Politicians By Day, Insurgents By Night: Why Hezbollah Is in The Parliament and on The Battlefield

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT

POLITICIANS BY DAY, INSURGENTS BY NIGHT: WHY HEZBOLLAH IS IN THE PARLIAMENT AND ON THE BATTLEFIELD

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This thesis argues that Hezbollah adapted a dual identity, with a political party and military wing, in order to serve and protect its constituents. It discusses the Lebanese Civil War and the environment in which Hezbollah was created. The thesis relies on the narratives in Hezbollah's leadership's speeches, as well as the evolving Manifesto, to demonstrate the underlying motives for the group's transition after the war was over in the early 1990

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Political parties are critical to the development and sustainability of representative

democracies. They represent the people's needs and wants, and balance them with the

resources available to the government. In a peaceful, calm environment, competition for

political office rarely brings violence, though tension may still be high.[1] In a state

transitioning from war to a functioning democracy, the first few elections, especially the

first post-violence one held, are critical to its development. As elections are based on

competitive principles, both internal and external watchdogs brace for the candidate or

party potentially resorting to old, violent habits to achieve their goal. It is not unusual for

an emerging state to hold elections soon after the violence subsides, sometimes even just

months after a peace agreement is approved and implementation begins. Very frequently

during these periods do new political parties emerge, sometimes out of pre-existing rebel

groups whose members had either a slight or significant role in the war. This is especially

probable when rebel groups gain legitimacy during the peace negotiating process, with

RENAMO in Mozambique as an example. Even in the cases where legitimacy is not

gained when a cease-fire is officially called, rebel groups may still pursue political ffice.[2]

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[1] Reilly, Benjamin. Political Parties and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding. *Civil wars.* 2013. pp. 88 - 104.

[2] Söderberg- Kovacs, M., From Rebellion to Politics. *Uppsala Universitet, Stockholm.* 2007

With established legitimacy or not, the intentions of those groups may not always be as clear, or garner the trust of those living within and outside their states' borders.

At the signing of the Ta'if Agreement in 1990, Lebanon began its transition from a war torn country to a developing democratic state. The first few years after the violence subsided were unsurprisingly tense and development was slower than anticipated. The identity based conflict remained, and it may be argued that it continues to be today, largely unresolved even after the violence had been generally tamed.[3] More importantly, the dialogue of how to separate political power from sectarian affiliations and support was never initiated, despite the fact that it was largely accepted as a point of contention between the various parties involved.[4] The first post-war parliamentary elections were held in 1992. The political environment was tense as most political parties were still mainly transitioning from their former identities as rebel groups. The Ta'if agreement, under Section III, established that all non-state groups must disarm and all but one did.[5] Hezbollah, or Party of God, was the only one to refuse to give up its arms despite both domestic and international pressures to do so. Despite the pressure placed on Hezbollah to disarm by Israel as well as the United States and various domestic players in Lebanon, the Lebanese military perceived the group as a balancing act to the presence of the Israeli Defense Front, which would remain deployed in the established security zone in the south

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[3] Leonard, Madeleine Schooling in conflict: an ethnographic study from Lebanon. *International journal of sociology and social policy*. 2010/2011. p. 543 - 554.
[4] *ibid*
[5] Krayem, Hassan. The Lebanese Civil War and the Taif Agreement. *American University of Beirut.* 1995. http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/conflict-resolution.html

of the country until 2000.[6] Additionally, as the third party implementer of the Ta'if

Agreement, Syria, was supportive of Hezbollah, the group did not feel the need to

succumb to any other power's wishes. In 1992, Hezbollah aimed to further strengthen its

existing political identity, which mainly focused on local issues at the time, and entered

state politics, supporting candidates from the three main regions in Lebanon where it

maintained control, specifically Bekaa in northeastern Lebanon, Nabatieh in the south

and several southern parts of Beirut.[7]

This thesis will explore the reasons that led to Hezbollah's adoption of a dual

identity within Lebanese society starting in 1992, and as ongoing today. It will focus on

why a non-state armed group becomes involved in the political environment of its

community and state, by all means evolves into a legitimate political party, yet all the

while maintains an active military wing. In Hezbollah's case, the armed component is

undoubtedly costly, as it includes thousands of trained and well-organized soldiers and a

rumored large arsenal. The thesis will take a close look at the narrative that Hezbollah has

used to justify its existence in both capacities, specifically around the first election they

participated in back in 1992. The argument that the thesis aims to test is two-folds. First,

given the history of the largely marginalized and underserved Shi'aa Muslim population

in Lebanon, Hezbollah became politically active after the war was over in order to

influence the government and guide the economic and social policies to better serve those

living in the poorest regions, coincidentally the group's controlled areas. As discussed

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[6] Saouli, Adham. Lebanon's Hizbullah: the quest for survival. *World affairs (Washington)*. 2003.166 (2), p. 71.

[7] Wiegand, Krista E. Reformation of a terrorist group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese political party. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism.* 2009. 32.8. pp. 669-680.

later, Hezbollah's political rhetoric focused on 'Islamization' of Lebanon and serving its own mission and that of its constituents. The second question that this thesis addresses is why Hezbollah maintains its military wing and has continued to strengthen it and its arsenal over time. It argues that Israel's physical presence in some Hezbollah controlled territory poses a threat to the community, giving the group no choice but to stay armed. Even after the Lebanese civil war was officially over in 1990, Israel maintained deployed IDF soldiers in an area in Nabatieh, also known as the security zone. Until 2006, the south of Lebanon was almost completely devoid of any Lebanese military presence, save for the powerless and largely ineffective Southern Lebanese Army. Though Lebanese troops are now found posted at the border, they have not traditionally protected the Shi'aa Muslim population living in that region when its security was threatened. Instead, the Lebanese military's leadership supported Hezbollah's arguments for maintaining their own armed wing and until 2000, did little to change the status quo.

This thesis will begin with a description of various events that occurred during the Lebanese Civil War that led to the formation of Hezbollah. It will then introduce and discuss the existing literature addressing the transitioning of organizations from non-state armed rebel groups to legitimate political parties. While some of the studies have solely focused on what determines whether a rebel group will become a spoiler or legitimately participate in the political process, others have examined what must occur for an organization to have a successful transition. Various schools of thought exist when it comes to what influences a group to change. Some argue that the environment of the state or community in which a group is found, are the most influential factors for this decision,

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especially if not adapting to the external sphere might render them powerless. Other studies argue that individual member mentality and goals, in other words, internal influences, matter much more than external ones. Other research argues the evolution occurs within the organizations if they gain legitimacy both domestically and internationally. Finally, and most relevant to this thesis, some studies have focused on the reasons why some rebel groups have chosen to become politically active while maintaining a military wing. The research in this thesis not only explores the motives behind Hezbollah's decision to adopt a dual role, it also examines the results of such a decision years down the line. What happens to a group when it can sustain itself as both a political and military wing, especially as both endeavors tend to be highly costly and seldom successful, especially in an unstable environment?

Chapter Six will address the first part of the argument presented in this introduction. It will closely examine why Hezbollah decided to divert some of its resources and enter the political arena. The chapter will explore the living standards of Hezbollah's largest voter base, mainly those living in the regions they control. It will compare the living standards in Nabatieh, Northern Lebanon and Bekaa Valley, both immediately after the end of the war, and then years later.. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Six, the party's rhetoric during the first post-war election was focused on bettering the lives of the Shi'aa population as well as the 'Islamization' of Lebanon. This chapter will also discuss Hezbollah's biggest triumphs in the Parliament, as well as its growing influence and power over policy-making and effective governing. It intends to shed light on the reasons why Hezbollah undertook the challenge of breaking into the

political scene in Lebanon. It will examine the tone and language used over time to explain motive and action taken in policymaking or challenging other politicians.

Chapter Seven will address the second part of the argument; specifically physical security being the main reason Hezbollah has and continues to refuse to disarm. It will discuss Hezbollah's public discourse on Israel over time, as it perception of the threat presented by the Jewish State evolves over time and the use of fear mongering to maintain public support for the sustainability of its non-state military wing. It will closely examine Nasrallah's messages and narratives in interviews and public statements regarding the Islamic Resistance's activities and plans over time, especially around the three major, albeit at times short, violent wars that have escalated between Israel and Hezbollah since the end of the civil war in 1990. The three wars are 1993's Operation Accountability, 1996's Operation Grapes of Wrath and 2006's unnamed, 34-day war. In 2000, Israel officially withdrew from the last parts of Lebanon that it occupied since it invaded the country in 1982, at the height of the civil war that threatened its borders. This chapter will shed light on Hezbollah's activity militarily as well as the changing rhetoric regarding the safety of the Lebanese population as a whole. Lastly, this chapter will examine the relationship between Hezbollah and the established, albeit weak, Lebanese military in order to determine whether the latter has sufficiently, over the years and when necessary, provided adequate security to the Lebanese Shi'aa community that the rebel group claims to protect.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Political parties are critical to the success of democratic governments, especially those undergoing transitions from war to nonviolence. As history has shown, one of the most common strategies to attempt to speed up the peace process is by international and domestic institutions organizing and monitoring postwar elections as soon as possible after conflicts deescalate.[8] In various post-violence states, political parties often emerge from pre-existing rebel groups that fought during the war. Existing literature has dissected the various factors that influence the decisions made by these groups. Some social scientists argue that the structure of the organization itself is critical to the success of the transition, while others believe that the external environment, both politically and socially, are the most important factors to consider when one tries to understand such groups. Other social scientists argue that the changes that happen must begin at the micro level within the organization, though two schools of thought debate exactly who drives the other; as in members or leadership. Some argue that individual members, and their own agenda, significantly influence the group to decide whether or not it would become politically active. The other school of thought believes that it all lays with the leadership, while the lower-ranked members follow suit and adjust their goals based on the overall

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[8] Höglund, Kristine The predicament of elections in war-torn societies. *Democratization*. 2009. 16 (3), p. 530 - 557.

mission's direction. For some social scientists, the transition may never be clearly established or fully complete.

When it comes to what prompts a transition in a rebel group to occur, not all experts are in agreement. Some argue that the political environment, whether it is the push to establish a democratic system early on, specifically by elections, can put enough pressure on a group to change. In "Demilitarizing Politics: Elections on the Uncertain Road to Peace", Terrence Lyons describes the importance of establishing interim institutions that would carefully manage the transition from violence to the first post-war elections. As the latter are based on competition, it is crucial to prevent the creation of an environment that would encourage ex-combatants and rebel groups to revert back to old warring ways.[9] Lyons argues that elections usually create incentives and opportunities for rebel groups to transform, though the earlier the process of their demilitarization begins, the more likely they are to peacefully and successfully enter their states' political realm. According to Lyons, the decision for rebel groups to become politically involved and transform the way they pursue their goals is carefully calculated, and various factors are involved in the process.[10]

Is creating a suitable political environment enough for a rebel group to consider new avenues? Carrie Manning, in "Armed Opposition Groups into Political Parties: Comparing Bosnia, Kosovo and Mozambique", does not necessarily agree that it is enough to inspire a change in strategy in groups. Instead, she argues that rebel groups are

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[9] Lyons, T., & Faculty Author Collection. *Demilitarizing politics : Elections on the uncertain road to peace*. **Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner**. 2005.
[10] *ibid*

more likely to transition into political parties if their existence or relevancy is challenged by not doing so.[11] For Manning, external sponsors of the groups play a critical role in the transition of the identities. Much like Lyons, she argues that external political environmental factors heavily influence whether a rebel group will transition, but it is the notion that the group will lose its credibility that she believes is the most critical element in whether or not they do so. Furthermore, according to Manning, the rebel groups emerging from identity-based conflicts are also likely to choose a different path than those moving on from another type of conflict. While some studies focused on the motives that would influence a push from rebellion to politics, others dug deeper into the actual changes that must occur within the organization before any significant shifts occur. External environments are not enough to ensure that an organization will transition; the mentality and motivations of the members are just as, if not more, important. In "From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebels Movements After Civil War", Jeroen de Zeeuw discussed what he believes are the main factors that influence whether a rebel group will transition into a political party or not.[12] de Zeeuw argues that the de-escalation of violence and whether these groups are involved in any of the peace talks, as well as the domestic and regional contexts in which they are found and much like Carrie Manning, the role of the international community are all deciding factors in the process. To de Zeeuw, the 'then what' question is critical to examine, it is not enough that credibility is in question, as Manning argues, what happens next is. According to de Zeeuw, the

[11] Manning, Carrie. Armed opposition groups into political parties: Comparing Bosnia, Kosovo, and Mozambique. *Studies in comparative international development*. 2004. 39 (1), p. 54 - 76
[12] de Zeeuw, J. From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements after Civil War. *Lynne Reinner, Boulder.* 2007.

process must be two folds; structural and attitudinal. Within the structural part, the group must demilitarize and can only do so once the members of the group, especially the leadership, shift their behavior from militancy to diplomacy in order to adjust to the changing external environment.

Before the intricate internal factors are examined, however, Andy Knight considers one more important external factor that could help predict the success of the transition of groups. What Manning, Lyons and de Zeeuw do not consider that Andy Knight sheds light on is the perception and reception of the citizens in the controlled areas and rest of the state of these transitioning groups. Is the political environment and changing mentality of the group important? Absolutely, but what about the trust of the people who endured a war but may not have actively participated in it? In "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview", Andy Knight discusses the importance of successful reintegration of ex-combatants into society once the violence subsides and peace agreements are implemented.[13] That said, he demonstrates the effects of the support of the civilian population to the process, and its ultimate narrative shifting influence should the latter refuse to help with the process. This study is critical to this thesis, as Hezbollah's constituents have and continue to support the group's political and military moves, despite not always directly benefitting from them. No peaceful transition can occur before rebels are welcomed back into society, and no political parties can be successful unless enough of the populace views them positively and supports them. In "Political

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[13] Andy Knight. "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview." *African security*. 2008. 1 (1), p. 24 - 52.

Parties in Conflict-Prone Societies", Benjamin Reilly describes the strategy that some

parties take when creating their new identities as based ultimately on the constituents

they care to represent. Some parties have catch-all strategies, which he describes as

meant to elicit multiregional support that extends across ethnic or religious groups. Other

parties, on the other hand, are more interested in catering to one ethnic group, and their

narrative during and after elections will reflect their preference.[14] By examining

narratives in interviews and political campaigns, it is evident that Hezbollah's targeted

populations are at first limited to the Shi'aa Muslims living in their communities, and as

they became more powerful and identify new platforms in which they can increase their

influence, the rhetoric became about serving all of Lebanon. Both Benjamin Reilly and

Andy Knight argue that the way society perceives the groups and their individual

members is vital for the evolution to even begin. Suitable political environment or not, if

civilians do not believe in the legitimacy of the group and its members, the latter may

have a very short-lived political career.

In his paper, "Political Parties and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding", Benjamin Reilly

reaffirms the necessity of a multiparty system for the success of a government based on

democratic principles.[15] This is especially important in transitional democracies, even if

the parties are originally created out of rebel groups. In his paper, Reilly discusses the

immaturity of the structural systems in such parties and stresses that development must

occur to guarantee any sort of sustainable success, for both parties and democratic

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[14] Reilly, Ben., and Nordlund, Per. *Political Parties in Conflict-prone Societies : Regulation, Engineering and Democratic Development*. Tokyo ; New York: **United Nations UP,** 2008. Print.
[15] Reilly, Benjamin. Political Parties and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding. *Civil wars*. 2013. pp. 88 - 104.

system. To be successful, these groups must learn to evolve quickly into strategic

political parties that revert to diplomacy, not violence, when attempting to reach their end

goals.[16]

While evolving rebel groups can be critical to a successful young democracy,

various experts have dissected the internal factors that drive the transition from within.

Some argue that the individual members and their own interests heavily shape the future

of the group, while others believe that it all occurs from the top down. Regardless, it is

important to consider the motives of the individual members of rebel groups when trying

to understand whether an organization will be successful politically or not, or even,

whether it will get involved in the political platform or otherwise continue to challenge it.

