



Hezbollah a State within a State: An Overview

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ABSTRACT:

Considered to be the most powerful militant organization and the biggest non-state actor in the world, Hezbollah has become a state within a state with a myriad of reasons behind its emergence. More powerful than many regular militaries of the world, Hezbollah is also politically active and derives its ideology from, and was established on the doctrines of, Islamic Republic of Iran. In comparison to other militant organizations, Hezbollah possesses the largest stockpile of sophisticated modern weapons. Hezbollah earned recognition, following its 36 days war with Israel, among various quarters when it defeated the most powerful military in the region. In 2011, Hezbollah sided with the Assad regime in Syria, after the violent crackdown on the Syrian Arab spring demonstrators which later turned into armed rebellion. This was the first foreign adventure the group had participated in. since then Hezbollah fighters have been sent to fight in Iraq, and according to some reports in Yemen as well. The paper aims to explicate Hezbollah's emergence as one of the most powerful militant organizations of the world that is yet to taste defeat.

Keyword:Hezbollah, Lebanon, Iran, Israel, Syria

Introduction:

“It was our stay [in Lebanon] that established [Hezbollah]... Hezbollah got stronger not as a result of our exit from Lebanon but as a result of our stay in Lebanon”.

Ehud Barak (Bardan, 2013).

In essence of its meaning “*Party of God*”, Hezbollah emerged, “in the early 1980s as a radical Shiite movement under the tutelage of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps, and is headquartered in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley neighbouring Syria” (Worth, 2011). Hezbollah, born out from “a number of different Islamic factions, professes a variety of alliances and affiliations. Some came from the Amal Movement, while others espoused the ideologies and philosophies of Imam Sayyed Musa al-Sadr. Some were influenced by the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran, while still others were swayed by prevalent activities taking place in neighbourhoods and mosques” (Harfoush, 2013). Since 1982, the organisation itself was started as part of the Revolutionary Guard Corps of the Iranian government. “Led by religious clerics, [Hezbollah] wanted to adopt an Iranian doctrine as a solution to Lebanese political [mess]. This doctrine included the use of terror as a means of attaining political objective” (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017). In early 1982, “nine prominent Islamist movement leaders met to establish a constituent body that would become [central] to Hezbollah’s formation. Among their ranks were Sheikh Sobhi Toufaily (the party’s first secretary-general), Sayyed Abbas al-Musawi (the second secretary-general), Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah (the current secretary-general), Sheikh Mohammed Yazbeck (member of the party’s current Shura Council) and Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyed. This constituent body worked to frame the main ideas that would define the principles of the Islamic resistance movement” (Harfoush, 2013). They first met when Israeli invasion had entered in its second week, and during their meeting, “they laid out their plans prior to the arrival of the Revolutionary Guard to Lebanon” (Harfoush, 2013). Sheikh Muhammed Hussein Fadlallah, a spiritual leader, is known as the founder of this organization. After the emergence of Hezbollah in October 1983, “Early on a Sunday morning terrorists drove an explosive-laden truck into the Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 220 Marines, 18 sailors and three soldiers. Moments later 58 French paratroopers were killed in an attack on their barracks” (Michaels, 2013). In 1984, President Ronald Reagan finally directed the U.S. marine to withdraw from Beirut. “Hezbollah built its reputation on a dogged ability to repeatedly hold [on to] its own against Israeli [assaults]-an achievement nearly unprecedented in the Arab world” (Fetini, 2009).

Historical Overview

Hezbollah, since its emergence “has shared the Iranian view of Israel as the ‘*Little Satan*’, and denies [its] right to exist, [while] seeking its physical destruction” (Azani, 2013). To whom Hezbollah wrote? “We obey the order of one leader, wise and just.... Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini. God save him!” (Hezbollah: A Report, 2013). Hezbollah is a “hierarchical hybrid terrorist organization comprising three branches: the political wing, the social wing, and terrorist/military (Jihad) wing. The three branches of the organization are all managed and controlled directly by the organization’s Supreme Leader Hassan Nasrallah via the Shura Council” (Azani, 2013).

