now than they were at a time, another time in history? **I think the fundamentals are now better and I think we've got a better chance because certain fundamentals are in place.**

QUESTION: Okay, just to follow up, that he's been given the green light to call early elections. Now, are you—if that goes ahead, are you willing to accept whatever the result is of those elections?

SECRETARY RICE: We always are going to accept democratic results of democratic elections.

QUESTION: Are you confident this time you'd have a different outcome?

SECRETARY RICE: I've talked to President Abbas several times. I know that he and his advisors and others in the Palestinian political class are trying to find an answer to the political crisis that attends **Hamas's unwillingness to govern from a position that is internationally acceptable.** That's what they're trying to resolve. I think they have not fully settled on a course yet of how they might do that. But **we obviously want to support the moderate Palestinians who are represented by Mahmoud Abbas, those that are committed to the internationally accepted principles.** And once they come to a way to resolve the crisis, I am sure we'll be there to support them.

QUESTION: If we can speak about the Iran nuclear program. Is the latest European draft submitted today at the UN acceptable to you?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, it is.

QUESTION: It is? Nothing is missing? You—

SECRETARY RICE: It's not the draft that we would have drafted. That's called negotiation and

diplomacy. But it's a good resolution. It's a first-step resolution. It establishes Chapter 7, which to my mind is the most important element here. It would make very clear to the Iranians that they are **not going to be able to pursue this program and remain integrated into the international system**, and I would hope would give them pause so that they might consider coming back to negotiations.

QUESTION: So you are still optimistic a sanction resolution can be voted before Christmas?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, I am optimistic. I don't—I think it has to be voted soon. I think this has gone on long enough.

QUESTION: **The negotiations have been dragging on for a month about this resolution and during this time Iran has continued to develop its capabilities. So when do you think they will pass the point of no return?**

SECRETARY RICE: **Oh, I don't think it ever passes the point of no return. I don't think we're at the point of no return with the North Koreans, and they've tested. I don't think you ever pass the point of no return.** I think at any time reasonable people in a government can decide that they've gone down the wrong course and should change course. But I do think that it's time to pass the resolution and to make clear to the Iranians that we can, in fact, do that path or take that path and still leave the other path open to them. But it needs to happen soon. It has been long enough.

To be fair, the resolution said August 31st, but then we wanted to give the Solana efforts a little bit longer. There was also the matter of the North Korean circumstances that kind of intervened for a bit and took attention, I think, toward the North Korean issue. But the time has come.

(...)

QUESTION: **If we can go back to Lebanon, you said at the beginning that you won't do anything that could harm the future of Lebanon in exchange of anything—**

SECRETARY RICE: **I want it to be very clear that the future of Lebanon is not an issue for negotiation with anybody.**

QUESTION: So who is asking you to negotiate anything?

SECRETARY RICE: **I just—I think it's just extremely important that that be very clear. And we understand who Lebanon's enemies are and those who are trying to bring down the Siniora government.** And Lebanon—we are committed to standing by those Lebanese democrats who have risked everything in favor of Lebanese democracy and who have faced assassinations—some successful, some that were close to succeeding—**and who stood in the streets of Lebanon to get Syrian forces out. And there is no way that the United States or the international community could ever countenance a reassertion of Syrian authority in Lebanon.**

QUESTION: And what do you answer to critics who say that U.S. contributed to the extreme weakness of the Siniora government today because they didn't seek for a ceasefire soon enough during the war last summer?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, this has been a difficult political environment in Lebanon

well before the war. I think we forget the resignations of the ministers and the fact that 1559 largely came to a halt. Prior to the war, I accept responsibility for the fact that I think the international community lost focus on 1559. I really do. I think we lost focus. And that didn't help matters, but Lebanon is an extremely complex political environment.

Now, after the war, yes, there were some terrible things that happened in the war that undoubtedly made it difficult for democratic forces. But it is also, after the war, the case that **the Lebanese army is, for the first time, in control of its entire territory—for decades. The Lebanese army is in control of its territory. There is [an international force in Lebanon that is helping the Lebanese forces to extend the authority of the Lebanese Government.](#)** There is about to be a major reconstruction conference for the Lebanese in Europe shortly after the first of the year to put billions of dollars into the reconstruction of Lebanon on top of the billions of dollars that were put in for immediate relief of Lebanon.

And the Lebanese Government has in Fuad Siniora a strong, dignified spokesman for Lebanese democracy. Now, if I contrast that with 1996 when my predecessor, Warren Christopher, managed to get a ceasefire, he did it between Hezbollah and Syria. Think of that. There is actually a Siniora government in Lebanon with which we're dealing.

See, I mean, part of the problem is that we lose perspective **on the broad changes that are going on in the Middle East and how much ground has shifted and how, when changes of this kind start, they are going to—** they are turbulent.

Every day, as I watch what's going on in Lebanon, I'm pulled back in my own mind to the terrible suffering of Lebanese civilians and Israelis during that war. I wish we could have done more so that innocent civilians didn't suffer. But I also recognize that the cause of that was Hezbollah acting like a government within a government, not even telling the Siniora government that it was about to launch an attack across an international line and plunge the entire country into war.

So I think we have to recognize where the fault lies, but it doesn't make any easier the fact that I think frequently about what the Lebanese suffered in that war.

(...)

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

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