What de Zeuw begins to explore in his study, Joseph Schlesinger digs deeper into in "On

the Theory of Party Organization". Structurally and mentally, rebel groups must

experience internal change before the organization transitions as a whole. Schlesinger

describes party members as falling into two main groups; those pursuing ideology and the

others seeking political office.[17] Even in democracies with a long-standing history of

non-violent times, members' personal pursuits heavily affect the success of parties as

well as their ongoing participation in the political system. The members interested in the

ideology of the institutions they belong to are less likely to respond to the current voter

market interests, negating what Andy Knight and Benjamin Reilly believe is an important

factor for the success of the transition. On the other hand, members who are more driven

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[16] *ibid*

[17] Schlesinger, Joseph A. On the Theory of Party Organization. **The Journal of politics**. 1984. 46 (02), p. 369 - 400.

by their goals of attaining political office are more prone to respond to constituents, even if the ladder may not always be faithful to the institutions that the candidates belong to.[18] In "Political Parties: Organization and Power", Angelo Panebianco's research gives a similar analysis of the member/party dynamic as Schlesinger's study. In this paper, Panebianco discusses how parties come to evolve in order to adapt to changing environments and social demands. Much like Schlesinger, he argues that they transition to better suit the various members that belong to them.[19] That said, Panebianco claims that the shift is from a "system of solidarity" to a "system of interest" in which parties shift from focusing on a common ideology to organizations that act as mediums between the various members' goals and aspirations.[20] To Panebianco, individual members with their own agendas may have enough influence to shift the mission of the group, but it will up to the organization as a whole to want to adapt to both internal and external changes for any movement to occur.

In "Swords Into Plowshares: The Organizational Transformation Of Rebel Groups Into Political Parties", John Ishiyama links the transformation of political parties in peaceful environments to the transitions that Panebianco describes to that some rebel groups must experience in order to effectively and successfully join the political platform.[21] This pursuit, according to Ishiyama, creates pressures on the internal structure to change. If the existing establishment does not adapt to its new political and social

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[18] *ibid*

[19] Panebianco, A. Political Parties: Organization and Power. *Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.* 1988.

[20] *ibid*

[21] Ishiyama, John "Swords into plowshares: The organizational transformation of rebel groups into political parties". *Communist and post-communist studies*. 2011. 44 (4), p. 369 - 379.

environment, it is unlikely to be successful in the long run.[22] In his chapter titled "Sri

Lanka: the Continued Armed Struggle of the LTTE" in the compilation book, "From

Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements After Civil War", Chris Smith

gives a great example of a rebel group with an established, centralized military leadership

that was very unsuccessful in becoming part of the political system, using Ishiyama's

theory in a real world example. According to his paper, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam (TTLE) failed to adapt to a post-violence environment, as its politically motivated

members were not able to challenge the established internal structure of the group.[23] The

political and military wings never seemed to sync objectives or goals, the transition to

adapt was never thus successful as the divide between the two different identities was

never remedied.[24]

Despite how great the newly transitioned political parties' success in the political

realm may be, whether the organization fully transforms is not always clear initially. In

"From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements after Civil War", De

Zeeuw discusses the various levels of transitions that a rebel group may undergo in order

to adapt to its changing environment. He categorizes the evolutions into three groups.

First is the successful transformation where a rebel group fully demilitarizes and becomes

a political party that is fully invested in its new identity and pursuing its goals using in

peaceful. The second type is the partial transformation, for which he uses Hezbollah

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[22] *ibid*

[23] Smith, Chris. Sri Lanka: the Continued Struggle of the LTTE. Published in Zeeuw, Jeroen
De. *From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements after Civil War*. **Boulder, Colo.:
Lynne Rienner,** 2008. Print.

[24] *ibid*

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specifically as an example. By partially transitioning, rebel groups adopt two identities, both the political and military pursuits at the same time.[25] Lastly, some groups do not actually transition at all, but humor their environment enough to seem to have done so. De Zeeuw describes this transformation as a façade transition, and demonstrates that the internal structure of such groups remains intact despite the end of the war and the rest of the state's transition to peace. Furthermore, De Zeeuw argues that those rebel groups tend to be, the more likely to spoil the political process and force their communities and countries back into war.[26]

In her chapter titled "Palestine: Hamas' Unfinished Transformation" in the compilation book, "From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements After Civil War", Pamela Scholey describes the partially transformed rebel group Hamas as it tried to effectively balance its political wing's ambitions with its military wing's objectives.[27] Much like De Zeeuw and Manning, Schoeley argues that Hamas began their transition to a political party and entered, successfully, their first elections in 2006 in order to remain relevant. In her paper, she demonstrates that the group's political involvement narrative is based on their awareness of the economic hardships that their constituents have endured due to the Israeli occupation.[28] In contrast, she argues that their ongoing military actions are based on the fact that they have deemed their struggle to be

[25] Zeeuw, Jeroen De. *From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements after Civil War*. **Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner,** 2008. Print.
[26] *ibid*
[27] Scholey, Pamela. "Palestine: Hamas' Unfinished transformation" in Zeeuw, Jeroen De. *From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements after Civil War*. **Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner,** 2008. Print.
[28] *ibid*

anti-colonial and have maintained this message since their creation after Palestine's first Intifada in 1988, with that drawing many members who were not always interested in political participation. In order to appease all of their supporters, Hammas adapted two distinct identities and experienced a partial transformation.[29]

This thesis demonstrates that various schools of thoughts regarding the delicate transitions of groups from insurgency to politics are applicable in Hezbollah's case. In 1993, many external factors played a significant part in Hezbollah's decision to join the political platform. The political environment was suitable for new groups to enter the scene, even if they were transitioning rebel groups. As Lyons argues, there must be a process established for a new government to be created to ensure a peaceful integration of rebel groups into the political scene. In the early 1990s in Lebanon, the signing of the Ta'if Agreement which clearly set the path for the transition from a warzone to a nonviolent state, as well as its enforcement, helped set the stage for any new party to enter the system. Much like Carrie Manning's argument about the fear of losing validity, Hezbollah's leadership had limited options for remaining legitimate, and shifted away over time from its sole identity as a non-state armed group, even going as far as updating its manifesto to include pro-democratic governance language. Citizen support was very critical to their success, as unlike some of the groups discussed by Knight and Reilly, Hezbollah was not a favorite for internal and external players outside their controlled areas, as is described in Chapter Six.

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[29] *ibid*

Internal factors also heavily influenced the change, especially when one considers the leadership at the time. As the chapter discussing the political involvement of Hezbollah in Lebanese politics explains, Nasrallah's support of a peaceful integration into various parts of the country's governing bodies was critical from the start. The leadership of the group not only recognized the need to become politically involved as critical to the survival of the group, the shift from working solely in the interest of the Lebanese Shi'aa population to include the rest of the sects was just as strategic. Though as much as the group resembles a traditional political party, its transition has not been full, remaining purposefully partial as it maintains its military wing. Hezbollah's political and military agendas are not always clear, especially as the group never publicly shares the latter. Though much light has been shed on this topic, Hezbollah's success in maintaining both wings for over twenty years is perplexing and intriguing.

What the existing literature fails to touch on is whether groups that undergo partial transitions are capable of sustaining their dual identities in the long term. It is undoubtedly costly to maintain a successful political party in almost any state today. It is even more expensive, one would presume, to sustain an organized military and an arsenal. Hezbollah has, for at least the previous twenty-six years, been able to maintain both, though the specific amount spent on either remains based on unconfirmed speculations. Some of the literature discussed above touches on the influence of international players' roles in determine whether a groups will undergo a transition, though the research rarely touches on whether the relationship ever changes, and if it does, how it would affect the status and mission of the group. One of the gaps also found

in the existing literature that will be discussed in this paper is the relationship between the armed wing of the partially transitioned groups and the state's established military. How much power does the state's army, which may be the only one recognized as a legitimate group internationally, have over the non-state military wings? What are the odds of a civil war reigniting if both military players do not cooperate? What type of environment or deal must be available for them to absorb one another and become a party? Does it always end with the state's military disarming the non-state's army? This thesis discusses the dynamics between Hezbollah's military wing and the Lebanese army over time, and the external factors that have led the latter to exist despite disarming all other rebel groups once the civil war was over.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Due to personal and safety reasons, no first person interviews or on the ground research were conducted for this thesis. As Hezbollah only has a minimal number of members and considers everyone else to be supporters, the challenges of receiving information directly from the source were significant. The author, due to work commitments, was unable to spend more than a week in Lebanon during the summer of 2015 and thus was unable to establish direct and meaningful relationships with constituents living in Hezbollah controlled areas. The data and research used for this thesis, therefore, are mainly drawn from secondary sources. In addition, it is important to note that while Hezbollah is open about the group's political mission, it is much less so when it comes to the military wing's goals and activity. Little is shared in interviews, public statements or correspondence outside of the small member group directly involved in the Islamic Resistance. This has presented its challenges when it comes to a full analysis of the military wing's mission evolution over time as the environment changed. Therefore, the author relied heavily on analyzing any information available publically through interviews or speeches. While this may not directly link to military wing activity over time, it has shed some light at the group's attitude towards other domestic and international powers, specifically those that have a keen interest in sustainability of the Islamic Resistance.

Chapter Six will offer a bird eye view of Hezbollah's main voter base, a look into the changed language of the group's Manifesto as well as the tone and message in the leadership's public messages over time. This thesis will rely heavily on pre-existing data collected by various studies focused on the standards of living and economic status of all three Hezbollah-controlled shortly after the war ended in 1990, and then years later. This chapter will also include narrative analysis of the original and updated manifesto that was published in 1994. It aims to understand the evolution of the political stance the group experienced over time as the electoral atmosphere changed and its leadership attempted to adapt to the Lebanese populace's attitude towards sectarianism. Chapter Six also includes data and information gathered from various articles and studies depicting the group's political evolution and quickly increasing power and control over the Parliament. As a result, it will offer insight on Hezbollah's influence over policymaking, country leadership and overall development of the group mentality and mission.

In Chapter Seven, the thesis will rely on news articles, Human Rights Watch and United Nations Interim Front in Lebanon (UNIFIL) reports as well as other independent evaluations of the Operation Accountability, Operation Grapes of Wrath, and the untitled 2006 war. It will also rely on similar sources to describe the current state of Hezbollah's military wing and their involvement in the war in Syria. Unfortunately, due to the fact that Hezbollah is especially discreet about the military wing's activities and future plans, it is almost impossible to gain intelligence or insight into their real goals, intentions, funding sources and arsenal size and sophistication. Therefore, Chapter Seven relies heavily on external sources that are main report based on observation, third party

descriptions and at times, undisclosed sources, which are usually so because of safety concerns at the time of interview or writing. As mentioned earlier in this section, this chapter relies on analyzing the interviews and speeches Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah has given over time, especially around or during period of time when significant events are taking place, during any or at the end of any of the three wars with Israel, as an example.

CHAPTER 4: FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO PARLIAMENT

In a nation with half the population of New York City, approximately 18 religious sects are legally recognized in Lebanon.[30] While over 95% of its population ethnically identifies as Arab, most individuals are more likely to disclose their specific faith before mentioning their Lebanese citizenship[31]. The country's close proximity to the often-volatile Middle East has contributed to its unstable political and economic circumstances. In the wake of its independence from France in 1943, Lebanese politicians designed and implemented a power-sharing agreement that would be proportionally representative of the population at the time.[32] The National Pact, as it became known, specified that the president may only be Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of the parliament a Shiaa Muslim.[33]

The social cleavages that were based in the National Pact were not limited to politics.[34] Youth groups, schools, sports clubs and charitable organizations mostly aligned with specific religious groups. Similarly, besides the capital city of Beirut,

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[30] Lebanon – Religious Sects. **Global Security.**
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/lebanon/religious-sects.htm
[31] Lebanon Demographics Profile 2014. **Index Mundi**
http://www.indexmundi.com/lebanon/demographics_profile.html
[32] Lebanon – Party of God. **Frontline/World.** 2003
http://www.indexmundi.com/lebanon/demographics_profile.html
[33] *ibid*
[34] Chamie, Joseph. The Lebanese Civil War: An Investigation into the Causes. **World Affairs.** 1976/1977 Vol. 139, No. 3. pp. 171-188

inhabitants from the same religious groups mainly occupied towns and cities.[35] Even

socially, the Christian community identified closely with the European cultural norms

while their Muslim counterparts leaned more towards Arab traditions.[36] Even marriage

and family traditions differed from group to group, with numbers of children per woman

varying widely from Christians to Sunni Muslims to Shiaa Muslims.[37] In 1971, the

birthrate for Catholic women between the age of 15 and 49 was 5.2. It was 6.9 for Sunni

women and 8.5 for Shiaa women.[38] Needless to say, by 1975, Lebanon's religious

demographic was significantly different from thirty years earlier and the political sphere

ceased to fairly represent the population.[39]

The Lebanese Civil War

The combination of the rapid growth of the Shi'aa minority, coupled with the

influx of over 300,000 Palestinian refugees and few resources to adequately support

them, proved to be too trying for an already fragile government. The country slipped into

a civil war that resulted in over a 100,000 deaths, 600,000 emigrations and the creation of

an internationally designated terrorist group; Hezbollah.[40] The violence erupted in 1975

when an armed political group, the Phalangists, attacked a bus in Beirut and killed all its

passengers, most of whom happened to be Palestinian refugees.[41] Within a year, the

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[35] *ibid*

[36] *ibid*

[37] *ibid*

[38] *ibid*

[39] *ibid*

[40] The Lebanese Demographic Reality. ***Lebanon Information Center.*** 2013
http://www.lstatic.org/PDF/demographenglish.pdf

[41] Lebanon Profile: A Timeline. ***BBC News.*** 2015. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14649284

Lebanese capital became the setting of a brutal and violent civil conflict between the

Christian and the Muslim communities.[42] In June of 1976, in fear of the war spilling over

the Syrian border and into its own state, Syrian President Hafez Al Assad's troops joined

the conflict and sided with the Christian groups. Soon after, the conflict came to an end as

a result of a meeting within the Arab League and 40,000 troops from various Arab

countries were sent in as peacekeepers.[43]

In 1979, however, as the underlying issues of the conflict remained unaddressed

and mostly unresolved, tensions rose again and the violence was reignited. Regional

instability, border clashes and a struggling economy, mixed with a marginalized majority

all contributed to a much longer civil war.[44] The conflict would last a little more than a

decade and the international community, in addition to the Arab League, would get

involved. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and focused its attacks mainly in areas where

Palestinian refugees resided. During the same year, Israeli-backed Bashir Gemayel,

whose father established and led the Phalangist political party, was elected president and

assassinated before taking office. The death of Gemayel prompted one of the worst

massacres in Lebanon as members of the Phalangist party raided a Palestinian camp and

killed hundreds of refugees.[45] By the end of 1982, with no end in sight to the war,

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[42] Lebanon. *Frontline World. PBS.* 2003.
http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/lebanon/tl01.html
[43] *ibid*
[44] *ibid*
[45] Bugh, Glen Richard. Lebanon. *Encyclopedia Britannica.*
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/334152/Lebanon/279120/Civil-war

French, Italian and American troops were deployed as peacekeepers in the country.[46] The international intervention, however, would only exacerbate the heavily divided sectarian groups as the Western powers were generally viewed as allies to the Christian militia.[47]

As the American led Western intervention struggled to contain the violence, Iran provided over 1,000 Revolutionary Guards to help arm, train and support the struggling Shi'aa community.[48] As Shi'aa militia became organized, more and more radicalized men began to join a newly created group, Hezbollah. Led by cleric-poet Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah and financially supported by Iran, the organization took no time before it launched Jihad over the American troops in Lebanon.[49] In 1983, 60 people, including 17 Americans, died after a heavily loaded truck exploded at the US Embassy in Beirut. As a response, the Reagan administration sent another 2,000 Marines into the country. In October 1983, Hezbollah responded to the heavy military presence by sending a truck bomb into the Marine barracks, killing more than 200 servicemen.[50] In the aftermath of the attack, US foreign policy towards Lebanon was changed, prompting American troops and personnel to leave the country, giving Hezbollah their first major win in battle.[51] In 1990, the Ta'if Agreement brings the war to an end and establishes Syria as a third party peace implementer.

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[46] Lebanon Profile: A Timeline. **BBC News**. 2015. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14649284

[47] *ibid*

[48] Lebanon. **Frontline World. PBS**. 2003. http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/lebanon/tl01.html

[49] *ibid*

[50] *ibid*

[51] *ibid*

The Party of God

Hezbollah, or "Party of God", issued its founding manifesto in 1985, as a direct response to Israel's invasion of the country two years earlier.[52] The Middle East was, at the time, experiencing a rise in political Islam, which began with the Iranian revolution and slowly became an influential force in the rest of the region.[53] As the Lebanese civil war became increasingly violent, Muslim Shi'aa groups in the country felt the brunt of the fighting, and looked externally for help. Several militant groups began forming, though none were as well-organized or well-funded as some of their Christian and Sunni counterparts. The Amal Movement, led by Nabih Berri, was among the most prominent and would eventually become Hezbollah's major opponent. Tension between the Shi'aa groups was high, as some favored an Iranian alliance while others preferred maintaining their distance.