According to Matthew Levitt, in 1982 “Israeli invasion and subsequent occupation of Southern Lebanon created the space in which Iranian diplomats and agents could help fashion the unified entity Hezbollah from a motley crew of shi’a militias and groups” (Levitt, 2013). Thence, Iran saw Hezbollah's emergence as an opportunity to increase its influence, cultivating Hezbollah “as a proxy force, providing funding, training, and weaponry though Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)” (Levitt, 2013). When the organisation was set up, thousands of members joined the organisation to travel to Beqa’a Valley, Beirut and Southern Lebanon? “These areas also offered a base for the recruitment of additional activists and fighters among the local Shi’ite populations” (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017). Hezbollah was the first Islamic resistance organization of its kind used which strategic suicide bombing in the region. Since its inception and until now, Hezbollah is dominant in southern Lebanon.

On the one hand, Hezbollah promoted itself to garner support against foreign army by distributing money and by providing social services to local peoples in the southern Lebanon, while on the other, it to begin attack against the western forces. The organization undertook the first act of bombing attack against U.S embassy in Beirut on April 18, 1983, killing 63, including 17 Americans. Hezbollah has used extremely violent tactics, “such as: kidnapping of foreign hostages in Lebanon and abroad, airline hijackings, and suicide bomb attacks international targets in Lebanon, including the American Embassy. During this period, the organization’s objectives within Lebanon were clear; to overthrow the existing regime through the use of violence, to apply sharia law in Lebanon, and the removal of foreign forces from Lebanon” (Azani, 2013). Like the other resistance and liberation movements, ‘Manifestos’ ‘Charters’ or ‘Declarations’ “issued to the public early in its founding—the African National Congress, Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas, Algerian FLN, and various “*Sons of Liberty*” groups during the American Revolution, come to mind—Hezbollah has been criticized by its detractors over the years for some language in its 1985 “*Open Letter*” manifesto. Some have urged Hezbollah to remove “*controversial language*” such as the call for an Islamic Republic in Lebanon—even though the Party has made clear that establishing an Islamic Republic of Lebanon is no longer a priority and emphasizes that Lebanon’s diversity is respected, valued and permanent. Others have called Hezbollah’s 1985 manifesto “*too religious*” and too dogmatic for a broad international appeal political document” (Lamb, 2009). In 1985, a founding manifesto under the new name of Hezbollah was issued by the organisation. Which states:

“Our primary assumption in our fight against Israel states that the Zionist entity is aggressive from its inception, and built on lands wrested from their owners, at the expense of the Muslim people. Therefore our struggle will end only when this entity is obliterated. We recognize no treaty with it, no cease-fire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated” (Laub, 2014).

Nevertheless, after Israel’s war in Lebanon, Hezbollah gained strength by attacking the French and American peace-keeping forces deployed in Lebanon while the Israeli forces withdrew from Beirut. “In 1985, [as] the IDF withdrew from Lebanon, with the exception of a security zone created to protect Israel’s northern border, for the next five years Israeli troops worked with the South Lebanon Army to defend the border. [In the mean time], Hezbollah [had] stockpiled weapons and recruited many new members, [to fulfil the aim] of driving the Israelis out of Lebanon” (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017).

According to a published in 1986, mentioned CIA report, that Fadlallah has “long been recognized as the spiritual leader of and political spokesmen for Lebanon’s Shia Hezbollah. [His] stature, [according to the report developed] along with Hezbollah’s political and military influence. Fadlallah ‘benefited from and contributed to the growing extremism in the Shia community by his bold sermons attacking Israel and, later, the presence of the Multinational forces in Lebanon’” (Levitt, 2013). From 1985 to the 1990s, under the leadership of Imad Mughniyah, its operational commander and a jihadist mastermind who ran the External Security Organization of Hezbollah (also known as the Islamic Jihad Organization or the External Services Organization), the group that plans and executes attacks outside Lebanon, Hezbollah also maintained an active global presence. “Members of this group, [led] by Mughniyah, hijacked TWA Flight 847 from Cairo to Athens in 1985, holding hostages for weeks and killing one in order to draw attention to and free Lebanese prisoners in Israel. The hijackers called for the release of 766 prisoners, and, after the Israeli government released 300, the hijackers freed the remaining hostages” (Stanford University, 2017). Subsequently, “Hezbollah became more active in Lebanese political and military arenas [as] it called for the establishment of an Islamic state, an end to Maronite hegemony and the party’s rejection of becoming part of the traditional Lebanese political game. Its uniqueness [as a result of the declarations was affirmed] and its ideologically further [set it] apart from other Islamist factions” (Harfoush, 2013).

