

Opinion poll: Lebanese Divided Behind Their Leaders Over Critical Matters [1/2]

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Lebanon entered a new era characterized by a general state of instability and a constant fear of attack. Indeed, the Armistice Agreement signed in 1949 did not prevent Israel from attacking Lebanon, killing innocent civilians and destroying houses and infrastructure, especially in the villages located near the border between Lebanon and Israel. The residents of these villages feared going out at particular times, especially at night.

In 1967, the Palestinian troops came to South Lebanon. Two years later, the Lebanese Government signed the Cairo Agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) granting the Palestinians the right to implement military operations against Israel from Lebanese soil (South Lebanon in particular). Since that date, all Lebanese territories, especially South Lebanon, became constantly targeted by Israel, which justified its hostility as a reaction to the operations of the armed Palestinian forces.

In March 1978, Israel invaded Lebanese territory, but did not push north into Beirut until 1982. The invasion of Beirut led to the expulsion of the Palestinian forces from Lebanon. Even though Israel withdrew from the capital later on, it maintained its occupation of a large bordering region in the South. In May 2000, Hizbullah drove the Israelis out of most of the occupied Lebanese territory.

While South Lebanon was occupied, Israel waged many attacks and wars, including one in 1993 and another more destructive one in 1996. The July-August 2006 Israeli war against Lebanon is a black mark in the modern history of Lebanon.

Justifying its hostility as a reaction to a Hizbullah operation (the abduction of two Israeli soldiers), Israel terrorized Lebanon for 33 consecutive days, massacring the Lebanese in the South and the Beqa'a, displacing hundred of thousands of civilians and destroying their homes and businesses, as well as bridges and electricity and telephone lines. This wide military operation undoubtedly took Lebanon and its people back years.

The consequences of this war will linger for years to come. Although the hostilities were stopped, the tragedies remain, and the war's political outcome has revealed real and serious divisions among Lebanese leaders and among the public.

Information International conducted an opinion poll with a sample of Lebanese (See "The Sample") concerning the war, its aftermath and all that relates to it in terms of politics and security. *Ii Monthly* publishes the results of this poll in two parts.

Part 1

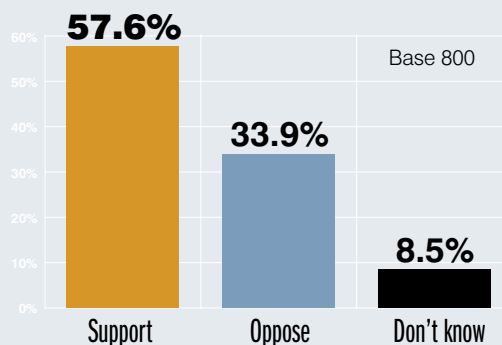
The Stance on Hizbullah's Abduction of the two Israeli Soldiers

On July 12, 2006, Hizbullah managed to abduct two Israeli soldiers from a region on the border, near the village of A'ayta Al-Cha'ab. Israel took this operation as a pretext to declare war against Lebanon.

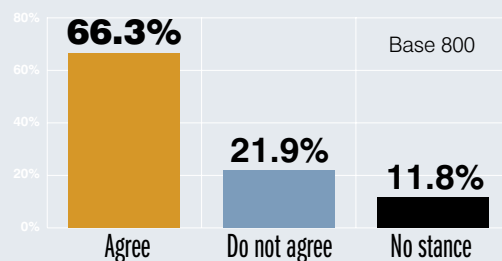
The Lebanese have various opinions about the abduction of the two Israeli soldiers. Among the respondents, 57.6% said that they support the operation, while 33.9% said they are against it and 8.5% answered "I do not know" (Graph 1).

The support for the operation can be explained by the fact that the majority of the respondents (66.3%) believe the Hizbullah's operation was only a pretext to declare war and that Israel had prepared to launch a military operation even before the abduction. On the other hand, 21.9% of the respondents believe that the abduction was the main reason behind this war and without it, Lebanon would have been completely safe, while 11.8% of the respondents said that they have no stance concerning this matter. (Graph 2)

G1|
% **What is your stance to the abduction of the 2 Israeli soldiers by Hizbullah?**



G2|
% **"Israel was preparing for the war, and the abduction of the soldiers was a pretext" What is your stance on this statement?**



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According to the distribution of the results by confession, a large majority of the Shia'a (93.6%) supports the abduction of the two Israeli soldiers. This rate is also high among the Greek Catholic confession, as 51.6% of them support the operation. As for the Druze, they constitute the religious community which supports the abduction the least (20%).