The group was formed initially in the southern parts of Lebanon, right along the border with Israel. Today, its activities can be found in the predominantly Shi'aa heavy areas, mainly in the southern districts in Beirut, south of Lebanon and in the Northeast, specifically, the Bekaa Valley.[54] Despite its categorization as a terrorist group, Hezbollah enjoys a significant amount of political and economic influence in the country. In fact, since 1992, its members have consistently held anywhere between 8 to 10 seats out of

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[52] Masters, Jonathan et al. Hezbollah. *Council on Foreign Relations.* 2014
http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155
[53] Avon, Dominique., Khatchadourian, Anaïs-Trissa, Todd, Jane Marie, and Ebrary, Inc.Hezbollah : A History of the "party of God". **Harvard University Press.** 2012.
[54] *ibid*

128 in the parliament.[55] In 2008, the group was granted veto power as a result of the Doha Agreement, which ended an 18-month long political crisis that prevented the country from having a president in office. [56]

Currently, Hezbollah is found in the southern region of Lebanon, southern Beirut and the northeast region of the country that borders Syria, Bekaa Valley. According to a report published in 2013 by the United Nations' Refugee Agency, the most impoverished areas in Lebanon are in fact the ones Hezbollah occupies.[57] A study published by the International Poverty Center in 2008 further bolstered this finding and indicated that 46% of the entire Lebanese population lived in extreme poor conditions and 38% of the entire poor population lived in Bekaa Valley. The South did not fare much better, with 42% of the population living in poverty.[58]

After the attacks on the US embassy in 1983 and on the Marine barracks in 1984 that left over 240 military personnel dead, Hezbollah continued to violently assert itself within and outside of Lebanon.[59] In 1992, it claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina that killed about 29 individuals.[60] Two years later, 85 people died after the group bombed a Jewish community center in Argentina.[61] In 2005, Hezbollah was linked to Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's death

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[55] *ibid*

[56] Lebanon Rivals Agree Crisis Deal. **BBC News.** 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7411835.stm

[57] Lebanon Baseline Information. **The United Nations Refugee Agency.** 2013. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7411835.stm

[58] Laithy, Heba et. Al. Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon. **International Poverty Centre.** 2008 http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCCountryStudy13.pdf

[59] Timeline: Hezbollah's Rise. **Reuters.** 2013. http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/26/us-syria-hezbollah-timeline-idUSBRE98P0BF20130926

[60] *ibid*

[61] *ibid*

after a bomb exploded where his motorcade was driving through Beirut. In 2006, the group sparked a five-week war with Israel after the group claimed responsibility for kidnapping two Israeli soldiers and killing a few others.[62]

<p style="text-align:center">Hezbollah in Parliament</p>

Hezbollah's path to involvement in politics was paved by the Ta'if Agreement, a change in leadership in the organization itself and a social environment welcoming change and recovery after a twenty-year old bloody civil war. Much of what remained of the political parties in power before and throughout the civil war was severely weakened, underfunded and mistrusted by the Lebanese population.[63] The environment was ripe for even one of the most controversial groups in the country to run for political office. Lebanon held its first post-war election in the summer of 1992. There was little consensus over whether the state was ready for a democratic election of that importance. Tension between the various sectarian groups was still relatively high at the time, and while the Ta'if Agreement was meant to address some of the underlying issues, it only succeeded in taming the violence.

The Ta'if Agreement, also known as the National Reconciliation Accord, was approved in November 1989 by the Lebanese Parliament. The terms of the Agreement were established during months of negotiations in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia and involved

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[62] *ibid*

[63] El Khazen, Farid. Lebanon's First Postwar Parliamentary Election, 1992: An Imposed Choice. *American University of Beirut.* Date of publication unknown. http://almashriq.hiof.no/ddc/projects/pspa/elections92.html

various warring sectarian groups from Lebanon.[64] The process was led by the Arab

League, supported by the United States and most importantly, supervised by Syria.[65] The

peace process brought the Lebanese civil war to an official end, established a new order

in the country and recognized Syria as the main implementer of the negotiated terms.[66]

The Agreement itself was organized in two parts. The first discussed the necessary

reforms needed to establish a functional democracy, including power-sharing and

political, economic and identity reform. In fact, one of the general principles reads; "the

people may not be categorized on the basis of any affiliation whatsoever and there shall

be no fragmentation, no partition, and no repatriation [of Palestinians in Lebanon]"[67].

The second part addressed the position of Lebanon in the international context,

specifically the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as the nature of the Lebanese-Syrian

relationship.[68] The document made no mention of any specific political or rebel parties,

instead treating all equally and calling for the disarmament of all non-state armed groups,

establishing the state military as the only legitimate armed group and calling for a

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[64] The Taif Agreement. **United Nations.** 1989.
https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf
[65] Karam, Karam. Positive Peace for Lebanon: Reconciliation, reform and resilience. **Conciliation Resources.** 2012. http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/taif-agreement
[66] *ibid*
[67] The Taif Agreement. **United Nations.** 1989.
https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf
[68] Karam, Karam. Positive Peace for Lebanon: Reconciliation, reform and resilience. **Conciliation Resources.** 2012. http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/taif-agreement

systematic liberation of Lebanese territories from Israeli occupation.[69] After the short but violent sectarian war that erupted on January 30, 1990 ended, the Lebanese power structure shifted from a political landscape controlled by the Maronites, to more shared power among the rest of the religious groups. This notion was a main theme during the talks leading to the Ta'if Agreement. In fact, the final version of the Agreement purposefully redefined the roles of the state's president, prime minister and speaker of the Parliament.[70] Though the religious group that was set to occupy each position did not change from the already established rules in the 1943 National Pact, the amount of power granted to each was reevaluated. The president no longer controlled all the cabinets in the government. Instead, that power was to be shared with the prime minister and speaker of Parliament. In a way, the Ta'if Agreement established three equal presidents to run the state and therefore attempted to establish power parity among the three largest religious groups in the country, the Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims and Shi'aa Muslims.[71]

In 1993, the political environment during the election season was strained, competition was fierce and at times, the narrative very reminiscent of the propaganda spread during the war. The Philangists, originally a political party from the predominantly Christian area of Mount Lebanon, were forced to disarm with the Ta'if Agreement. Other existing parties were also stripped of much of their power around the

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[69] The Taif Agreement. **United Nations.** 1989.
https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf

[70] The Ta'If Agreement. As Approved by the Lebanese Parliament in 1989. *The United Nations.* https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf

[71] *ibid*

country. Hezbollah, on the hand, refused to accept the terms set in the Ta'if Agreement, and remained armed, all the while presumably well-funded and supported by Iran and Syria. The Lebanese military and transitioning government did not publically object to the group's position and did not pressure them to disarm. In an effort to protest Hezbollah's participation in the political domain, especially with Syria's support, the Philangists and other parties called on their supporters to boycott the election. As a result, only about 24% of the registered voters turned up. Most of the Lebanese who skipped the polls were Christians living in the areas where the Philangists exercised the most influence.[72]

After 20 years without elections, Lebanon's political environment was at a turning point. Shi'aa Muslims alone held 27 seats out of the 128 in Parliament. The generally underrepresented sect suddenly had more representatives in 1993 than after any election held between 1943 and 1972. The most the sect had ever held before was 19 in 1972, right before the civil war escalated and spiraled out of control.[73] Hezbollah's supported candidates held 8 of those 27 parliamentary seats around the country. They represented all of the regions they were exercising the power, including the Bekaa Valley, located in the northeast, Nabatieh, located in south of Lebanon and various parts of Beirut.[74]

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[72] Malik, Habib. Parliamentary Elections in Lebanon: an Early Assessment. *The Washington Institute*. 1996. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/parliamentary-elections-in-lebanon-an-early-assessment

[73] Hazran, Yusri. Shi'aa Community in Lebanon: from Marginalization to Ascendency. *Braindeis University.* 2009. http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB37.pdf

[74] Hamzeh, Nizar A. Lebanon's Hizbullah: from Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accomodation. *Third World Quarterly.* 1993. Vol. 14, No. 2 pp. 321-37.

Two days after the first two of three rounds of the elections were over in August 1992, Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah was interviewed by An-Nahar, a major Lebanese newspaper, about the results and the world's anticipation for the group's next move. During the interview, the reporter asked Nasrallah if he was concerned about the third day of the elections being canceled as his party's wins seemed threatening to the status quo.[75] Algeria was used as an example as, at the time, it was undergoing its own violent, decade-long civil war that was prompted by canceled elections in 1991 when it seemed probable that the Islamic Salvation Front, a fundamental insurgency group, was going to gain significant power over other parties. In his response, Nasrallah insisted that the political and social environment in Lebanon was significantly different from that of Algeria. His party's candidates, he maintained, would keep their constituents' needs above their personal gains. During the same interview, An-Nahar inquired if the group's interest and success in politics was setting the scene for Hezbollah to turn from a military to a political party. Nasrallah replied, "[…] We were never a military or militia; we put ourselves forward as a jihadi movement to confront the ongoing occupation and the aggression on our people and land. Our participation in the National Assembly does not detract whatsoever from our being a resistance movement, because the call to duty and the reasons that compel some individuals, or an entire people, to resist against continued occupation, are still valid."[76]

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[75] Victory at the Polls. **An-Nahar Newspaper**. August 25, 1992. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. **Verso.** 2006

[76] *ibid*

Since the 1992 election, Hezbollah continued to successfully support candidates in the Shi'aa communities where it was most active. In every parliamentary election since the first after the war ended, the group held anywhere between eight to ten seats.[77] The political scene in Lebanon remained tense after the first post-war elections. In 2006, political gridlock between most political parties in Parliament, including Hezbollah, would significantly slow down progress in the country and prevent the presidential seat to be filled.[78] Hezbollah's influence over the political arena both domestically and internationally earned it a seat during the Lebanese National Dialogue in Doha Qatar in 2008. The Dialogue aimed to resolve the governmental gridlock that had plagued the state for years. As a result, the Doha Agreement paved the way for the country to fill its presidential seat 18 months after a soft coup resulted in a long-term vacancy for one of the most important seats in the government. It also granted Hezbollah veto power in the cabinet, making it the single most powerful decision maker in the country.[79] As is explained in Chapter Six, the events that led to the Doha agreement, and the increased power Hezbollah enjoys in the Parliament, are the most concrete evidence that the group's dual strategy of maintaining an armed wing while becoming politically active has been carefully manipulated to the point where one wing can be used to help the other.

<div align="center">Political Participation: The Early Days</div>

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[77] Masters, Jonathan et al. "Hezbollah". *Council on Foreign Relations.* 2014 http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155

[78] Lebanon Rivals Agree Crisis Deal. *BBC.* 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7411835.stm

[79] Wiegand, Krista E. Reformation of a terrorist group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese political party*. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 2009. 32.8 pp: 669-680.

For Hezbollah's members and supporters to choose to actively participate in free and fair elections in 1992 is not a surprising tactic for post-conflict non-state armed groups reevaluating their strategies in an effort to stay in power in their areas, and gain legitimacy in the views of outsiders.[80] Much like the insurgencies that Carrie Manning describes in "Armed Opposition Groups into Political Parties: Comparing Bosnia, Kosovo and Mozambique", in 1992, Hezbollah was under pressure from the Ta'if Agreement to consider various avenues other than violence and intimidation to remain relevant in the areas in which it has the most support. The political and social environment in Lebanon at the time was ripe for newcomers and the change they would bring.

In order to further maintain the calm that Lebanon began to experience steadily after 1990, albeit except for some areas in the South, former militant groups were actively encouraged to participate in the political realm. Hezbollah's leadership found itself with the perfect opportunity to expand the group's influence in Lebanon, and it did so under the guise that the economic inequality in the country, which had been rampant and especially felt in the muhafazat where the group's constituents live, must be directly addressed.[81] The group vowed to support fair and free elections, and made promises of developing and supporting policies that would bring economic prosperity, security and a voice to the Shi'aa Muslims living in their areas. At the time, Hezbollah was the only

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[80] Manning, Carrie. Armed opposition groups into political parties: Comparing Bosnia, Kosovo, and Mozambique. *Studies in comparative international development*. 2004. 39 (1), p. 54 - 76
[81] Victory at the Polls. *An-Nahar Newspaper*. August 25, 1992. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

non-state armed group left in the country. As the group was protected by its alliance to

the third party implementer of the Agreement, Syria, it had few options to explore in

order to develop and maintain the trust of the Shi'aa Muslims in the small, fragile, state.

In an interview conducted in 1992 with the Lebanese leftist newspaper Al-Safir, or The

Diplomat, Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah explained Hezbollah's future plans in the country

as, at the time, the dust had settled after the official end of the civil war, particularly as

the group's conflict with their counterpart, Amal Movement, subsided. He said: "After

the conflict between us and our brethren in Amal ended, the attention of Hezbollah's

leadership once again turned towards escalating the resistance [against Israel], and taking

steps towards other groups in the country. It was also time to start attending to the

people's problem."[82] Hezbollah would, inarguably, take advantage of the mistrust that the

Lebanese citizens, especially the Shi'aa Muslims', of the existing governmental structure

and organize what various groups argued for into one succinct message. Soon after

Hezbollah's leadership began exploring political opportunities, they began leading public

demonstrations of the dissatisfaction with the status quo.[83] These generally non-violent

protests would become a staple of the party's political activity, and their constituents

would continue to be supportive of the message that change is needed as the status-quo of

the State remained unchanged.[84]

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[82] After the Assassination. Al Safir Newspaper. February 27, 1992. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. **Verso.** 2006

[83] Salamey, Imad Hezbollah: A Proletarian Party with an Islamic Manifesto – A Sociopolitical Analysis of Islamist Populism in Lebanon and the Middle East. **Small wars & insurgencies**. (09/2007) , 18 (3), p. 416 - 438.