During the 1990’s Hezbollah’s operational behaviour underwent a transformation when it became a hybrid terrorist organisation. “It incorporated political participation coupled with acts of violence. The organization began an international campaign [that was] aimed at hiding the terrorist wing of the organization [while] branding Hezbollah as a legitimate Lebanese party [that] operate[d] within the [confines] of the Lebanese political system. In order to [rationalize its terrorist] image, Hezbollah stressed that [its] action against Israel w[as] essentially defensive in nature and designed to liberate Lebanon. [It also] claimed that the launching of Katyusha rockets at Israeli civilian population centers was only a reaction to its aggression” (Azani, 2013). On June 4, 1991 Hezbollah launched a satellite television “*Al-Manar*”. “It was the first terrorist satellite television launched from Beirut. Al-Manar TV, an official satellite channel of Hezbollah, has been broadcasting various anti-Israel and anti-Semitic programs, while claiming, that Israel spread H.I.V., virus that causes AIDS, and other diseases, throughout the Arab world. In other telecasts, Al-Manar called for a war against world Jewry and the eradication of Israel. The channel was banned around the world, such as France where, the highest administrative court in France banned it for inciting racial hatred. “The channel is also banned in the US, Spain and Germany” (Hezbollah: A Report, 2013).

In February 1992, after the assassination of its leader Abbas al-Mussawi, assassinated by Israel Nasrallah took over as secretary-general of the group, after one month Nasrallah took over, “Hezbollah operatives carried out a truck bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, killing twenty-nine and wounding 242” (Stanford University, 2017). Although after the Taif agreement in 1989, Hezbollah took part as a political party in the 1992 Lebanese general election and won eight seats in parliament. It was considered a tactic to gain hold of the Lebanese government and lead the world to think that Hezbollah was a political movement, not a militant group. Nevertheless, in July 1994, “it was accused of bombing the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association, which killed approximately 100 [while] wounding more than 200. However, Hezbollah had denied the responsibility for the attack. The group bombed the American Khobar Towers housing complex in Saudi Arabia, killing 19 in June 1996” (The Century Foundation, 2017). And a year later on 8 Oct. 1997 U.S declared Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. Israeli defence forces withdrew from the southern part of Lebanon to the Blue Line (a boundary demarcation between Lebanon and Israel published by the United Nations on 7 June 2000) in July 2000.

Hezbollah has been openly anti-Israel and anti-Semitic since its inception. Its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has repeatedly this proved this in various statements:

“I’m against any reconciliation with Israel. I don’t recognize the presence of a state that is called Israel. (February 2000) If they (Jews) all gather in Israel, it will save the trouble of going after them worldwide. (October 2002)” (Hezbollah: A Report, 2013).

