

# A Victory for Islamism? The Second Lebanon War and Its Repercussions

[Magnus Norell](#)

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The bloody "first war" between Israel and Lebanon in 1982 rooted out the destabilizing presence of the PLO, but left Hizballah, the Iranian-backed "Party of God," in control of southern Lebanon. The "second war" involving Israeli forces on Lebanese soil took place in summer 2006 in response to a violent campaign of Hizballah rocket attacks on northern Israeli communities and a cross-border Hizballah ambush of Israeli soldiers along the Lebanese border. Despite an eventual UN-brokered ceasefire calling for the organization's disarmament, Hizballah continues to insist that the outcome of the 2006 conflict represents a clear victory for "resistance" as a strategic option for Islamists in their dealings with Israel and the West.

In *A Victory for Islamism? The Second Lebanon War and Its Repercussions*, a translation from the original Swedish, former Swedish intelligence analyst Magnus Norell argues that although Hizballah's strong position in Lebanese society keeps the bilateral conflict with Israel alive, the perception of strength and success in battle provides Hizballah with much broader reach and regional influence. Indeed today, the growing belief of Islamists that Israel can be defeated on the battlefield and forced to make political and territorial concessions has a devastating impact on current peace initiatives by the Obama administration and will continue to frustrate attempts at a negotiated solution.

Norell, who was once responsible for creating a diplomatic backchannel between Israel and Hizballah, warns that given the number of other tensions fragmenting the Middle East today -- between Sunnis and Shiites, Arabs and Israelis, Islamists and moderates, and Lebanon's own sectarian communities -- the region is in danger of a new series of armed

conflagrations and small-scale wars fed by the triumphalism of militant Islam.

[Read the author's related op-ed on Foreign Policy.com](#)

## THE AUTHOR

**Magnus Norell** is a senior analyst at the Swedish Defense Research Agency (FOI) in Stockholm and an adjunct scholar of The Washington Institute. As a recent Fulbright scholar and visiting fellow at the Institute, he focused on the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hizballah. Prior to joining FOI, Dr. Norell served as a special analyst for the Swedish Secret Service and a senior analyst for Swedish Military Intelligence. Earlier, as a research analyst at the Swedish National Defense College, he created a backchannel between Hizballah and Israel to facilitate the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. He publishes in both Swedish and English on a wide array of international security issues, including terrorism, radical Islamist extremism, the role of intelligence in counterterrorism, and UN reform.

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