For the remaining confessions, the rates of supporters and opponents of the abduction operation are almost equal.

The distribution of the stances concerning Hizbullah's abduction of the Israeli soldiers is illustrated by confession in Table No.1.

Distribution of the Stance concerning Hizbullah's abduction of the Israeli Soldiers by Confession Table 1

Confession	Maronite	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Support	41.5 %	50 %	51.6 %	46.9 %	93.6 %	20 %
Oppose	44.7 %	39.7 %	35.5 %	43 %	3.6 %	77.8 %
"I do not Know"	13.8 %	10.3 %	12.9 %	10.1 %	2.8 %	2.2 %

The Prior Knowledge of Some Lebanese Politicians About War

When Israel expanded its attack and decided to wage a wide and destructive war against Lebanon, some officials tried to justify the Israeli reaction to what had happened, holding Hizbullah fully or partially responsible for the current events. As a result, rumors spread that some Lebanese politicians had prior knowledge of an impending war.

Even though such rumors might have been an attempt to generate a clash between the Lebanese, the majority of the respondents (47.6%) believe that such statements are true, while 26.8% think they are misleading. Moreover, 25.6% of the respondents stated that they do not know whether this information is true or false.

The majority of the Shia'a respondents (73.6%) believe that some Lebanese politicians knew about the war before it began. On the other hand, stances among the members of other confessional communities were closely divided.

The Description of War and the Stance of the United States

Each Lebanese describes this war according to his beliefs and political perspective. Some describe it as an Israeli-American war against Lebanon; others say that it is a battle between democracy and terrorism; some others describe it as a Syrian-Iranian war against Israel and the United States.

The Lebanese also have divergent opinions concerning the United States' stance during war.

The results show that the majority of the respondents (65.5%) describes this war as being an Israeli-American war against Lebanon, while 15.6%

describe it as a Syrian-Iranian war against Israel and the United States of America, 14.9% describe it as an Israeli-American war against Iran and Syria, and only a small portion (3%) describe it as a war between democracy and terrorism. Finally, 1% of the respondents did not specify their stances concerning this matter. Table 2 details the descriptions given to the war against Lebanon by confession.

This means that the majority of the respondents (83.4%) describes this war as an Israeli-American war, whether against Lebanon, or against Iran and Syria through Lebanon.

The large majority of the respondents (83.3%) accuse the United States of having supported and sided with Israel during the war, while 13% believe that the U.S. was supportive of Lebanon while opposing Hizbullah, 0.6% believe that the United States had a neutral and impartial stance during the war and 3.1% answered "I do not know".

The distribution of the results according to confessions shows big differences between the opinions of the Druze community and those of the Shia'a community.

The Description Given to the War Against Lebanon by Confession Table 2

Description	Confession	Maronite	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Israeli-American War against Lebanon		46.3 %	60.3 %	64.5 %	67.1 %	93.6 %	8.9 %
Syrian-Iranian War against Israel and the United States		26.1 %	13.2 %	9.7 %	16.9 %	0.5 %	51.1 %
American-Israeli War against Iran and Syria		21.3 %	23.5 %	19.4 %	11.6 %	5 %	33.3 %
War between Democracy and Terrorism		4.8 %	3 %	3.2 %	2.9 %	0.5 %	6.75 %
No Answer		1.5 %	-	3.2 %	1.5 %	0.4 %	-

Victory in War

Based upon Resolution 1701, all military hostilities stopped and the situation calmed down in Lebanon.

However, there were many understandings about the end of this war: the majority (59.2%) of the respondents considers the end of this war a victory for Hizbullah and Lebanon (26% think it is a victory for Lebanon and Hizbullah, 17.3% think it is a victory for Hizbullah and 15.9% think it is a victory for Lebanon), 3.7% think of it as a victory for Israel and the United States, 29.7% believe that it is no one's victory, 4.1% believe that the end of this war is a victory for Syria and Iran and 3.3% said that it is a victory for Hizbullah, Syria and Iran all together (Graph 3).

