



Tragedy in South Lebanon: The Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006 by Cathy Sultan

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Reviewed by Michele Heather Pollock

In July of 2006, Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers, sparking a war between the Israel and Lebanon that victimized civilians on both sides of the border. In *Tragedy in South Lebanon*, Cathy Sultan, an American married to a Lebanese man and who once had lived in Lebanon, attempts to tell another side of the story, one neglected by the Western media.

The book recounts the history of the complex relationships between the United States, Israel, and Middle Eastern peoples such as the South Lebanese and the Palestinians. From that complex history, the book examines the events that led to the July 2006 war, the direct and indirect impact of the violence upon civilians on both sides of the Israeli-Lebanese border, and the longer term concerns of government viability in Lebanon.

The book is filled with first-person accounts of Lebanese and Israeli citizens directly impacted by the violence of the missile attacks. These help to transform war from an abstract concept into a series of real impacts, especially for those who have never experienced this kind of violence firsthand. The book also offers a perspective on the events that were completely missing from the mainstream media coverage of the events. Sultan dissects and explains who Hezbollah is and what they mean to the people of South Lebanon, softening the edges of a group viewed solely as a terrorist organization in the West to a much more complex, multi-faceted political and social service entity helping to meet the basic needs of average people in South Lebanon.

Despite all the book's good points, it does seem Sultan cannot quite help but fall victim to the very thing she criticizes in the mainstream media: a biased telling. Perhaps, since each of us comes to every situation loaded with our own histories, no human being can avoid such bias in storytelling, and the impetus falls on the reader to explore as many sources as possible to create as unbiased a picture as possible. In that case, *Tragedy in South Lebanon* commends itself by offering up a side of the story heretofore untold to Western readers.

Armchair Interviews agrees.