The Al-Aqsa intifada in Israel provided additional opportunity for Hezbollah to commit further violent attacks against the Jewish state. “It funded the Palestinian Authority (PA) and collaborated with other militant organizations, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, to systematize attacks on Israel. It began hastening its recruitment programmes in order to infiltrate into Israel. It continued with the smuggling of arms and advanced weapons into Lebanon from Syria and Iran” (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017). In December 2001, three Hezbollah members were arrested in Jordan for the first time as they were trying to carry the BM-13 Katyusha rocket into the West Bank. A year later a Palestinian Authority-owned ship, “was intercepted by the IDF the Karine-A, carrying 50 tons of weapons, including anti-tank missiles, Katyusha rockets. And long range mortar bombs. The weapons, most of them were made in Iran, and a senior member of Hezbollah was held responsible for loading the weapons onto the ship” (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017). With the withdrawal of Israel in 2000 and the withdrawal of Syria in 2005, Hezbollah “started to act independent of Syrian concerns and achieved a major role in Lebanese politics. Hezbollah had transformed itself into an organization dominating the coalition in Lebanon, using legitimate political tools to achieve its goals” (Valansi, 2017). Hezbollah targeted Israeli defence forces near the Blue Line after the March 2004 assassination of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin by an Israeli gunship helicopter. In February 2005, Rafiq Hariri was assassinated. “The UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon found Hezbollah guilty of his murder. Many voice in Lebanon accused Hezbollah to killing him” (Hezbollah: A Report, 2013). The national political scenario changed after the assassination of Prime Minister and Hezbollah played a crucial role. “As the event polarised the country into two political blocs, Hezbollah joined the March 8 alliance, and thereby allied itself with then six other Lebanese parties, including secular and Christian ones. In addition, it fielded for the first time two ministers (energy and water as well as labour) for the cabinet, an experience it has repeated since in the following three cabinets with the portfolios of agriculture, labour and administrative reform” (Gaub, 2013). In 2008, The United Kingdom has banned the military wing of Hezbollah while allowing contact with its political leaders.

Hezbollah’s Health & Social Services:

After the withdrawal of Israeli forces, Hezbollah emerged as the primary player in the Lebanese political system. Healthcare and social programmes for Lebanese citizens is one factor that strengthened Hezbollah. Hezbollah’s “social service provision is rooted in the nature of Lebanon’s state and society. In Lebanon, sectarian differences are sharply politicized and institutionalized, and virtually all political players (as well as religious groups and secular NGOs) offer social welfare in one form or another. The Lebanese state is notoriously weak with respect to social provision and religious and sectarian organizations have long played a vital role in the health, education and social assistance. Competition between sectarian groups typically shapes the extent and intensity of welfare provision. More than electoral politics is at stake. Some sectarian organizations aim to build “street power” and engage in militia politics and not just to win votes—which shapes their distinctive strategies of allocating social welfare” (Cammet, 2014). The enormous social welfare activity of Hezbollah has continuously outperformed the social programmes of the Lebanese government. Maintaining the Social Services Section, while effective, is very expensive. Social programs are estimated to pay for 50 per cent of the annual budget of Hezbollah. Hizbollah provides millions of dollars per year for Lebanon’s social welfare. Hezbollah receives funding from both internal and external sources. “Though Hezbollah’s funding comes from sources such as drug cartels, nearly 50% of all spending, or \$250-500 million dollars is spent yearly on social services including hospitals and healthcare” (Donnelly, 2016). On the other hands “several organizations that are internationally known to provide support to Hezbollah. For example, in the United States, funds are raised through the Islamic Resistance Support Organization, the Alavi Foundation, the Educational Support Organization, the Goodwill Charitable Organization, and the al-Shahid Association (Martyr’s Association). Hezbollah raises funds in Europe through the Lebanese Welfare Committee, the HELP Foundation, and the Jamaya al-Abrar. Hezbollah receives support from organizations like the People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) and the Karballah Foundation for Liberation. Donations to Hezbollah’s social services may seem a noble effort but in reality the donor is increasing the lethality of the organization” (Love, 2010, pp. 29-30). Also “Hezbollah supporters are predominately Shi’a and are dutybound to donate 2.5 percent of their net worth to charity in support of the zakat pillar of Islam” (Love, 2010, p. 29). Zakat defined in the Quran:

“Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to the truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah; and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.”