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Even though Resolution 1701 was described as “unfair” to the Lebanese and to Hizbullah by some Lebanese politicians, more than half of the respondents (57.3%) consider that Hizbullah approved it to stop the killing, the massacres and the destruction, while 30.1% said that Hizbullah approved the Resolution because they wanted to preserve national unity, 5.5% believe that Hizbullah approved because they had lost the war and become weaker, and 7.1% answered “I do not Know”.

The Most Affective Scene or Quote

During war, images and scenes of martyrs and destruction were broadcast by the thousands. Among the respondents, 20.6% stated that they were affected by the images and scenes of the Qana Massacre, 19.6% were affected by the pictures of dead women and children in general, 18.1% were affected by images of massacres, 6.1% by the destruction, 2.4% by the Marwahine massacre, 1.9% by the scene of Prime Minister Fouad Sanioura shedding tears before the Arab Foreign Ministers, and 2.8% were affected by the scene of the Israeli warship burning.

Stances on International Resolutions and the Deployment of the Lebanese Army in the South

While 89.3% of the respondents support the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the South, 77.7% support the deployment of the international forces, and 80% support Resolution 1701.

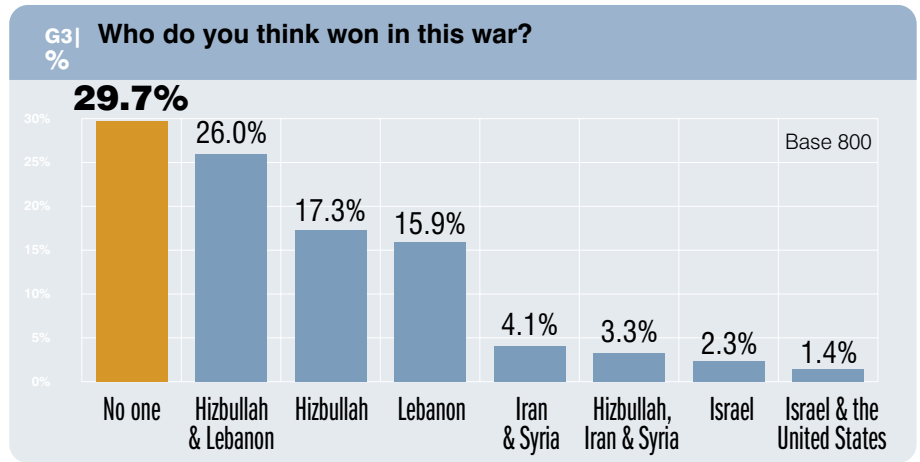
Among the respondents, 61.1% support Resolution 1559, while 49.8% support the deployment of the international forces along the Lebanese-Syrian border. These results are indicative of the way the Lebanese perceive Lebanon’s relations with Syria.

It is also noteworthy that even though Resolutions 1559 and 1701 are almost alike, most of the respondents have associated Resolution 1559 with certain political circumstances which increased the percentage of those who oppose it.

Table No.3 shows the distribution of the stances of the respondents concerning the above mentioned matters.

The Stance on Hizbullah’s Armaments

The issue of Hizbullah’s armaments has been the main



The Distribution of the Respondents’ Stances Concerning the Deployment of the Army and the International Resolutions Table 3

The Subject	The Stance	Totally Support	Supports if there was a National Agreement Concerning it	Totally Oppose	No Stance
Resolution 1559		26.1 %	35 %	35.1 %	3.8 %
Resolution 1701		29.5 %	50.5 %	14.4 %	5.6 %
Deployment of the Lebanese Army in the South		61 %	28.3 %	8.9 %	1.8 %
Deployment of International Forces in the South		43.9 %	33.8 %	18.9 %	3.4 %
Deployment of International forces on the border with Syria		29.9 %	19.9 %	44.8 %	5.4 %
The installation of international observers in Lebanese airport and sea ports		20.8 %	17.4 %	55.8 %	6 %

Lebanese topic for years now, especially after Israel withdrew from the regions it was occupying in South Lebanon in May 2000. In fact, this was one of the major matters discussed within the National Dialogue meetings which took place over the past months in the Parliament.