[84] *ibid*

Today, Hezbollah's military wing remains as active as the political wing. Hezbollah's fighters have played a critical role supporting Assad's troops as they fight Sunni rebels all over Syria, as well as maintained a heavy presence along the Lebanese border alongside the military in an effort to ward off the potential of war spillage.[85] While the organizational structure of Hezbollah has not been completely confirmed by the organization itself, some experts have deemed it to be simple yet well established.[86] At the top of the pyramid is the decision-making Shura Council, headed by the Secretary General, the Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah, who works in conjunction with the deputy secretary general. The Shura Council makes all decisions, including the political decisions, managing the various councils and identifying the major goals of the organization. The organization is then split into five known councils; the Executive Council, the Judicial Council, the Political Council, the Political Advisor and the Jihad/Military Council.[87] While these councils are meant to work together to advance Hezbollah's overall goals, at times, they seem to have conflicting ideals.[88] As the group's identity is a combination of supporting the Shi'aa community in Lebanon and abroad,

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[85] De Luce, Dan. Syrian War Takes Rising Toll on Hezbollah. *Foreign Policy.* 2015. http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/09/syrian-war-takes-rising-toll-on-hezbollah/

[86] Cohler, Sarah. Hezbollah: Analysis of Violence. *University of North Carolina.* 2011. http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2011/0104/comm/cohler_hezbollah.html

[87] *ibid*

[88] Hezbollah: Profile of the Lebanese Shi'aa Terrorist Organization of Global Reach Sponsored by Iran and Supported by Syria. *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies.* 2003. http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF_simuchin_349_2.pdf

fighting for Iran's initiatives in the region and identifying as Lebanese, evidence shows

that the Councils have frequently struggled in syncing their mandates.[89]

The split between Hezbollah's military and political wings has contributed to the

uncertainty of the international community on labeling the organization as terrorist.[90]

Despite the group's responsibility for several violent attacks on both in Lebanon and

abroad, it has, over time, participated in and supported peaceful elections in Lebanon. Its

Political Council and Political Advisory wings have slowly changed the mission of the

group from strictly aimed at establishing a Shi'aa nation to supporting democratic

elements of governance.[91] In 2013, the European Union placed Hezbollah on its terrorism

list, though clearly stating that only the military wing is to be considered dangerous.[92] In

1997, the United States' Department of State categorized Hezbollah as a Foreign

Terrorist Organization, without necessarily distinguishing between the various councils.[93]

In 2015, following successful talks with Iran in regards to their nuclear power and energy

development, the United States omitted Hezbollah from its terrorist list.[94]

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[89] Levitt, Matthew. On a Military Wing and a Prayer. *The Washington Institute.* 2013.
http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/on-a-military-wing-and-a-prayer
[90] *ibid*
[91] Qassir, Qassem. Hezbollah's Evolution, Challenges. Translated by Anthony Goode. *Al Monitor.*
2013. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/03/hezbollah-progress-challenges.html#
[92] Pawlak, Justyna and Adrian Croft. EU adds Hezbollah's Military Wing on its Terrorism List.
Reuters. 2013. http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/22/us-eu-hezbollah-
idUSBRE96K0DA20130722
[93] Foreign Terrorist Organizations. *US Department of State.*
http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm
[94] Moore, Jack. US Omits Iran and Hezbollah from Terror Threat List. *Newsweek 2015.*
http://www.newsweek.com/iran-and-hezbollah-omitted-us-terror-threat-list-amid-nuclear-
talks-314073

CHAPTER 5: HEZBOLLAH'S WAR WITH ISRAEL

Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 as a response to the increased threat presented by the

influx of Palestinian refugees into the country. The Palestinian Liberation Organization

(PLO) had begun forming a satellite group of supporters, mainly refugees living in the

camps in Beirut, and thus elevating the potential of an attack on Israel from the north of

its borders.[95] The invasion only deepened the divide between Lebanon's various sect

groups as they were already embroiled in their own civil war. To the Lebanese Christian

Maronite community, the Israeli Defense Front (IDF) was a guaranteed way to defeat the

Muslim rebel groups. That said, the Shi'aa Muslims bore a significant part of the toll of

the invasion as the fighting occurred mostly in areas heavily populated by the sect. In

1983, various Shi'aa Muslim groups joined efforts and with Iran's financial and military

support, created Hezbollah. Syria played a critical role in the formation of the group at

the time as well by supplying a route through Damascus for the delivery of weapons from

the Revolutionary Guard to the new rebel army.[96] It is unclear if Israel had long term

plans on remaining in the country when it planned to launch an attack against the PLO

satellite group in the refugee camps. As it fought the rebels living in the camps, Israel's

military set-up a buffer zone in the south of the country, in areas where a predominant

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[95] Lebanon. *Frontline World. PBS.* 2003.
http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/lebanon/tl01.html
[96] Cohler, Sarah. Hezbollah: Analysis of Violence. *American diplomacy*. 2011.

portion of Lebanon's Shi'aa Muslims have lived for generations. This area would remain

occupied until Israel's withdrawal in 2000, despite pressure to do so earlier by the

Lebanese government and various other Arab countries.[97] Its refusal to do so earlier

created an environment where random and sporadic violence across the border became a

usual occurrence between the neighbors for years to come. In 1993, just three years after

the end of the Lebanese civil war, Israel launched a violent retaliation campaign against

the rebel group headquartered just north of its border.

<center>Operation Accountability</center>

On July 8, 1993, members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-

General Command (PFLP-GC) caused the death of two Israeli Defense Front soldiers

during an ambush on the patrol. Israel retaliated a few days later by shelling the fields

around one of Hezbollah's villages. That same day, Hezbollah's fighters launched an

attack in the security zone, killing three IDF soldiers.[98] During the days that followed,

both sides of the borders launched verbal attacks and threats against one another, until

July 22nd of that year when Hezbollah launched Katyushas on the Galilea panhandle.

Though the rocket launchers caused little damage and no casualties, Israel launched a

violent retaliation that would last about a week. According to Israeli sources, both in the

military and civilian capacity, Operation Accountability had two main goals. The first

was to punish Hezbollah and the PFLP-GC directly. The second was to destroy the

infrastructure in the south of Lebanon to the point where it would be deemed too difficult

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[97] Norton, Richard Augustus. Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern
Lebanon. *Journal of Palestine studies*. 2000. 30 (1), p. 22 - 35.
[98] "Operation Accountability". *Global Security.*
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon-accountability.htm

for Hezbollah to continue to operate out of the area and therefore eliminate the threat of further rocket launches into the security zone and beyond.[99] As Israel carried out indiscriminate air strikes in every neighborhood that may have been suspect, Hezbollah evidently launched approximately over two hundred seventy rocket into northern Israel and the security zone. In an interview with Human Rights Watch, a few months after the war was over, one Israeli civilian residing in the northern region of his country said: "Rockets fell across the whole of northern Israel. A population of tens of thousands was pinned down for a week. The sporadic nature of the attacks made it perhaps even more traumatic: God knows when, God knows where they will fall next."[100]

By the seventh and last day of the war, 120 Lebanese civilians were killed and another 500 were injured. Over 300,000 were displaced, some as far north as Beirut. The estimated damage to the caused was over $28 million. On the Israeli side, two civilians were killed and another 24 injured.[101] The damage sustained was clearly significantly steeper on the Lebanese side than it was on the Israeli and it is inarguable that civilians bore the toll of the war the most. A Human Rights Watch report published three years after the calm had been restored following Operation Accountability would describe the little warning Lebanese civilians received from the Israelis before attacks were launched in specific areas. It would also allege that weapons linked to Hezbollah were found

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[99] Hiltermann, Joost. Civilian Pawns: Laws of War Violations and the Use of Weapons on the Israel-Lebanon Border. *Human Rights Watch.* 1996. https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Israel.htm
[100] Human Rights Watch interview, Nahariya, November 21, 1993.
[101] Hiltermann, Joost. Civilian Pawns: Laws of War Violations and the Use of Weapons on the Israel-Lebanon Border. *Human Rights Watch.* 1996. https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Israel.htm

stored in two civilian homes. The report, for those and additional various reasons, found both sides guilty of violating international war law and human rights law.

A peace agreement between Hezbollah and Israel went into effect on July 31, 1993. That day, both sides agreed to what became known as the '1993 Understandings', an unofficial verbal agreement which offered a guarantee that neither side would deliberately target civilians from then on.[102] The agreement itself was vague with various points open for interpretation, and it would, over time, test the limits of each side. As an example, only a few short weeks after the war was declared over, Hezbollah-supported suicide bombers claimed the lives of eight Israeli soldiers in the security zone. Israel retaliated with airstrikes in Bekaa, mainly in areas with no known civilian populations. Hezbollah did not react as no civilians were harmed. Other flare-ups of violence would emerge in the subsequent months and years. In some cases, one or both sides exhibited great restraint, in others, the grey line between civilian and fighter seemed to blur.[103]

Operation Grapes of Wrath

The fragile and ambiguous '1993 Understanding' collapsed entirely in 1996, when Israel launched its second official war against the group in three years. Operation Grapes of Wrath began on April 11, 1996 and lasted for almost 16 days, officially ending on April 27 of the same year.[104] For five weeks leading up to the start of the war, both sides indiscriminately attacked the other with various weapons, including rocket launchers and air strikes. The random attacks and retaliations resulted in approximately

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[102] *ibid*

[103] *ibid*

[104] *ibid*

eleven casualties; seven Israeli soldiers, three Lebanese civilians and at least one

Hezbollah fighter. Even more soldiers and civilians were injured on both sides,

approximately thirty in total. The war would increase the number of wounded to 350

Lebanese and 62 Israeli civilians. The number of casualties during the 16 days of war is

estimated to be anywhere between 154 and 170.[105] In comparison to the 1993 war, the

level of sophistication and strategy exhibited by both sides are both far more advanced. In

1996, Israel used warships to blockade the three main ports in Lebanon; Beirut, Sidon

and Tripoli. By the fourth day of the war, the warnings for evacuations were extended to

approximately eighty-six communities and much like in 1993, thousands fled their

homes, seeking refuge and shelter closer to Beirut. Unlike Operation Accountability,

however, not even the United Nations mission to Lebanon, United Nations Interim Force

in Lebanon (UNIFIL), was safe.[106] Reports of Israeli warplanes targeting clearly marked

UN vehicles transporting civilians seeking shelter emerged. The UN base in Qana was

also reportedly indiscriminately shelled on April 18, resulting in the death of over one

hundred civilians.[107] The message to Lebanon and the international community from

Israel was clear: this conflict is the entire country's problem, not just Hezbollah's.

Hezbollah's role in and leading up to the war was just as violent, albeit with less

sophisticated weaponry and inflicting significantly less damage on their enemy. Reports

from United Nations employees even indicated that Hezbollah fighters prompted the

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[105] *ibid*

[106] *ibid*

[107] Fisk, Robert. Desperate Voices go Unheard as Shells Rain Down. *The Independent.* 1996.
http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/desperate-voices-go-unheard-as-shells-rain-down-1305585.html

attack on the peacekeeping base in Qana by firing off mortars and katyusha rockets from a few hundred meters away, just minutes before Israel soldiers begun their shelling on April 18.[108] In 1995, almost up to a year before Operations Grapes of Wrath began, Nasrallah decreed that the '1993 Understanding' no longer held after one of Hezbollah's commanders, Rida' Yassin, was killed in an Israeli helicopter attack. The group retaliated by launching at least thirty Katayushas across the border, killing one civilian and wounding nine others. Later that same year, Hezbollah launched a number of katayushas, this time killing an Israeli commander. The Israeli response was formidable, with more than 600 artillery, tank and mortar rounds fired back that same day.[109]

Developments at the Turn of the Century

Needless to say, for the first few years after the Lebanese war came to an official end, tensions between Israel and Hezbollah remained high. While each war ended with an agreement, it would not be long before each faltered as none of the underlying issues were ever addressed. In fact, there is little evidence of any communication existing between Israel and Hezbollah. In an interview conducted shortly after the end of the Grapes of Wrath campaign, Nasrallah was asked to share his point on view on the restrictions imposed in the peace agreement that would end the 1996 war, also known as the 'April Understanding'. The Understanding was an agreement specifically discussing the safety of both Lebanese and Israeli civilians. Four main points were established in the

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[108] Military Operations by Lebanese Guerilla Fighters. *Human Rights Watch.* 1997
https://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/isrleb/Isrleb-02.htm#P635_149465
[109] Hiltermann, Joost. Civilian Pawns: Laws of War Violations and the Use of Weapons on the Israel-Lebanon Border. *Human Rights Watch.* 1996.
https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Israel.htm

short document, and though no specific group is mentioned, the first point makes it clear

that no armed Lebanese group would target Israeli civilians with Katyusha rockets or

otherwise.[110] As Hezbollah was mainly kept out of the talks, Nasrallah's less than

enthused response regarding the Understanding is not surprising. He says: "I would like

to say at the outset that we took part in writing the terms of the Understanding, although

we have nothing to do with the text itself. Based on that, we see this Understanding as an

agreement between the Lebanese government and the government of the Israeli

entity".[111] Talks, as it would seem, mainly occurred between Israel, the Lebanese

government and Syria and as the latter was viewed as heavily influential on Hezbollah.

Moreover, Israel and Syria had been involved in their own conflict around the same time,

and evidently, prior to Grapes of Wrath, talks between both states had fallen through,

with little hope of a resolution.[112] With Israel's troops deployed inside Lebanon, and the

Lebanese military's less than optimal effort beyond allowing Hezbollah to maintain their

armed wing, there was little that the fragile country could do to reduce the threat on

Hezbollah's controlled regions physical security. As Israel's stance on Hezbollah evolved

to include verbal attacks on Lebanon as a whole, the rhetoric of the group changed as

well. In Chapter Seven, the slow change of Ayatollah Nasrallah's language when

discussing the perceived threats posed by Israel is evident. Just as the latter challenges the

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[110] Israeli-Lebanon Ceasefire Understanding. April 26, 1996. **The United States Institute of Peace, Peace Agreements Digital Collection.**
http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/il_ceasefi re_1996.pdf
[111] The April Understanding. Al Safir. April 30, 1996. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006
[112]*ibid*

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Lebanese government, both verbally and militarily, more and more over time, the Islamic

Resistance's mission changes from protecting the Shi'aa population, to Lebanon as a

whole.

In 2000, developments in the political and military strategies of both countries led

the way for both the Lebanese military's southern extension, known as South Lebanon

Army (SLA) and the Israeli Defense Front (IDF) to withdraw out of southern Lebanon.[113]

With Israel's troops withdrawing from the country, and as the long-standing perception

that their presence in Lebanon contributed to the threat faded, the general political

support for the remaining existence of Hezbollah's army began to decrease within and

outside of the country. Neither Hezbollah nor its leadership missed this shift in opinion

and Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah soon shared the group's "minimal demands" when talks

of Israeli withdrawal were ongoing between the Lebanese and Israeli governments. In

addition to the Israeli withdrawal from all of Lebanon, specifically the security zone in

the south and western Bekaa, Hezbollah demanded the return of the Palestinian refugees

to their own country as their presence was not necessarily welcomed by the group. In an

interview conducted by Teshreen News, a Syria-based newspaper, on June 21, 1999,

Nasrallah was asked to share Hezbollah's future plans should the region experience a

sustainable, lasting peace. "If this happens, then there are two factors to consider when

talking about Hezbollah's future: the first is the political factor. I am not worried, in this

context, as far as the future is concerned, although some would like to provoke people's

insecurities and fear. […] Hezbollah has a good and prosperous future, and I am not

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[113] Miller, Marjorie. Israel Leaves South Lebanon After 22 Years. *LA Times*. 2000.
http://articles.latimes.com/2000/may/24/news/mn-33497

worried at all from this point of view. I also expect the Lebanese people to recognize

Hezbollah's jihadist role, and the state to appreciate the favor that Hezbollah has rendered

this country. As for the military factor – in other words our field operations – we do not

usually speak about this topic in public, and I believe that keeping it secret and under

wraps, regardless of the reality on the ground, is in the interest of both Lebanon and

Syria."[114] Over time, Hezbollah's plans for the military wing became clear: it would

remain part of the organization and as the next war with Israel proved it would be further

strengthened, both with weaponry and operative capacity building.

<div align="center">2006 War</div>

The escalation of the thirty-four days long war in the summer of 2006 was quick,

and almost uncontrollable. Just a few days before the war began on July 12, Ayatollah

Hassan Nasrallah allegedly assured the then Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora that

Lebanon would have a calm summer, with little to no military activities planned for

Hezbollah's fighters for the following months. [115] On the morning of July 11, however,

Hezbollah fighters carried a mission called "True Promise" on Israeli border. Following a

previously successful prisoner swap that involved Israeli soldiers kidnapped by

Hezbollah and insurgency fighters caught by Israel, the group believed that a new attack

could prompt the release of more of their fighters.[116] Approximately twenty Hezbollah

fighters attacked two Humvies on patrol, killing eight soldiers and kidnapping two.

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[114] Towards Liberation. Teshreen Newspaper. June 21, 1999. In print in the book compilation *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. Edited by Nicholas Noe. ***Verso.*** 2006

[115] Arkin, William. Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. ***Air University Press.*** 2007.