Hezbollah’s social-welfare headquarters is situated in Beirut’s southern suburb. It is not clearly known the exact date of Hezbollah’s social services beginning in southern Lebanon and Bekaa vally. The social works of Hezbollah continued on a regular basis after the Lebanese Civil War. After the war, the organization was taking the responsibility for restoring the houses and restarts the businesses of Christian families who had returned to southern Beirut. Hezbollah led, “the reconstruction process after a 1996 Israeli bombing campaign in southern Lebanon, reportedly rebuilding 5,000 homes and repairing roads and infrastructure. It also claims to have provided compensation to 2,300 farmers in the area” (Stanford University, 2017). Hezbollah has a strongly organised system of health and social welfare organizations. “The service system is made up of the Social Unit, the Education Unit and the Islamic Health Unit.... Many of Hezbollah’s service organizations are legally registered with the Lebanese government as NGOs, a status that provides certain legal protections and eases collaboration with other organizations that may be wary of the “Hezbollah” name” (Shawn Teresa Flanigan, 2017). Hezbollah has been “indispensable” to the people of Lebanon. The emphasis was no longer on Hezbollah’s status as a terrorist group, but rather on its identity as a complex political organisation providing healthcare, social services and welfare.

Hezbollah’s social services are divided into four units: (1) the Jihad Construction Foundation, (2) the Martyrs’ Foundation, (3) the Foundation for the Wounded (4) the Khomeini Support Committee. “The Jihad Construction Foundation, Jihad El Binaa, has become one of the most important NGOs in Lebanon. This institution is responsible for infrastructure construction and, in the early 2000s, delivered water to about 45 percent of the residents of Beirut’s southern suburb. Following the Israeli aerial bombardment of Lebanon in summer 2006, the Jihad Construction Foundation became

indispensable, assessing damage and paying reconstruction compensation to residents of southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburb. Also under the umbrella of the Social Unit, Hezbollah's Martyrs' Foundation provides aid to those adversely affected by Hezbollah's continuing military struggle with Israel, offering financial assistance health and social support to the families of "martyrs" who have been killed in combat. In addition, the Foundation for the Wounded grants aid to civilians who have been injured during Israeli assaults.... Hezbollah's Islamic Health Unit also has a vital function in meeting public health needs. It operates three hospitals, 12 health centers, 20 infirmaries, 20 dental clinics, and 10 defense departments. The Islamic Health unit has been so effective that it was asked to assume the operation of several government hospitals in Southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. The health-service unit provides health care to low-income Shiites and other low-income populations at little or no cost. The Islamic Health unit is involved in a number of initiatives, such as offering free health insurance and prescription-drug coverage through a network of local pharmacies. Hezbollah's Education Unit provides another indispensable service to the Shiite poor. Lebanon's public school system is considered to be of extremely low quality, a last resort for only the poorest of families, who cannot afford to send their children to private schools. Hezbollah operates a number of primary and secondary schools at fees that are far less than those of most other private schools. Hezbollah's schools reportedly serve approximately 14,000 students. In addition to education, Hezbollah provides low-income students with scholarships, financial assistance and books, buying in bulk and selling at reduced prices; it also operates lending libraries for students" (Shawn Teresa Flanigan, 2017). In a nation where public education system is weak, where Hezbollah's educational services has highly regarded for peoples.