However, the long discussions generated no agreement or accordance concerning what should become of these armaments.

Today, the war is over and the Lebanese Army has been deployed in South Lebanon along with the international forces. Hizbullah’s armaments are once again – even more than before – a subject of urgent discussion, especially since Lebanese have divergent opinions concerning the issue.

The results show that 9.6% of the respondents support the immediate and forceful removal of Hizbullah’s armaments and their delivery to the government, while 17.4% think of Hizbullah’s armaments as a national right, 34% support the idea of having a dialogue to discuss the appropriate mechanism of removing Hizbullah’s armaments, 22.3% believe that Hizbullah’s armaments are an efficient defense mechanism that should be preserved in coordination with the government, and 11.4% support the removal of Hizbullah’s armaments after Israel withdraws from Mazarea’a Cheba’a

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(Cheba'a Farms) and frees all Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails. Also, 3.8% of the respondents support the preservation of Hizbullah's armaments until a solution is reached with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, while 1.5% said that they do not have a particular stance concerning Hizbullah's armaments (Graph 4).

In a comparison with an opinion poll conducted by *Information International* between May 13 and 18, 2006, there is a difference in the figures.

The results of the May poll showed that 15.8% of the respondents supported the immediate and forceful removal of Hizbullah's armaments and their delivery to the government, while 32% supported their removal in accordance with Hizbullah, 25.5% supported the idea of preserving Hizbullah's armaments until other defense mechanisms are found to protect Lebanon, 11.9% supported their preservation as long as Israel occupies Mazarea'a Cheba'a, 9.8% supported their preservation until a solution is reached with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict and 5% answered "I do not know".

Thus, the recent war has led to a decrease in the number of people who support the immediate and forceful removal of Hizbullah's armaments (from 15.8% to 9.6%). Also, there is less support for the idea of preserving Hizbullah's armaments until a solution is reached in the Arab-Israeli conflict (from 9.8% to 3.8%) which means that, in general, the support for the preservation of Hizbullah's armaments has increased (from 47.2% to 54.9%).

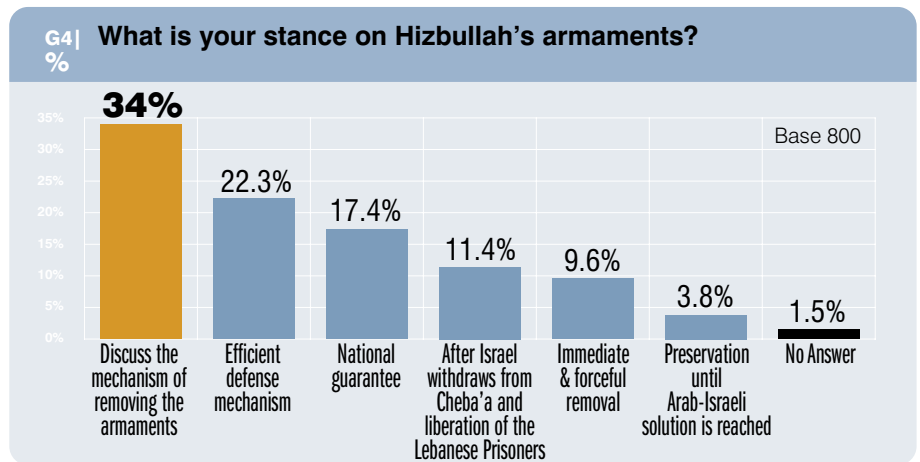
Table No.4 shows the distribution of the respondents' stances concerning Hizbullah's armaments (by confession).

According to Table No.4, the stances of the religious communities are clearly divergent from one another.

While the Shia'a respondents do not support the delivery of Hizbullah's armaments, 45.5% of them asserted that the armaments are a national right. On the other hand, only 10.6% of the Sunni respondents, as well as small percentages of the other confessions, think that Hizbullah's armaments are a national right.