[116] *ibid*

Within the hour, Nasrallah held a press conference and on behalf of his organization, claimed responsibility for the attack and kidnappings.[117] Nasrallah emphasized in his comments that the soldiers would not be rescued with military force, but rather by a prisoner swap with Israel. Approximately twenty minutes later, at 10:20AM, Israel jets carried out airstrikes across south Lebanon, targeting bridges and suspected Hezbollah command and military posts in the region.[118] The retaliation response was to be expected, given the history of cross-border fire over the years. The public statement given by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert regarding the way his government views the attack, however, was different from previous years. The killing and kidnapping of Israeli soldiers was not viewed as a terrorist attack, but rather as an unprovoked and causeless violent act of a sovereign state against Israel.[119]

On July 12, 2006, the war officially began. Israeli airstrikes reached as far north as the Rafik Hariri international airport, located in Beirut. The damage to the infrastructure, with the airport alone, was detrimental not just to Hezbollah but also to the country as a whole.[120] As Israel's airstrikes were destroying Lebanese infrastructure and reaching regions generally not under Hezbollah's control, the latter was launching missiles further south across the border than it ever had before. The attacks did not end for over a month, and by August 14, 2006, over one thousand Lebanese, mostly civilians, were killed with about four thousand more injured, and thousands displaced. Furthermore, more than forty Israeli civilians lost their lives, alongside approximately

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[117] *ibid*
[118] *ibid*
[119] *ibid*
[120] *ibid*

one hundred and nineteen soldiers.[121] The United Nations' brokered ceasefire ended with,

more or less, a truce. For the first time since the creation of the group, Hezbollah's

military and intelligence seemed to significantly challenge the weaknesses of the Israeli

Defense Forces. The war in 2006 shed the light on the group's arsenal expansion and

evolution of military tactic sophistication over the ten years since the last violent

campaign between Israel and Hezbollah took place. In the fall of 2006, Israel's Prime

Minister appointed the five-member Winograd Committee to assess Israel's behavior and

success in the war. After over a year of investigation and evaluation, the Committee

released a report exhibiting the war as a failure on Israel's side.[122] Neither goals set by

the Prime Minister and the then Defense Minister, Aritz Peretz, were accomplished. The

two soldiers remained in Hezbollah's custody, and the group's military wing was still

undefeated.[123] Nevertheless, the report supported Lebanon's stance that the war was

initiated by Israel, as the latter reacted violently immediately after the news of the

kidnappings was released, instead of considering other, more peaceful options. That said,

Ayatollah Nasrallah released a statement soon after the war deescalated expressing regret

over the actions taken by Hezbollah fighters on July 11, 2006 as the reaction from Israel

was not expected to be as violent. In fact, on the day of the patrol attack and kidnapping

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[121] Knickmeyer, Ellen. 2006 War Called a Failure for Israel. *Washington Post*. 2008
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/30/AR2008013000559.html
[122] *ibid*
[123] *ibid*

of the two Israeli soldier, one of Nasrallah's aides assured the Lebanese Prime Minister

that the retaliation was expected to end within 24-48 hours.[124]

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[124] Arkin, William. Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. *Air University Press.* 2007.

CHAPTER 6: GETTING INTO POLITICS

Hezbollah's involvement in politics, whether it is on the local or parliamentary level, has become a significant part of the group's identity and the Lebanese political scene. This chapter aims to support the first part of the argument, which focuses on the reasons that triggered the partial evolution of the rebel group into a political party with a military wing. Based on public statements made by the group at the time, the argument this thesis focuses on is that Hezbollah became involved in the political environment following the end of the civil war in order to achieve two specific goals. The first focused on serving the Shi'aa community, the second was advancing the group's Manifesto's mission of the 'Islamization' of Lebanon. The members of parliament who were supported by Hezbollah ran for office due to a higher calling; "Hizbullah's nominees have no desire to compete with others over power, wealth, or material possessions; rather, they want to be dedicated to a religious duty (*taklif shar'i*) in front of God, in order to preserve the country, uphold the interests of the people, and achieve the objectives that the holy warriors and the martyrs fought for."[125] Hezbollah's leadership frequently described the group's mission to be focused on the main goal of liberating the country from Israel. In order to explore the motives behind Hezbollah's political involvement and evolution of power over time, this chapter will examine the public statements made by

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[125] Alagha, J. Hizbullah's documents : From the 1985 open letter to the 2009 manifesto. *Amsterdam University Press.* 2011.

various group members, especially around elections. This chapter will introduce the constituency that resides in Hezbollah controlled areas, and will compare their standard of living soon after the war ended to almost a decade after Hezbollah became a political party. This chapter will examine the political wing's ultimately increasing influence over domestic politics, and its growing role and responsibilities in the parliament. It will also demonstrate that the group's motives behind adopting dual personalities are more complicated than the public statements would lead to believe. In fact, this chapter will examine the language used by Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah in various interviews and speeches in which he describes the goals and aims of the political wing. With the notion that, as the group became more politically present and more interested in garnering nationwide support, the tone and goals changed to adapt to the social and political environment at the time of interview or speech.

The Constituency

Hezbollah's members of Parliament represent constituents from all over Lebanon. The areas most represented are the Bekaa Valley, Nabatieh in the South of Lebanon and the southern part of the country's capital, Beirut. All three areas have historically been predominately host to the largest Shi'aa Muslim communities in Lebanon.[126] These areas have also been consistently ranked as some of the poorest in the country. Not only are they limited with employment opportunities and therefore have some of the highest rates of unemployment among youth and adults in the country, the location of each has been detrimental for any sort of economic growth in the past few decades. In fact, the South of

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[126] Hamzeh, Nizar A. Lebanon's Hizbullah: from Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accomodation. *Third World Quarterly.* 1993. Vol. 14, No. 2 pp. 321-37.

Lebanon has been the site for various short but violent wars between Israel and Hezbollah since the early 1990s. Bekaa Valley, on the other hand, lies on the border to Syria and has regularly carried the brunt of refugees fleeing conflict from both Iraq, and since 2011, Syria's civil war. The South of Beirut, though geographically further from the turbulent borders, has hosted Palestinian refugees since the 1970s.[127] The influx of the Palestinians back then, most of whom were Shi'aa Muslims, proved to be too burdensome on the fragile government and its weak economy. It is in that camp where the first violent act that would propel the Lebanese civil war into a long messy battle, and less than a decade later when Hezbollah was created as a response to the unprotected and marginalized Shi'aa population.[128]

The Standard of Living in Shi'aa Muslim Communities

Five years after the end of the civil war in 1990, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs conducted a study mapping the poverty in the country. This research may be the first of its kind in Lebanon since the beginning of the civil war in 1975.[129] As the conflict escalated during the 15 year gap between the studies, the more difficult it became to try to collect and analyze data pertaining to the economic condition of the various parts of the country. The Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs' research was prompted by a growing concern of unequal income distribution around the country, as well as strong realization that the twenty-year-old civil war significantly reversed any progress made in

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[127] Masters, Jonathan et al. "Hezbollah". **Council on Foreign Relations.** 2014
http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155
[128] *ibid*
[129] Mapping of Living Conditions in Lebanon. **UNDP**. 1998.
http://www.undp.org.lb/programme/pro-poor/poverty/povertyinlebanon/molc/executive.htm

the 1960s and 1970s. In 1995, the unemployment rate was over 26%, as 25% of heads of households were unable to pursue their education past the elementary school level a few decades earlier. That said, the burden of the civil war and its ripple effects were not felt equally around the country. The quality of the lifestyle of an average family living in Mount Lebanon vastly differed from that of a similar household living in Bekaa Valley.[130] In fact, the study showed the three top muhafazats, or governorates, with the highest rates of dissatisfaction in the households' current living conditions were Nabatieh, located in the south of the country, North Lebanon and Bekaa Valley. The study did not set out to study the level of poverty in each governorate, but rather the overall living conditions of the inhabitants in the five different regions. In other words, the level of income per household was not measured, but rather the perception of deprivation from basic needs in comparison to Lebanese households in other parts of the country.[131]

The research measured multiple factors in all of Lebanon's five governorates in order to determine the status of the living conditions in each. The factors include the level of household satisfaction in the current living conditions, which took into consideration the social services provided by their cities and the existing civil society. Income related indicators, such as satisfaction with income levels and the head of households' ability to meet their dependents' basic needs, were measured. The education index, including accessibility to education and then its effects on one's ability to find related employment, was taken into account, as it is, after all, a reliable and measurable indicator of poverty

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[130] *ibid*
[131] *ibid*

and development. The quality of the housing structures, mainly in their ability to meet basic shelter needs, as well as the availability and adequacy of public utilities and infrastructure services to households were measured.[132] The data was shared both by geographical location and whether households preferred the public versus private services. Finally, the availability of clean, drinkable water as well as the availability of sewage were taken into consideration in each muhafaza. As both indicators are generally provided by public services, the research aimed to study whether or not they were equally available around the country.

The research conducted by the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs in 1995 furnished interesting results that bore few surprises for the time period. Satisfaction in living conditions was ranked lowest in North Lebanon, Bekaa Valley and Nabatieh, in the south of Lebanon. In other words, two of the main muhafazat where Hezbollah had been mostly active politically ranked as the first and third areas in the countries with the most unsatisfied households. Fifty one percent of the households in Nabatieh rated their satisfaction with their living conditions as 'low', 39% ranked it 'medium' and only 9% ranked it high. In North Lebanon, 43% of the households ranked their level of satisfaction with their living conditions as 'low', almost 37% ranked it as 'medium' and 18.7% ranked it as 'high'. Bekaa Valley's rankings were similar to those pulled in North Lebanon. Almost 41% of the households in Bekaa Valley ranked their satisfaction as 'low', 43.5% ranked it as 'medium' and approximately 16% ranked it as 'high'. On average in all of Lebanon the year the poll was taken, 32% of the households polled

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[132] *ibid*

ranked their satisfaction with their living conditions as 'low', 42% ranked their satisfaction as 'medium' and a slightly more than 26% ranked it as 'high'.[133]

The rest of the data gathered in the research shed significant light on the reasons why households in Bekaa Valley and Nabatieh had a higher than the average dissatisfaction levels in their living conditions in 1995. For the level of satisfaction in income related indicators, the study chose to take into consideration the number of vehicles owned by households, as that could be a indirect indicator of level of income as well as directly illustrate the convenience rate in available transportation. This section also measured the number of employed members of the households as well as the type of employment available and taken. Overall, Nabatieh, Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon had the highest ranking of the most dissatisfied heads of households in regards to income-related indicators. Approximately 58% of the households in Nabatieh ranked their satisfaction as low. Both Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon had 52% of their total households rank their satisfaction in income-related indicators as low. The average rate of households dissatisfied with their income-related indicators around Lebanon, when all muhafazat are considered, was approximately 42%.[134] In other words, the households in the areas where Hezbollah maintained significant presence were 10% more dissatisfied with their income, and the quality of life in allowed them and their dependents to enjoy, than the rest of Lebanon.

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[133] *ibid*

[134] Mapping of Living Conditions in Lebanon. **UNDP**. 1998.
http://www.undp.org.lb/programme/pro-poor/poverty/povertyinlebanon/molc/executive.htm

The effects and reach of the education policies in Lebanon as a whole, as well the individual muhafazat's investment in schools and trainings, were measured in this study. As access to adequate education is ranked as a basic human right on the international platform, it was vital for the research to take into consideration what could be as one of the most trusted indicators of future development and income. The education policy at the time mostly affected public schools though heavily influenced private academy curricula as well. Public schools tended to be mostly secular while private academies, on the other hand, were mainly sectarian. Throughout the country, students were prepared to work in the global economy thanks to the requirement to learn three languages starting at an early age; Arabic, French and English.[135] That being said, the link between the evolving market and the rate of development to the education curriculum was not always strong. The ripple effects of the twenty-years long civil war were deeply felt in the education sector, as more parents and caretakers struggled to finance their children's education and the Lebanese government invested an insignificant portion of its budget in public schools. Only 8% of the population in Bekaa Valley ranked their satisfaction in the quality of available education as high. In South Lebanon, only 6.8% of the households ranked their satisfaction as 'high', and even less in Nabatieh, 4.2% ranked their satisfaction in the quality of education as 'high'. On average in Lebanon in 1995, 26.4% of the households ranked their satisfaction as 'high'.[136]

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[135] Lebanon: Educational System – Overview. *Education Encyclopedia.*
http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/827/Lebanon-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OVERVIEW.html
[136] Mapping of Living Conditions in Lebanon. *UNDP*. 1998.
http://www.undp.org.lb/programme/pro-poor/poverty/povertyinlebanon/molc/executive.htm

The rate of satisfaction in housing in 1995 did not produce results that were significantly different from those found when income related indicators or education were measured. Again, Nabatieh and South Lebanon came in second and third, after North Lebanon, in their dissatisfaction levels in the quality of housing available and its ability to meet basic shelter needs.[137] In comparison to the national 25.6% average of dissatisfied households in the quality of their shelters, approximately 27% of the households in Nabatieh and South Lebanon gave the same ratings. The rating in the Bekaa Valley was not significantly different, with about 36% of the households being unsatisfied with the quality of their housing.[138]

As the country enjoyed longer stretches of violence-free periods after the Ta'if Agreement was implemented, the population slowly grew and areas around Lebanon became more urbanized. Demand for access to clean water networks and sewerage facilities grew nationwide, yet 9% of households living in Bekaa Valley did not have a reliable water supply.[139] In comparison to the national average of less than 5% without access to clean water, the amount of families living without water is disconcerting, especially as other areas in the countries had less than 1% of households dealing with the same issue. Similar comparative results were found when access to sewerage facilities and services was measured. On average in Lebanon in 1995, only 0.8% lacked access to

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[137] *ibid*
[138] *ibid*
[139] *ibid*

public provided sewer services. In Bekaa and North Lebanon, on the other hand, more than 2% had no access to the same services.[140]

Overall, the percentages of the overall national satisfaction with the variables measured were comparable to the individual Hezbollah controlled muhafazat ratings. . The study conducted in 1995 was a snapshot into the lives of the Shi'aa Muslims in the country that shed the first light at the quantitative difference of the level of satisfaction of the households, and many of the findings would be reflected in a similar study conducted in 2004, described later in the chapter[141]. Though it addressed the regional disparities using all the methodologies listed, it never fully discloses who lives in the areas. One specific religion dominated the regions with the most regularly dissatisfied number of households, and that's Islam. North Lebanon regularly ranked highest in the dissatisfaction scale, whether it is with housing or education. The population in that muhafaza was, in 1995, and remains today, mostly Sunni Muslim. Shi'aa Muslims, on the other hand, lived in the subsequent two most dissatisfied muhafazat in the country. Bekaa and Nabatieh's populations were and continue to be mostly Shi'aa Muslim.

Later studies conducted using similar methodologies showed comparable results. In 2007, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs published a comparative study of the findings in 1995 and then later, in 2004 of the level of satisfaction of households in all the muhafazats in Lebanon. The latter study measured 10 indicators of economic development and only about 21% of the sample size of units interviewed in 1995 was

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[140] *ibid*

[141] Development of Mapping of Living Conditions in Lebanon, 1995-2004: A Comparison with the Results of "Mapping of Living Conditions in Lebanon, 1998". ***Ministry of Social Affairs. UNDP***. 2007. http://www.pdslebanon.org/UserFiles/comp_mapping.pdf

considered, as in only 14,000 households were reached in 2004, compared to the 65,000 in 1995. For the sake of comparison of the finding across the two studies, the results from the same indicators only were taken into consideration.[142]

Overall in almost 10 years of post-violence development, the conditions of living for the Lebanese were, based on the research, moving in a positive direction. In 1995, 31% of the households were living in poverty, 10 years later, only 25% were. The results were different when the rates from each muhafaza were analyzed. While the overall percentage of households in the country living in deprivation decreased by 6% in nine years, it only changed slightly in the areas where Hezbollah had significant and stable political power for the same amount of time. In Bekaa Valley, 38%, down from 40% in 1995, of the households remained deprived of basic shelter, access to water and sewerage as well as equitable education to the rest of the country.[143] In the South of Lebanon, the rates of satisfaction of the households in their current living conditions remained unchanged in 2004 from where they were in 1995. Access to affordable and reputable education, clean water and reliable electricity remained the same for the residents of some of the largest areas had significant presence. In Nabatieh, the results of the study found only a difference of 4% between the households reporting dissatisfaction in their living conditions in 2004 and 1995, with 46% and 50% respectively.[144]

Seventeen years after Hezbollah became involved in the political realm, 29% of their constituents in Bekaa Valley, 22% in the South and 20% in Nabatieh lived below

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[142] *ibid*

[143] *ibid*

[144] *ibid*

the poverty line. That said, the UNDP conducted a study in 2009 that demonstrated that expenditures were increasing steadily in all three muhafazat, despite the bleak rates of poverty found. Another study, conducted by the International Poverty Center in 2008, demonstrated that the mean of the spending Nabatieh, Bekaa and South Lebanon were comparable to the country overall.[145] This study's findings also mirrored those found in the UNDP study conducted a year later. While growth in spending in three of the six muhafazat in Lebanon stalled from 1997 to 2004, specifically in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon, the trend was the opposite in Bekaa Valley, Nabatieh and South Lebanon. That said, 10.8% of Bekaa's households, 11.6% of South Lebanon's households and 2.18% of Nabatieh's households lived in extreme poverty that year, compared to less than 1% in Beirut and the national average in the entire country.[146]

On the Policies and Growth of Hezbollah in Politics

In the twenty-three years since the civil war ended in 1990, Hezbollah's presence in the Parliament grew from being a newcomer to one of the moew influential groups in policy and decision-making.[147] Over time, Hezbollah's actions proved that the group's interest in political involvement was more self-serving and in many ways, another outlet for the group to increase their influence and power not just in their controlled areas, but in the rest of the country as well. Over time, Hezbollah's Manifesto and the language used in public statements and interviews by its leadership shifted away from the hardline

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[145] Laithy, Heba, et.al. Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon. *International Poverty Center.* 2008. http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCCountryStudy13.pdf
[146] *ibid*
[147] Perry, G. Hezbollah, Islamist politics, and international society. **Choice (Middletown).** 2015, 53 (1), p. 153

60

Islamist rhetoric to a tone that fit with the rest of the country.[148] Though the Manifesto is

generally vague, the language in the 2009 version contains fewer Shi'aa identity

references than the Open Letter in 1985 did.[149] While the later versions continued to

confirm Hezbollah's goals to changing the Lebanese political system to a majoritarian

democracy, it addressed the Lebanese as a whole, not just the Muslim population.[150] The

softening of the language and mission to appeal to the entire population, not just their

constituents alone, is indicative of a party that evolved as the political scene changed and

its leadership recognized that in order to survive, it must adapt to its environment.

