


Nov 04, 2016 by [Jade Miller](#)

The Hezbollah-Israel Conflict in the World's Eyes ^[1]

USC Ph.D candidate Jade Miller argues that Hezbollah is public diplomacy's biggest winner in the ongoing Middle East dispute. She also notes the actions associated with each party involved in the conflict.

Jade Miller published a new USC Center on Public Diplomacy special report titled "[Hezbollah, Israel, and the U.S.: A Conflict with Far-Reaching Implications](#)." Click [here](#) to view the report, or [here](#)  for a PDF.

The 33-day military confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel and the subsequent cease-fire and aid operation has important public diplomacy implications not only for the two warring parties but for many other state and non-state actors. From the onset of hostilities, the conflict commanded the world's attention.

Much more than a land dispute or run-of-the-mill cross-border antagonism, the conflict encapsulated, highlighted, and exacerbated many other strains in the region and in world politics at large: the struggle of Lebanon's newly elected government to control its territory; the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict; Syrian and Iranian influence in Southern Lebanon through their support for Hezbollah; U.S. support for Israel; and associations with the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

The actions of each party associated with the Israel-Hezbollah conflict have been noticed around the world and linked to much larger trends. The public diplomacy implications from this conflict for each actor are manifold.

Following the mid-August cease-fire, Israel emerged enmeshed in negative international opinion from much of the world, but particularly in Muslim nations as a result of the conflict. Condemnation of Israel's actions in this conflict were rarely unaccompanied by condemnation of U.S. policy; the two have been conflated in the eyes of many bystanders. The idea that Israel's actions are made possible because of the tacit approval of the U.S. means that any actions taken by the Israeli government could hardly be more associated with the U.S. than if the U.S. had performed them itself. The policies of the U.S. in the Middle East and the actions of the U.S. in Iraq have been very closely attached in public discourse to the actions of Israel in southern Lebanon.

Syria, on the other hand, emerged in many ways a winner in the public diplomacy war, as its power and dominance in the region has been highlighted by many. The conflict has led many to suggest that the U.S. resume direct diplomatic relations with Syria, while commentators around the world have suggested Syria as key to solving problems in the region.

The biggest public diplomacy winner in this conflict, however, is surely Hezbollah. Among private citizens across the world with anti-American or anti-Israeli sentiments (either as a result of this or other geopolitical conflicts), Hezbollah emerged as an embodiment of resistance. Traditionally a Shiite movement, even Sunnis across Middle East expressed feelings of admiration for and even support for Hezbollah's actions. Hezbollah has used its time on the forefront of the world stage to practice public diplomacy itself, raising its image among foreign publics while it remains an extra-national organization.