The majority of the respondents (59.8%) support the saying that "Hizbullah's armaments prevent Israel from attacking Lebanon", while 30.9% of the respondents do not believe so and 9.3% answered "I do not know".

A comparison with the results of the May 2006 poll



Stance	Confession						
	Maronite	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze	
Having a dialogue to discuss the appropriate mechanism of removing Hizbullah's armaments	46.8 %	58.8 %	35.5 %	39.1 %	10.5 %	31.1 %	
Preservation of Hizbullah's armaments as an efficient defense mechanism in coordination with the government	18.1 %	14.7 %	19.4 %	19.3 %	32.7 %	13.3 %	
Preservation of Hizbullah's armaments as it is a national right	5.3 %	2.9 %	-	10.6 %	45.5 %	-	
Removal of Hizbullah's armaments after Israel withdraws from Mazarea'a Cheba'a	13.3 %	16.2 %	19.4 %	13.5 %	5 %	15.6 %	
The immediate and forceful removal of Hizbullah's armaments and their delivery to the government	14.9 %	2.9 %	9.7 %	10.6 %	-	37.8 %	
Preservation of Hizbullah's armaments until a solution is reached in the Arab-Israeli conflict	0.5 %	-	6.5 %	5.3 %	5.9 %	2.2 %	
No Answer	1.1 %	4.5 %	9.5 %	1.6 %	0.4 %	-	

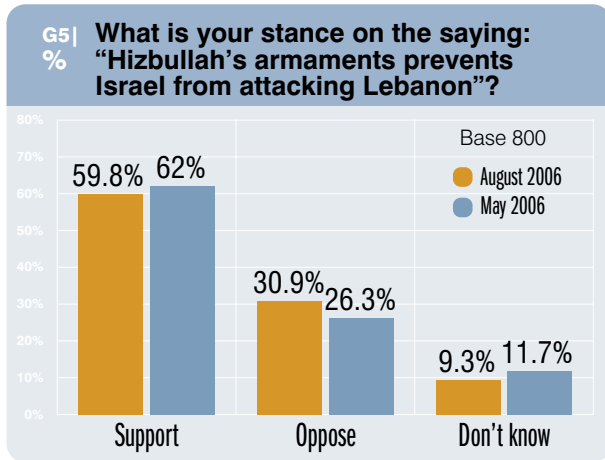
shows that there is less support for the saying that "Hizbullah's armaments prevent Israel from attacking Lebanon" (62%) and more opposition to it (26.3%) while 11.7% of the respondents back then answered "I do not know". (Graph 5)

This could indicate that the perception of Hizbullah as a defensive force has weakened, although there is still large support for Hizbullah's armaments.

While the majority of the respondents support Resolution 1701, which prohibits the existence of Hizbullah's armaments, the majority (66.1%) believes that Hizbullah will not agree to deliver their armaments, while 18.3% think that Hizbullah will deliver their armaments and 15.6% answered "I do not know".

In order to find a solution for Hizbullah and its armaments, some suggest that the members of Hizbullah can join the Lebanese Army. This solution gets the support of

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62.8% of the respondents, while it is opposed by 24.5% and 12.7% answered "I do not know". In comparison with the May 2006 opinion poll, only 43.8% of the respondents back then supported the idea of Hizbullah's members joining the Lebanese Army while 38.7% opposed it and 17.5% refused to give their stance concerning this matter. The increase in the support for such an idea can be explained as an attempt to find a solution to the issue, or as a sign of sympathy shown toward Hizbullah.

Knowing that Hizbullah owns institutions and possesses armaments, 36.8% of the respondents perceive Hizbullah as a "state within a state", while 51.6% oppose this idea and 11.6% answered "I do not know". The people's stance on this matter remains the same before and after the war. (Graph 6)

Concerning the financial aid that Hizbullah has been giving to people harmed by the war, 55.6% of the respondents believe that this is a justified and legal action, while 14.6% think that it is an attempt to buy loyalty, 19.6% consider it a substitute for what the Government has failed to offer, 9.3% think of it as a justified action but view the source of the money as illegal and 0.9% answered "I do not know" (Graph 7).