During the first few years after Hezbollah's supported candidates began winning

seats in the Parliament, one of the group's missions remained focused on the

'Islamization' of Lebanon.[151] Public statements made by the various Hezbollah members

contained language hinting at the group's intent to change the landscape of the social

makeup to adhere to strict and conservative interpretation of the Koran, though not

necessarily by using violence.[152] In a 1993 interview with Al-Diar, Nasrallah said; "we

believe that the establishment of Islamic Rule in Lebanon is contingent on the will and

choice of the people, and we will try to convince the people to choose this option."[153]The

tone, however, would eventually become softer and eventually almost entirely eliminated

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[148] Fadhil Ali, Rafid. New Hezbollah Manifesto Emphasizes Political Role in a United
Lebanon. *Terrorism Monitor.*2009. Vol. 77 Issue 38.
[149] *ibid*
[150] Khatib, Lina. Hizbullah's Political Strategy. *Survival.* 2011. Vol 53, No. 2. pp 63-71
[151] Hamzeh, Nizar A. Lebanon's Hizbullah: from Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary
Accomodation. *Third World Quarterly.* 1993. Vol. 14, No. 2 pp. 321-37.
[152] Azani, Eitan. Hezbollah's Strategy of "Walking on the Edge": Between Political Game and
Political Violence. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 2012. Vol. 34, pp741-759.
[153] *ibid*

any mention of the impending change desired. Some analysts even argue that Hezbollah's 'Islamization' plan slowly turned into the group's own 'Lebanonization' transformation.[154]Over time, Nasrallah himself began regularly supporting pro-democratic governing efforts. In 2009, Hezbollah's manifesto was revised and updated to reflect the group's more moderate tone.[155] In fact, the Manifesto contained no indication of moving the country towards adopting Islamic Rule; "one of the key conditions for the creation of such a homeland and for ensuring its sustainability is the presence of a strong, capable and impartial state, a political system that truly reflects the will of the people and their aspirations for justice, freedom, security, stability, well-being and dignity. These goals are shared by all the Lebanese."[156] The group's success in maintaining control over Bekaa, Nabatieh and several parts of Beirut seemed to have driven its leaders to want to appeal to the rest of the country.

Several opinion surveys taken over time have shown a shift in the opinion that various sects in Lebanon have about the group and their presence in the political realm. In 2014, the Pew Research Center published interesting results of an extensive survey conducted in Lebanon. At the time, 31% of the Christian community shared a positive and favorable opinion on Hezbollah, while 69% did not trust the group's mission.[157] On the other hand, only 9% of the Sunni Muslim population felt positive and optimistic

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[154] Haddad, Simon The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah. *Studies in conflict and terrorism*. 2006. Vol 29. p. 21 - 34.
[155] Masters, Jonathan et al. Hezbollah. *Council on Foreign Relations.* 2014 http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155
[156] Alagha, Joseph. Hizbullah's Documents. *Amsterdam University Press.* 2011.
[157] Concerns about Islamic Extremism on the Rise in the Middle East". *The Pew Research Center.* 2014. http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/01/concerns-about-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-middle-east/

about the group, while 88% distrusted the organization. On the other hand, and unsurprisingly, 86 % of those who self identified as Shi'aa Muslims supported the group to some extent, while 13% of the Shi'aa Muslim population was not favorable of Hezbollah.[158] Overall, the Lebanese population's general opinion of Hezbollah in 2014 was positive, with 41% of the population favoring the group overall. While the research does not specify whether those surveyed strictly distinguished their opinions of each section in Hezbollah, it is evident that as a political party, both the Christian and Shi'aa communities accept Hezbollah. Over time, the group became one of the largest political parties in the country, as it attracted the most followers since the end of the civil war.[159]

As the Lebanese people's trust in Hezbollah began to shift in the direction the group had hoped for, its influence seemed to grow as steadily in the Parliament. By 2008, Hezbollah had become the most powerful cabinet in the governing body. Its efforts to maintain its legitimacy in the country proved to be effective. To further accentuate their plans to increase their influence and solidify their position in the political realm, Hezbollah's members led a campaign in May 2008 against the then prime minister, and eventually created one of the longest running political gridlocks in the Parliament. The political crisis in Lebanon began after Rafik Hariri, a former prime minister, was assassinated in 2005 and large demonstrations calling for Syria's exit of the country erupted around the country.[160] The demonstrations were successful as Syria's last troops

[158] *ibid*

[159] Harik, Judith. Between Islam and the System: sources and implications of popular support for Lebanon's Hizballa. ***Journal of Conflict Resolution.*** 1996 Vol. 40, No. 1.pp. 41-67.
[160] Saab, Bilal. Shaping Lebanon's Future. ***Brookings.*** 2008.
http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2008/03/19-lebanon-saab

withdrew in May of that same year, and in June, the country held its first post-Syrian parliamentary elections. The winning political bloc, which became known as the "March 2014" coalition, was supported by the international community, and opposed by Hezbollah.[161] The coalition was led by none other than the late Hariri's son, Saad Hariri, and over time developed and introduced an ambitious plan to transition the country's politics away from external influence.[162] Hezbollah, leading the opposition, would refuse to attend cabinet sessions and without their members' votes, would prevent laws and reforms from being implemented.[163]

No other party could match the influence or power Hezbollah's supporters held in the Parliament.[164] Soon after the campaign started, a soft coup was led against the US backed president in power, and the most important seat in the country's governing body became empty for over eighteen months. As tensions grew between the various parties in the Parliament and short spurts of violence began flashing between their supporters. Hezbollah even mobilized its military and seized Sunni politicians' offices in West Beirut, and closed the media outlet owned by Saad Hariri.[165] In an effort to control the escalation of violence, Lebanese leaders, including then-President Michel Sulaiman, Saad Hariri and representatives of all major political parties in the country, including

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[161] *ibid*

[162] *ibid*

[163] *ibid*

[164] Lebanon Rivals Agree Crisis Deal. *BBC.* 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7411835.stm

[165] Bazzi, Mohamad. Lebanon is stuck in near perpetual political paralysis. *The National.* 2015 http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/lebanon-is-stuck-in-near-perpetual-political-paralysis

Hezbollah, met in Doha.[166] After five days of intense negotiations in what is known as

the Lebanese National Dialogue, the Doha Agreement was drafted and issued by the

Council of the League of Arab States on May 22, 2008.[167] The agreement paved the way

for the only candidate with enough support from all involved parties to win the

presidency. The majority in the Parliament, most of which was backed by the West, were

given sixteen cabinet seats and were slated to choose the prime minister. On the other

hand, the Syrian backed opposition, led by Hezbollah, was given eleven cabinet seats and

total veto power over any government decision. While all parties seemed satisfied with

the outcome of the Doha Agreement, it is undeniable that Hezbollah walked away with

the most power, especially in the long term.[168]

Hezbollah's military action in 2008, and its militia's quick overtaking of West

Beirut, was the first time the group purposely used the Islamic Resistance, as in its

military wing, to achieve a political wing goal.[169] Though the activity of the Islamic

Resistance was mainly kept private, prominent members of the Organization claimed that

the wings shared the same function and goals. In an interview in the Daily Star, Lebanon

in 2012, Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary-General, Naem Qassim, said: "We don't have a

military wing and a political one; we don't have Hezbollah on one hand and the resistance

[166] The Lebanese National Dialogue (2008-2014). *Common Space Initiative.* Last
updated 2015.
http://commonspaceinitiative.libguides.com/content.php?pid=469830&sid=3846490
[167] Doha Agreement on the Outcome of the Meeting of the Lebanese National Dialogue. *UN
Security Council.* 2008. http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-
8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Lebanon%20S2008392.pdf
[168] *ibid*
[169] Bazzi, Mohamad. Lebanon is stuck in near perpetual political paralysis. *The National.*
2015 http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/lebanon-is-stuck-in-near-perpetual-
political-paralysis

party on the other." The relationship, though mostly kept out from the public purview,

between the two wings has been critical to the group's identity, serving Hezbollah's

mission.[170] Whether the military wing was maintained in order to bolster the group's

political power in the Parliament is a difficult concept given the available public

resources.

After the siege of West Beirut in 2008, the series of events that occurred in 2011

show that Hezbollah uses the dual strategy to benefit itself. In 2011, while Prime Minister

Saad Hariri was on a diplomatic visit to Washington, DC, Hezbollah and their allies

staged a collapse of the government. The political gridlock was a protest against the

official recognition of the UN Special Tribunal to Lebanon's investigation of the

assassination of Rafik Hariri.[171] At the time, several Hezbollah members were named

prime suspects of the assassination of Rafik Hariri. In June 2011, a UN tribunal indicted

four members of Hezbollah on charges of serving as spotters as Hariri's vehicle was

driving to the explosion site. Hezbollah has, and continues to, deny any involvement with

the February 2005 suicide bomb truck that left twenty-three dead in Beirut, including

Hariri. That said, in an effort to prevent the government from cooperating with the

Special Tribunal, Hezbollah's leadership led the opposition in Parliament towards

gridlock. The group tactically managed to guise its actions as its protest against the

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[170] Horowitz, Richard. Hezbollah's Military and Politics: Any Difference? *World Policy Blog.* September 25, 2013. http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2013/09/25/hezbollahs-military-and-politics-any-difference
[171] Fassihi, Farnaz. Hezbollah topples Lebanon government; U.S.-backed prime minister, while meeting with Obama, loses his coalition when Syrian-backed group withdraws. *The Wall Street Journal.* Eastern edition. 2011

current government's inability to achieve change and reform..[172] Unlike in 2008,

Hezbollah's leaders did not mobilize the Islamic Resistance. Instead, they strategically

turned peaceful demonstrations of pro-party supporters into violent riots. Within days,

eleven prime ministers resigned, ten of whom were in Hezbollah's party.[173] the

government collapsed and Hariri was forced to hand his power to Najib Mikati, a

candidate for Prime Minister who enjoyed Hezbollah's support.[174] In addition to ensuring

that an ally occupied the most important office in Parliament, Hezbollah backed members

of the Parliament gained oversight over the ministry of agriculture and more importantly,

the reform of Lebanese bureaucracy. In turn, it agreed that it would not use military

power while trying to resolve domestic political conflicts.[175] A little more than three

years after gaining veto power with the Doha Agreement in 2008, Hezbollah successfully

managed to increase its influence and control over the government even further.

What were they thinking?

All eyes were on the youngest, freshest political group entering the turbulent and

tense post-war elections in Lebanon. Hezbollah's manifesto had been published less than

ten years prior, and aggressively called for the creation of an Islamic state.[176] Both

international and domestic observers worried over the escalation of a new civil war as

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[172] *ibid*

[173] Lebanon Political Parties Gridlocked. **Voice of America.** 2011.
http://www.voanews.com/content/lebanon-pm-hariri-in-turkey-following-government-collapse-113594874/133527.html

[174] Fassihi, Farnaz. Lebanon vote elevates Hezbollah; election of premier sets pro-Iran party as the country's pre-eminent power. **The Wall Street Journal.** *Eastern edition.* 2011.

[175] *ibid*

[176] Blanford, Nicholas. Introduction to Voice of Hezbollah. **Verso.** 2006

other political groups increased their anti-secularism propaganda.[177] In an interview

conducted by As-Safir in February 1992, just a few months prior to the first post-war

elections, Nasrallah was asked about the possibility of establishing alliances and

governing with other existing political parties when Hezbollah's mission is based on

Islamist fundamentals, while some a significant portion of Lebanese were Christians.

Nasrallah assured the interviewer about the group's ideal Islamic government, stating,

"historically, and by virtue of its nature, an Islamic government cannot survive or last if it

does not have a wide popular base, or if the nation as a whole does not support it. Based

on that, I believe that we are entitled- as is every Lebanese citizen- to aspire to the best

project or notion that, in our opinion, would lead to the most just, prosperous, secure and

peaceful society."[178]

During the initial years of Hezbollah's political involvement in the parliament, the

group's rhetoric was based on the historic stance it took regarding the issues it faced. In

his speeches and interviews, Nasrallah would often mention Iran and their government

and society as an example for the Lebanese to consider when envisioning the future of

Lebanon. It was not long until the leadership of the group understood and accepted that

the political and social environment in their country differed from that in Iran. The

Manifesto was updated just a couple of years after the first few Hezbollah supported

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[177] El Khazen, Farid. Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans. *The Middle East journal.* 2003. 57 (4), p. 605 - 624

[178] After the Assassination. **Al Safir Newspaper**. February 27, 1992. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

parliamentarians were sworn into office.[179] The new rhetoric was more supportive of

building an inclusive Lebanese state based on democratic principles, not Islamic beliefs.

In fact, the Open Letter which was published in 1985, directly references choosing

Islamic based principles for governing. "To allow our populace the right of self-

determination; to freely choose   the political sy

our commitment to (the rule of) Islam, and we invite everybody to choose system (of

government/governance), which alone is capable of guaranteeing justice and dignity to

everyone, thus preventing any colonial attempt from invading our country again."[180] the

2009 Manifesto, on the other hand, rarely references Islamic rule and beliefs. Instead, it

lists seventeen principles it advises the Lebanese people and government to follow in

order to achieve a true, secular democracy. Principle Five, the only one to make any

mention of religion, reads; "the State that is committed to applying the rule of law on all

constituents within a framework of respect for public freedoms, and impartial application

of citizens' rights and duties, irrespective of religious sect, home region or the citizen's

views."[181]

After the end of the Operation Accountability war of 1993, Hezbollah faced the

social pressure concept known as 'Lebanization'.[182] The group was challenged to become

more accepting and inclusive of all communities in the country, and to understand the

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[179] Blanford, Nicholas. Introduction to Voice of Hezbollah. *Verso.* 2006
[180] Hezbollah's Open Letter Addressed to the Oppressed. As published in Alagha, Joseph. Hizbullah's Documents. *Amsterdam University Press.* 2011.
[181] The New Manifesto (30 November 2009) As published in Alagha, Joseph. Hizbullah's Documents. *Amsterdam University Press.* 2011.
[182] Haddad, Simon The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah. *Studies in conflict and terrorism*. 2006. Vol 29. p. 21 - 34.

danger it posed on the state as a whole when it instigates Israel into a war. Nasrallah, in

an interview with As-Safir, questioned the aim of the advocacy to become more

'Lebanese', and compared Hezbollah's Iranian ties to the Christian community that spoke

French and adapted a westernized lifestyle. His response did not end with posing a

challenge to the patriotism his Christian counterparts felt, but instead, admitted that the

latest aggression with Israel forced the group to reassess its stance in the political scene

and adapt more open and collaborative values.[183] Referring to Operation Accountability

as the 'event', he says; "as for after the event, it is evident to all that the Lebanese people

are open towards each other. They share common feelings and values, and therefore have

what it takes to form a single, cohesive community in the face of aggression. I do not

deny that this will further encourage Hezbollah to be more open, to force stronger

relations with other groups, and to be forthcoming in interacting with various sectors of

the Lebanese population. This would be a factor of assurance, not a founding factor,

because the latter already exists."[184]

In an interview with Al-Ahram in the wake of the Israeli withdrawal from the

Security Zone in the south of the country, Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah shared the group's

stance on political sectarianism. It was undeniable that it benefitted the Christian

community more than it did the Muslim sects, and as the political and electoral systems

was deeply rooted in the sectarian social makeup, Hezbollah voiced what other groups

were already saying. "[…] We feel that it is necessary to deal with various Lebanese

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[183] The April Understanding. **Al Safir Newspaper.** April 30, 1996. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006
[184] *ibid*

domestic issues with a great deal of empathy and understanding; we want to get rid of political sectarianism, which is a backward and tribal system, and replace it with a modern one that would govern the country and preserve the internal cohesion."[185]

Conclusion to Chapter 6

Since 1992, Hezbollah has successfully managed to infiltrate the Lebanese political realm, sustain its legitimacy as a non-state armed group in the country and increase its power and influence within its controlled areas as well as the rest of Lebanon. Until 2006, it had been protected by Syria's presence as the latter continued to serve as the third party implementer of the Ta'if Agreement. Though Hezbollah continued to refuse to give up its arms and therefore adhere to one the most important clauses in the Agreement as other parties had before it, its members began shifting their tones and messages to better fit with the current Lebanese social environment. As the civil war ended abruptly, and no official peace talks or agreements between the individual warring parties ever took place, the political scene in 1992 was ripe for newcomers. Hezbollah at the time was the newest party to enter the political scene, and over the next few years would gain the most support among the youth, especially in the Shi'aa Muslim communities. While Hezbollah ran under the guise of wanting to better the communities in which they exercise the most power, it seemed as though their successes were found in the increase of influence over governance.