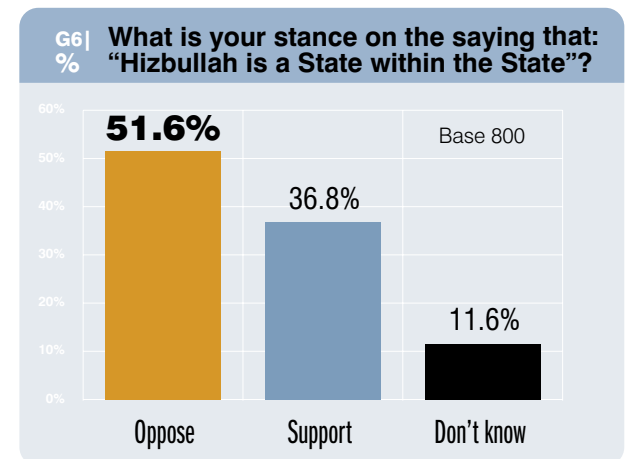
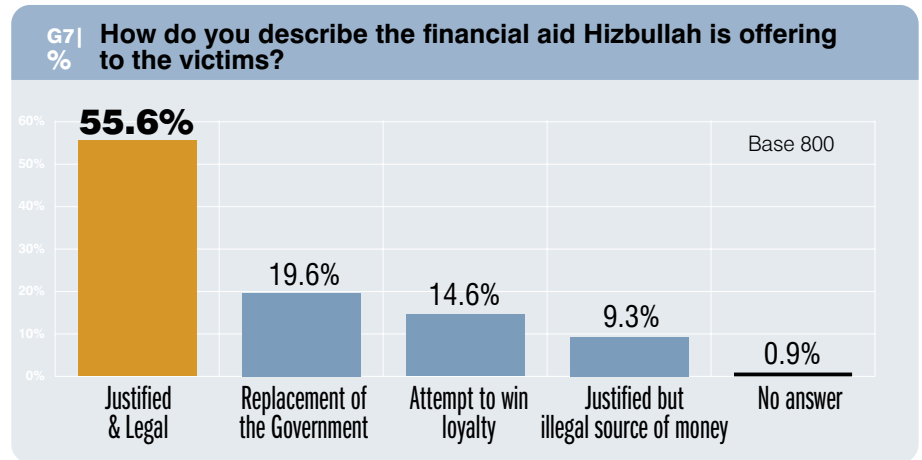
The reconstruction of all the destroyed businesses, roads and buildings was the main preoccupation of the Lebanese people. Who is going to take responsibility for this charge? The results show that 46.5% of the respondents would prefer if the Lebanese Government took charge of rebuilding what has been destroyed, 28.3% stated Hizbullah, 14.3% stated the countries who grant direct financial aid, 8.6% stated a fund run by the United Nations, 1.1% stated political leaders or "Za'im" each in his region, 0.6% stated the political "Za'im" according to their confessions and 0.6% said "I do not know".

The Relationship between Iran and Hizbullah

Hizbullah's military and financial capacities raised questions concerning the party's relations, especially with Iran.

Stances regarding this matter are almost split equally between the respondents as 45.3% of them believe the decisions that Hizbullah makes are 100% Lebanese while 41.5% do not believe so and 13.2% answered that they did not know.

As for the description of the relationship between Iran and Hizbullah, the majority of the respondents (42.4%) said it was an alliance, 24.5% said it was a relationship of subordination, 28.6% said it was a bilateral agreement understanding, while 0.6%



denied the existence of such a relationship and 3.9% answered "I do not know". (Graph 8)

The respondents were also asked about the reaction of Hizbullah if Iran is attacked by Israel or the United States. The answers came as follows: 38% said that Hizbullah would implement political and popular campaigns against the attacker, 20.3% said that Hizbullah would turn South Lebanon into a battlefield, 10.1% said that Hizbullah would send volunteers to Iran, 9.5% said that Hizbullah would implement military operations against the attackers, 7.6% said that Hizbullah would not do anything, and 14.5% said "I do not know".

These answers showed the depth of the relationship between Hizbullah and Iran.

The Personality of Hassan Nasrallah

Although there are big differences concerning the perception of Hizbullah, there is an almost general