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[185] "A Peaceful Resolution is a Victory for the Resistance". **Al-Ahram**. February 16, 2000. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

It is undeniable that Hezbollah's political involvement has stemmed from the desire to maintain its legitimacy after the war ended in 1990. The protection that Syria granted the group until 2006, when it was forced to withdraw after several links were made to the assassination of Rafik Hariri, further helped Hezbollah gain and maintain the momentum that other political parties in Lebanon lost once the war was over. Though the situation on the ground today is much different than it was as recently as four years ago, Hezbollah remains one of the most influential parties in Lebanese politics. It has successfully established itself as a force to be reckoned with, sometimes using violence as a means to its ends. Though the political climate today in Lebanon is volatile as the region deals with several ongoing wars, and Hezbollah has been stretched thin as it supports Assad's troops in Syria, it continues to exercise significant power over any decision made in the government.Hezbollah's image has evolved over time to better adapt to the changing environment in which its members live. It has made it one of the most successful parties in the country, as well as among comparable groups internationally. It is safe to say that its political participation has effectively allowed its leadership to reach a wider audience, gained them a seat at every major talk in the region and has catapulted it to control more of the Lebanese state than it could have by focusing on maintaining its military wing alone. It was critical, in 1992, for the leadership to choose to enter the political realm, even though the government structure at the time was more favorable to other sects, mainly the Maronite Christians. Though development in the areas in which it exercises the most power remains slow in comparison to other parts

of the country, the increasingly positive opinion of the Lebanese populace as a whole

towards only solidifies the notion that the group is here to stay.

CHAPTER 7: MAINTAINING THE MILITARY WING

Section III, Subsection 2 in the Ta'if Agreement states:

"Considering that all Lebanese factions have agreed to the establishment of a strong state founded on the basis of national accord, the national accord government shall draft a detailed one-year plan whose objective is to spread the sovereignty of the State of Lebanon over all Lebanese territories gradually with the state's own forces. The broad lines of the plan shall be as follows:

A.   Disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias shall be announced. The militias' weapons shall be delivered to the State of Lebanon within a period of 6 months, beginning with the approval of the national accord charter. The president of the republic shall be elected. A national accord cabinet shall be formed, and the political reforms shall be approved constitutionally. […]"[186]

In 1990 and 1991, all non-state armed groups in Lebanon agreed to the terms established by the Agreement and fully, albeit slowly, disbanded militarily. Though most maintained their political presence and participated in Parliamentary elections ever since, their influence in their areas and in Lebanon in general seemed to dissipate over time.[187] Hezbollah, on the other hand, was formally exempt by the established Lebanese government, with support from the Lebanese military, from abiding by the Agreement's

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[186] The Ta'If Agreement. As Approved by the Lebanese Parliament in 1989. **The United Nations.** https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf
[187] El Khazen, Farid. Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans. **The Middle East journal.** 2003. 57 (4), p. 605 - 624

stipulation as it was seen as a necessary counterbalance to Israel's presence in the Security Zone in the south of Lebanon.[188] Furthermore, as its influence and power in the government grew, the harder it became for opposing parties to challenge their resistance to giving up their military power, and as this chapter will show, the group's dual identity was a strategy where one wing's power bolstered the other. Fully supported by the third party implementer, Syria, Hezbollah was not concerned with external pressures to disarm either. When pressed for an explanation over the group's defiance to the Ta'if agreement now that Israel has evacuated to country, Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah's message has consistently been centered over the physical security of their controlled areas, specifically due to the threat that Israel presents.

This chapter will examine why and how Hezbollah continues to maintain a military wing despite the fact that Israel no longer occupies land in Lebanon. This chapter places a heavy emphasis on speeches and interviews given by the party's leadership. Due to the limited and generally unconfirmed publically available information regarding the Islamic Resistance' funding sources, amounts and strategies, the research for this chapter was significantly restricted and therefore a deeper analysis of the military wing's existence is impossible at this time. Hezbollah has always been notoriously secretive about its military purpose and strategy, especially after Israel no longer occupied the Security Zone. That said, this research will examine Nasrallah's public statements regarding the military wing, especially when he makes calls to appeal to the general populace regarding its necessity for national security. It will also examine the group's

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[188] Saouli, Adham. Lebanon's Hizbullah: the quest for survival. *World affairs (Washington)*. 2003.166 (2), p. 71.

relationship with the Lebanese military throughout time, as the latter has shifted its stance on the existence of the Resistance over time. While this chapter may not be able to dive deeply into the group's internal information regarding the wing, it will focus on the available information to support the second part of the argument that claims that Israel has and continues to present a threat to Lebanon, especially the areas where Hezbollah's constituents live.

In 2005, after the United States, the United Nations and other external parties placed pressure on Assad to end the occupation in Lebanon following Hariri's assassination.[189] By May of that same year, the last of the Syrian troops fully withdrew from the country and with that Hezbollah's military wing lost some of the support it enjoyed in the 15 years since the end of the civil war. Even then, the group refused to disarm. A few days before the first post-Syrian parliamentary elections began in 2005, Nasrallah spoke at a rally in the south of the country, and described the organization's stance on the pressure exerted by both internal and external players to give up their weapons. "We are the most eager to have peace, stability, and national unity in Lebanon; we do not wish to attack anyone, and never have, and will also not allow anyone else to attack Lebanon. But if anyone – listen to me – anyone tries to disarm the resistance, we will fight him the way the martyrs fought in Karbala, because we know that any action of

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[189] Worth, Robert. Deal for Lebanese Factions Leaves Hezbollah Stronger. *The New York Times.* 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/world/middleeast/22lebanon.html?_r=0

this kind would be an Israeli action, an Israeli decision, and a move to further Israel's interests."[190]

Hezbollah's resistance to disarming is not necessarily surprising as the armed wing is a significant part of the group's identity and its most guaranteed means to carry out its mission. As the group's beginnings were initially warlike and its efforts to protect its constituents were mainly violent, it built its credibility on its military might. The most consistent reason used over time to justify its refusal to disarm is the ever-present threat of the existence of Israel, first against the southern parts of Lebanon, and later, against the whole country. The group's unwillingness to negotiate with their neighbor, even though the occasion has presented itself more than once is puzzling as their military strategy and interests remain completely secretive.

As the Ta'if Agreement only addressed the surface issues that plagued the country enough to cause a long and bloody civil war, the underlying problems that drove the various sects to create their own-armed groups were never resolved. Non-state armed groups who survived the civil war did not go through any sort of rehabilitation program to prepare them to enter political world and allow the fragile young democracy to be successful. The Lebanese military, per the Ta'if Agreement's stipulations, was to be fortified with funding, recruits and proper training.[191] It was deemed to be the only legitimate armed group in the State, yet limited resources and shaky leadership have,

[190] Nasrallah, Hassan. We Will Consider Any Hand that Tries to Seize our Weapons as an Israeli Hand. Speech given on May 25, 2005. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

[191] Krayem, Hassan. The Lebanese Civil War and the Taif Agreement. *American University of Beirut*. 1995. http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/conflict-resolution.html

since the end of the civil war, prevented it from becoming the protective and empowered entity that the Taif Agreement envisioned; "the fundamental task of the armed forces is to defend the homeland, and if necessary, protect public order when the danger exceeds the capability of the internal security forces to deal with such a danger on their own.[192]

. As a result, over time, the Lebanese public opinion at times showed more support for Hezbollah's military than to the established state army, especially when it came to protecting the country from a potential war with Israel. In a survey conducted in 2010 by the Beirut Center for Research and Information, 84% of the Lebanese population trusted the Hezbollah's military capability when it comes to dealing with any future Israeli attacks.[193] The military's limited activity to counter Israel's attacks in the 1990s and 2000s, as well as the leadership's much public inability to secure sustainable funding for their troops and arsenal both contributed to the overall shift in trust in Hezbollah's military wing.

The survey results found by the Beirut Center for Research and Information in 2010 are not surprising given Hezbollah's suspected military evolution and arsenal growth since their humble beginnings in the 1980s. Three short, yet violent, wars with Israel were ignited and fought after the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990. These wars, especially the one in 2006, would reestablish Hezbollah as a military force that could do what well-funded Arab nations' state militaries could not; present a viable threat

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[192] The Ta'If Agreement. As Approved by the Lebanese Parliament in 1989. **The United Nations.** https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf
[193] Lutz, Meris. Lebanon: Even Those Wary of Hezbollah Believe in its Prowess. **Beirut Center for Research and Information.** 2010 http://beirutcenter.net/default.asp?MenuID=64

to Israel's armed forces.[194] Achieving military success against their biggest enemy was an undertaking that was preceded by shorter violent outbursts that have cost the group hundreds of casualties as well as several million dollars in infrastructure damage in their controlled areas.

<div align="center">Nasrallah on the Islamic Resistance</div>

As previously mentioned, Hezbollah has maintained complete secrecy regarding the military wing, its purpose and plans. Rarely does Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah share more than a few words regarding the Islamic Resistance when prompted. Unlike Hezbollah's public political evolution, the plans for the military have often stumped researchers and analysts. When one examines the Ayatollah's interviews and speeches over time, it is clear that few themes exist. During various parts of Hezbollah's history, calls for support from most, if not all, Lebanese factions are made.Following the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah's predecessor as Hezbollah's Secretary General, Sayyed Abbas Mussawi, Nasrallah spoke of the necessity for the Lebanese to agree on the common denominator that will unite them all, in this case, Israel and the danger it poses on Lebanon.[195] In an interview with As-Safir, a Lebanese newspaper, he says: "we are saying to the Lebanese: 'Come, let us give Lebanon a minimum degree of protection so that the Israeli enemy will not gobble it up; come, let us liberate Lebanon and

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[194] Kalb, Marvin. The Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflicts. **The Brookings Institute.** 2007. http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/events/2007/2/17islamic-world/2007islamforum_israel-hezb-war.pdf

[195] After the Assassination. **Al Safir Newspaper**. February 27, 1992. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. **Verso.** 2006

eliminate the Israeli danger to it and, based on that, we can then solve the impending issues through dialogue."[196] Fear mongering is a regular tactic used by the group to initiate and sustain support domestically. In a speech given in 2002, Nasrallah challenges the various parties placing pressure on the group's leadership to disarm. He says, "what we are saying here is that those who want to protect Lebanon should endorse the resistance's presence in the south, and those who want to sacrifice the army should send it to the south."[197]

This rhetoric is no different from the message given by the group almost a decade earlier at the end of the Lebanese civil war and while Israel maintained a military presence in the south of the country. In 1989, in the wake of the Tehran-Damascus Agreement, a ceasefire brokered by Iran and Syria to end a long and violent war between two of the most prominent Shi'aa militant groups in the country, Hezbollah and Amal Movement, Nasrallah's message was similar though more aggressive. The Agreement established a truce between both groups, Nasrallah, in his interview with Pan-Arab newspaper Al-Wahda Al-Islamia, suggested that a stronger alliance with Amal needs to be established as, ultimately, they had one common goal to accomplish. He says; "we believe that a genuine resistance will incapacitate Israel in the face of its unity, loyalty, and spirit of sacrifice in defense of its land, and the integrity and dignity of its people. […] Over the past few months, Israel has sat there watching and feeling safe in its positions; now, however, it is issuing threats because it wants young Shiaa men to be

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[196] *ibid*

[197] Nasrallah, Hassan. "How can you Afford that?". Speech given on February 16, 2002. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

killed in Lebanon. All Shi'aas should wake up to these threats and be ready to confront the original enemy, Israel, as well as overcome all obstacles and grudges, on account of the threat facing the south and Muslims."[198]

Three years after this interview, Hezbollah continued to show reservation about forming alliances with other groups, especially Christian and Sunni Muslims in Lebanon. In an interview with Lebanese newspaper *Al-Safir*, Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah emphasized on the threats presented by Israel, and maintained that the state was Lebanon's foremost and most dangerous enemy. He expressed concerns about other groups foregoing the Israeli attacks on Lebanon, and even forming alliances with them. He described the resistance to Israel as the common denominator that may bring all Lebanese sects together, especially at a time when the country was beginning to rebuild itself from the war. When asked about contacting Christian leaders to prompt the conversation about Israel, Nasrallah was especially opposed to working with the Phalangists, a Maronite Christian political group that was linked to Israel during various points of the civil war. While Nasrallah admitted that he had reservations about working with Lebanese Christians, he added that he did not believe that all were supportive Israel.[199]

Over time, Hezbollah's stance on cooperating with other Lebanese sects would soften and the language used to describe those victimized by Israel would shift. Though

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[198] Shi'aa Reconciliation. **Al-Wahda Al-Islamiya.** February 3, 1989. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

[199] After the Assassination. **Al Safir Newspaper**. February 27, 1992. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

in the political arena the evolution of the group's goals are shared publically and the transition from aiming to establish an Islamic state to supporting some Democratic principles can be seen, on the military end, the changes are less concrete. The tone in the interviews and speeches regarding Israel and the necessity of the Islamic Resistance differed depending on whether or not a conflict with Israel was about to escalate, de-escalate or happened to be ongoing. After the Grapes of Wrath war concluded, Hassan Nasrallah was interviewed by the Lebanese daily As-Safir about the peace agreement and the difference between the war in 1993 and the one in 1996. Unlike earlier interviews that identified the victim as Shi'aa men and women, Nasrallah consistently kept referring to all Lebanese civilians as those who suffered in the war. While Shi'aa men and women were Lebanese, this was one of the first times when Nasrallah included the rest of the existing sects as part of the resistance. The switch in language is important to note as, at the time, Hezbollah had just experienced changing its manifesto to show softer, more inclusive language. The fight was no longer about protecting Hezbollah-controlled territory; it was about the entire state. As Nasrallah puts it; "[…] we do not need anyone to impose restrictions on us, because the Lebanese people are our people, the destroyed homes are our homes, the dispossessed are our families, […]"[200]

In 2000, the UN Security Council Resolution 425 called for an orderly Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. While Hezbollah was not at the negotiation table, Nasrallah took the opportunity to declare the decision a victory for the Islamic Resistance and the

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[200] The April Understanding. **Al Safir Newspaper.** April 30, 1996. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

country as a whole. On May 26, 2000, in a speech in the southern town of Bint Jbeil, the Ayatollah praised the efforts of the martyrs, both from the Resistance itself as well as the Lebanese army, who sacrificed their own lives for the 'liberation'. For the first time, he also made a public declaration regarding the security of the area and said "the state is in charge here; this region has returned to its control, and it alone can decide what to do: send security forces, reinforce police posts, or send other security apparatus. We do not bear any responsibility whatsoever for maintaining security in this region."[201] This speech was critical not only for what the Ayatollah publicly declared to the crowds that day, but must also be noted for what was left unsaid. While the responsibility of the security and rebuilding of the region was officially deemed to be the state's responsibility, and not that of Hezbollah, no mention of the future of the Islamic Resistance or its purpose was mentioned. Nasrallah's tone about cooperating with other groups in the country, especially the only legally recognized military group, the Lebanese Army, is significantly different in this speech than it had been previously. The evolution of the group's stance on its place in Lebanese society was never more obvious, its future, however, remained a deeply protected secret.

Between 2000 and 2005, an uncommon calm would take over the country. Fewer violent exchanges would occur at the border between Hezbollah and Israeli troops. All the while, the political wing's development and progressively growing control of the Parliament would overshadow what was suspected to be some of the most critical years

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[201] Nasrallah, Hassan. Victory. May 26, 2000. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. **Verso.** 2006

in Hezbollah's arsenal and intelligence development.[202]In 2005, former Lebanese Prime

Minister Rafik Harriri, a prominent and long-standing political figure in the country, was

killed when a bomb detonated in a nearby vehicle. His death was almost immediately

linked to Syria and Hezbollah, and not long after, a UN Tribunal launched an

investigation of the case. Nasrallah was quick to deny his group's involvement with the

attack, as well as Syria's. The intervention, according to Nasrallah, was an international

interference in Lebanese affairs that was meant to oppress and limit the Resistance.[203]

While the political wing slightly shifted its strategy from an opposition to an ally in the

Parliament after the first post-Syria elections took place, the military wing's strategy

became more aggressive towards any calls for disarming.

In 2006, shortly after the UN mandated ceasefire of 2016, New TV, a Lebanese

television network, interviewed Nasrallah and discussed the results of the war, the

Lebanese Army's intervention and the devastation that affected areas as north as Beirut

due to the war. Much like before, Nasrallah emphasized the group's willingness to abide

by the military, who would, according to him, be ultimately responsible for the security

of the region. Once again, however, little is mentioned about the future of the Islamic

Resistance, or even the necessity of its sustainability.[204] Nasrallah would grant few

interviews and make even fewer public appearances and the mission and plans of the

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[202] Arkin, William. Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. *Air University Press.* 2007.
[203] Nasrallah, Hassan. We Will Consider Any Hand that Tries to Seize our Weapons as an Israeli Hand. Speech given on May 25, 2005. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006
[204] Interview with New TV. August 27, 2006. In print in the book compilation Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Edited by Nicholas Noe. *Verso.* 2006

Islamic Resistance would be further obscured. While the relationships between the group and Lebanese military, Syria and Iran are known to be critical for the existence of the Resistance, publically shared information regarding the military wing offers a miniscule lens into the operation. One might argue that it is that exact secrecy that has led to the success and long-standing status of the military wing. That said, the rest of this chapter will explore the relationship, in as much detail as possible, between the Lebanese military and Hezbollah, as well as the latter's involvement in the Syrian civil war, and the challenges posed by entering such a complicated situation.

The Lebanese Military and Hezbollah

At the end of the war, and as decreed in the Ta'if Agreement, the Lebanese military was to be rebuilt, having suffered severe human and material damage during the war. In addition to reestablishing itself as the sole legitimate armed group in the fragile state, the military disarmed every insurgency group that fought during the civil war, except, of course, for Hezbollah.[205] At the time, Hezbollah's military wing was viewed as a legitimate and strong buffer against Israel's presence in the south of the country and the leadership in the Leadership generally left the group to its own demise, rarely questioning their tactics and strategies. As an alternative to establishing a military base in the Hezbollah-controlled Nabatieh in the South, the military instead formed a small army that would be based there until it was deemed unnecessary. The South Lebanese Army (SLA), as it became known, did little to interfere with Hezbollah attacks on Israeli soldiers and

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[205] Arkin, William. Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. *Air University Press.* 2007.

then even less when the 1993 and 1996 wars were ongoing.[206] As Lebanon slowly

recovered from the civil war and when Israel reached an agreement with the established

government to evacuate the security zone, the Lebanese military began placing pressure

on Hezbollah to disarm.[207] During the 2006 war, the Lebanese government claimed no

responsibility for the kidnaping of the two Israeli soldiers. It did, however, promise to use

its military power to protect its people. That said, as no Lebanese military barracks were

ever established in Hezbollah controlled territory, Lebanese soldiers were involved in

minor battle and did little to influence the outcome of the war. Once the conflict

deescalated, the Lebanese army, for the first time in decades, joined UNIFIL at the border

in the south of the country.[208]

Over the years after the Lebanese civil war ended, Hezbollah's Islamic

Resistance's relationship with the Lebanese military would evolve slowly. Heavily

supported by Syria and the Assad's troops that occupied the country until 2006, there was

little motivation for Nasrallah and his military commanders to cooperate with the

Lebanese military. After the Syrian troops were forced to evacuate from Lebanon

following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the pressure on

Hezbollah to disarm significantly increased. The relationship with the Lebanese military

would become strained until the Syrian civil war began in 2011 and Syrian Sunni

Muslims began seeking refuge in the Bekaa, one of Hezbollah's controlled areas. The

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[206] Analysis: Role of the SLA. *BBC.* 2000 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/760914.stm
[207] Ghosn, Faten. The case of the 2006 War in Lebanon: reparations? Reconstruction? Or both?. *The international journal of human rights*. 2013.17 (1), p. 1 - 17.
[208] Arkin, William. Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. *Air University Press.* 2007.

threat of satellite insurgency activity in the area increased, especially by individuals associated with the Free Syrian Army and other Syrian rebel groups fighting one of Hezbollah's main allies, the Assad regime. It was then that some form of cooperation between Hezbollah's fighters and Lebanese soldiers began to be established with the shared goal of ensuring the physical security of the northeastern side of Lebanon. [209]

Until 2000, Hezbollah faced minimal and sporadic domestic pressure to disarm by the Lebanese military. The presence of Israel within the country was deemed to be a threat by politicians and military strategists unaffiliated to Hezbollah, and the existence of the Islamic Resistance was viewed as a necessary counterbalance. The Lebanese military was also rebuilding itself from the war, and it was widely known that it was too weak to be able to fight against Israel, should the need arise.[210]

<div align="center">The Syrian Civil War</div>

In 2013, about two years after the beginning of the Syrian civil war, Hezbollah fighters began their open war engagement alongside Assad's soldiers. Though one of Nasrallah's main goals was to secure the northern border with Syria, his organization's main weapon shipping route from Iran was suddenly in danger of collapse. Though it is difficult to fully confirm Damascus' role in the sustainability and growth of Hezbollah's military wing, various reports have emerged over time linking the two Middle Eastern powers. In 2013, Hezbollah's military wing's priorities shifting from solely focusing on

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[209] Alami, Mona. The Lebanese Army and The Confessional Trap. *Carnegie Endowment for Peace.* 2014. http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=56014

[210] Arkin, William. Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. *Air University Press.* 2007.

fighting Israel to fighting the rebels in Syria that Bashar Assad's regime had deemed as 'terrorists'.[211]

In various parts of Syria, the militia's fighters have been known to lead the fighting against groups like the Free Syrian Army. In just under three years, it is estimated that 700 to 1000 Hezbollah fighters have been killed or wounded.[212] Though unconfirmed by the secretive military wing, the number of injured or killed could be significant, as various sources believe that over 6000 Hezbollah fighters are currently on the ground in Syria.[213] Hezbollah's planned timeline of involvement in Syria is not clear, though recent developments in the ongoing civil war, especially with Russia's increased direct military backing of the Assad regime, could be setting a new direction for the conflict. As of today, Hezbollah's true motivations for fighting alongside Assad remain unclear. There are few public statements regarding the involvement of the troops in Syria, and even then, the information given by reliable sources in the group are vague and unreliable.

<div align="center">Conclusion of Chapter 7</div>

Hezbollah's military power today is far stronger and more sophisticated than it was twenty-six years ago in 1990, with a reported arsenal of 40,000 rockets and missiles including anti-ship and Scud missiles.[214] When the civil war ended, and as the Ta'if Agreement was signed and adopted, the Lebanese military, recognizing its own

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[211] Sullivan, Marisa. Hezbollah in Syria. *Institute for the Study of War*. 2014
[212] De Luce, Dan. Syrian War Takes Rising Toll on Hezbollah. *Foreign Policy.* 2015. http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/09/syrian-war-takes-rising-toll-on-hezbollah/
[213] *ibid*
[214] *ibid*

shortcomings and desperate need to rebuild itself, did not pressure Hezbollah to disarm as it did to other existing non-state armed groups. Israel, at the time, occupied a significant amount of land in the south of the country, mainly in traditionally Shi'aa Muslim communities. Given the close proximity of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) to the homes of the constituents that Hezbollah represented in Parliament, the group's main rhetoric for remaining armed was the necessity to protect their communities and eventually, that evolved into the safety of the country as a whole. Until 2000, the need for guaranteeing a balance to the presence of the Israeli troops deployed in the Security Zone was shared by Hezbollah and supported, albeit not always happily, by the Lebanese government. As the Lebanese military did little during that period to protect the civilians from harm, Hezbollah's fighters were quick to gain legitimacy even while instigating one too many conflict escalations.

Between 1990 and 2006, Israel and Hezbollah fought three violent wars. Thousands of Lebanese civilians and at least two hundred Israeli soldiers and civilians were killed, injured or displaced. Given the seemingly unending random cross-border attacks, it is impossible to determine which side initiated Occupation Accountability in 1993, Grapes of Wrath in 1996 and the longest violence campaign of the three, the unnamed war of 2006. The existence of the physical threat to Hezbollah and their controlled areas was real, as displayed by the verbal and physical attacks on the group and Lebanon by Israel over time. The danger posed by Israel's occupation of the security zone until 2000 was verifiable and undoubtedly threatening to the communities inside and around the area. Israel consistently attacked indiscriminately when provoked, not

only focusing on Hezbollah fighters but consistently violating internationally established laws of war in every violent campaign it fought against its northern neighbor. Hezbollah on the other hand, continued to develop and strengthen its own military capacity, even after the Israeli occupation ended in 2000.

In conclusion, the information presented in this chapter does not fully support the second part of the argument, which cites that the reason why Hezbollah maintained and sustained a military wing is the threats to physical security by Hezbollah's occupation of the security zone as well as their established state south of Lebanon. Given the level of secrecy that the military wing holds over its plans, arsenal inventory, number of fighters trained for combat, it is very difficult to conclude that Israel and the threat it presents were the sole reasons why Hezbollah only experienced a partial transition. In addition, the limited confirmed information on the sources of funding for Hezbollah presents another challenge for understanding the motivation behind the motivation for sustaining a costly endeavor. The analyses that focused on the escalation of every major war between 1999 and 2006 make it difficult to solidly support the second part of the presented argument, especially if the context of the entire twenty-six years since the end of the war are considered. The analysis of the interviews and speeches given by Hezbollah nonetheless present a small window into the Islamic Resistance's world. It was evident that the tone changed over time, first with a mission that excluded the rest of the Lebanese sects, especially the Christian community. Then, as the group became more politically active in the Parliament and the reality of the importance of widespread support was finally accepted, the tone in the interviews softened to include statements

that hinted at a nationwide battle against Israel, one that demanded collaboration across sectarian lines for it to have any chance at victory. Later on, with Israel's evacuation of the south in 2000, the threat posed to the physical security of Hezbollah's controlled areas greatly diminished. Starting that year, the armed group faced new pressures from the Lebanese government, alongside international powers, to finally abide by the Ta'if Agreement and demilitarize. The tone in the interviews changed to a more defensive and almost threatening one. Nasrallah seldom reminded his interviewer and audience about the dangers that Israel and the United States posed on national security. The group did, and continues to, refuse to submit to those pressures, despite the political and social environmental changes in the country over time.

Today, Hezbollah's involvement in the war in Syria and its estimated growing numbers in human losses is entirely different from the reasons used in the early 1990s to justify maintaining an armed wing as other rebel groups gave up theirs. The group's involvement in the war and the leadership's willingness to incur such high human and financial tolls remain unclear. There are speculations that this goes back to the group's relationship with Iran, but there is little available evidence that would help create a solid conclusion. The second part of the argument, therefore, cannot be fully supported using the data and analysis shared in this chapter. It has most certainly become clear over time that Hezbollah's goals for maintaining an armed wing extend beyond defending their regions and people from Israel. Though the group remains extremely secretive about their military goals, it is clear that, much like they have been with political involvement in the country, they are using their growing military power to extend their influence beyond

Bekaa, Nabatieh and Beirut. They are also, undoubtedly, evolving to better suit the

diverse Lebanese environment and sustain the support they have successfully gained

domestically thanks to growing strong enough to present a real challenge to Israel.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The transition of a rebel group into a political party is based on its leadership's

careful consideration of the opportunity costs of not doing so. External and internal

factors are critical to its success in the long run. For Hezbollah, the political and social

environments, combined with its leadership at the time and the perception of a large

enough population support base, were perfect for a rebel group to adapt to a new identity

and remain a significant part of the Lebanese scene. In 1992, as the country continued to

heal and transition from a twenty-year long civil war, Hezbollah's supporters began

running for Parliamentary seats, and winning them. The argument presented in the

introduction to this paper was two fold. One, the group entered the political realm in

order to secure economic security for its constituents, mainly the Shi'aa Muslim

population, who have traditionally been marginalized while the Christian Maronite and

Sunni Muslim communities have flourished and enjoyed the country's political and social

benefits. The second part of the argument asserted that while Hezbollah entered the

political realm, their identity needed to only partially transform at the time, instead of

fully, as the physical security of their controlled areas remained threatened by the

presence of Israel and its deployed troops in the security zone.

Chapter Six focused on the first part of the argument and used narratives in

speeches and the evolving Manifesto to showcase the motives and stances the group has

taken over time. It introduced the population living in its controlled areas, and shed a

light on the living standards enjoyed by their main voter base over time. As the chapter

demonstrates, since the first post-civil war election, Hezbollah's influence and power

grew in the domestic political scene. Since 1985 and the publication of the Open Letter,

the group's tone has softened and shied away from using religious based language to

justify its mission and vision for the country. Nasrallah's tone in the speeches and

interviews he has granted has also changed since the group's inception and throughout

his leadership. In order for Hezbollah to appeal to the entire Lebanese population and not

just the Shi'aa Muslim sect, it marketed its political decisions and strategies as

reformative and critical for a successful future for Lebanon. By 2011, Hezbollah had not

only become the most influential party in the government, both by a steadily growing

external support and policy influence, it also controlled the majority's policies with its

veto power. The first part of the argument was not supported by the analysis presented in

Chapter Six. It is difficult to conclude that Hezbollah joined the political realm and

transitioned as an organization to serve its constituents. Rather, it seems clearer that its

leadership recognized the urgency of adapting to the changing political and social

environment after the Ta'if agreement was signed and transitioning from a rebel group to

a diplomatic entity supportive of democratic principles. As history shows, Hezbollah

frequently used its dual political and military identity to maintaining legitimacy, often

with one wing propelling the other and helping it achieve its goals, even if that violated

official pacts and agreements. As is demonstrated in the section in Chapter Six detailing

the events that led to the Doha Agreement, the group did not shy away from using its

military might to achieve its political means. The partial transition of the group was costly, but also incredibly effective in not only ensuring that Hezbollah survive a changing political environment, but become one of the stronger players in the country's government.

In contrast, Chapter Seven used information pertaining to the conflict with Israel in order to focus on the second part of the argument that asserted that the group did not demilitarize in the early 1990s because of the physical security threat posed by Lebanon's southern neighbor. Given the limited accessibility to the true motives of Hezbollah's decision as the group is notoriously secretive about its military strategies and arsenal, the research was limited to news articles, public statements and independent research conducted on the relationship between Israel and the group's armed wing. As the chapter demonstrates, given the unconfirmed but significantly high number of the random attacks across the border, it is impossible to verify whether Hezbollah instigated any of the wars with Israel, and whether the latter truly presented a physical threat. That said, the narratives used of each about the other were rarely diplomatic or calm, and their actions against one another consistently proved a lack of trust. This chapter thus fails to fully support the second part of the argument as it is stated.

Hezbollah has inarguably undergone a successful partial transition since the end of the civil war in Lebanon. Its intentions, goals and mission have changed over time, and while the motives behind the political and military wings may not always be public, Ayatollah Hassan Nasrallah has frequently confirmed in his interviews and his speeches that Hezbollah serves Lebanon as a whole, despite its Shi'aa Muslim roots and

connections. Today, Hezbollah is a key player in the region's affairs, especially as its role in the Syrian war seems to have no end in sight. It is impossible to tell, given the Middle East's volatility, whether Hezbollah will ever fully transform into a political party and eventually disarm. In this group's case, it is critical not only to watch the political and social dynamics across the various sects in Lebanon to determine its future, but to also pay close attention to the proxy war between Iran and the Gulf States to gain an insight at the leadership's potential next moves and alliances.

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