Emergence of Hezbollah as a Regional Military Power

As the Lebanese civil war ended, the Israeli forces withdraw from Southern Lebanon. "Hezbollah's success won it support from many sides. Its reputation as [an] anti-Israeli military group in the Middle East won it support from Arab nationalists and backing from Iran and Syria" (Fetini, 2009). In 2006, the conflict started between Hezbollah and Israel for the second time. Hezbollah crossed the border and kidnapped two IDF patrol on Israeli-Lebanon border and killed 8 others on July 12, 2006. As a result war ensued between Hezbollah and Israel. Consequently, in July, Israeli forces entered into southern Lebanon with a mission to destroy Hezbollah's military bases. It killed more Hezbollah fighters as it had fired almost 4000 rocket into Israel. The war claimed 164 Israeli lives, in which 45 were civilians. Besides, 1125 Lebanese were killed mostly civilians along with 250 Hezbollah fighters deaths. In 2006, in the aftermath of a 36-day war, "the United Nation was tasked with maintaining UNIFIL forces both on Israel's border with Lebanon to prevent future skirmishes, but also on Lebanon's border with Syria to prevent further arms smuggling into the Hezbollah stronghold areas. Unfortunately, UNIFIL's mission [was] compromised either by a lack of desire on the part of its soldiers to interfere or a lack of ability to stop the smuggling" (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017). Hezbollah also "upgraded its anti-aircraft missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, and reconnaissance and attack drones; all of which would make Israeli retaliatory strikes far more difficult. The group notoriously displayed its anti-ship capabilities in 2006 by firing a Noor anti-ship missile at the Israeli naval vessel INS Hanit" (Cohen, 2014). On the other hand, in 2008, in a joint CIA-Mossad operation, assassination of main mastermind of Hezbollah's operation against Israel Imad Mughniyeh in Damascus, "thwarted five attempts by the group to average his death, piquing Hezbollah's suspicions in the process, the report said. Mughniyeh's assassination was considered a major blow to the group, and while Israel never claimed responsibility, Hezbollah has blamed [Tel Aviv] for the attack" (Sterman, 2015). An explosive device exploded on the Israel-controlled side of the border between Israel and Lebanon on October 7, 2014. "Hezbollah immediately took responsibility for the attack less than 4 hours after it happened, which is surprising considering their record of denying any attacks against Israel that they have been accused of. This marks the first time that Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for an attack against Israel since the Second Lebanon War in 2006" (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017).

Hezbollah rapidly extended its realm of operations and sent its fighters to Syria and Iraq. It has been backing Houthi rebels in Yemen. As an outcome, "Hezbollah is not just a power unto itself, but is one of the most important instruments in the drive for regional supremacy by its sponsor: Iran. Hezbollah [has been] involved in nearly every fight that matters to Iran and, more significantly, has helped recruit, train and arm an array of new militant groups that are also advancing Iran's agenda" (Hubbard, 2017).

Since mid 2012, Hezbollah has been actively involved in the Syrian conflict and has intervened in behalf of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, against the FSA, and later on the ISIS and Nusra front. "...Hassan Nasrallah acknowledged that 'his members were indeed fighting in Syria'" (Faisal Mohammad Rather, 2015, p. 44). Hezbollah has increasingly struggled to shield its on-the-ground support for the Assad regime. In August 2012, "the U.S. Treasury Department blacklisted Hezbollah, already on the Department's terrorism list, this time for providing support to the Assad regime. Since the beginning of the rebellion, Treasury explained, Hezbollah had been providing 'training, advice, and extensive logistical support to the Government of Syria's increasingly ruthless efforts' against the opposition" (Levitt, Hezbollah's Syrian Quagmire, 2014). Hezbollah's "style of fighting is based on three principles: Absorption, deterrence, and attrition. Absorption refers to the organization's ability to withstand attack or retaliation. Hezbollah has sought to maximize its absorption capacities by building intricate systems of underground tunnels and bunkers across southern Lebanon, which it uses to store and transfer weapons and fighters from one combat zone to another, and as shelter from IDF retaliation. These bolt-holes also help create the sense of a "disappearing" enemy, difficult to detect and target. After all, you cannot defeat what you cannot see.... In regard to deterrence and attrition, both refer to Hezbollah's ability to keep up its fight against Israel without suffering total destruction, thus drawing out the conflict to such an extent that it becomes difficult to bear the cost of sustaining it. Hezbollah's massive arsenal ensures that Israeli towns and civilians will suffer a constant barrage of rockets and missiles, something the director of IDF Intelligence has recently referred to as an 'era of fire'" (Cohen, 2014). Russia's participation in Syrian civil war had also benefited Hezbollah apart from an alliance with Iran and Syria. "In some pictures Hezbollah fighters can be seen leaning against Russian tanks, and the truth is that since Russia began its open military activities in Syria, Hezbollah fighters are also learning Russian methods of war, becoming familiar with advanced Russian weaponry, coming to understand the latest Russian technologies, and in some cases, actually fighting alongside Russian Special Forces" (Issacharoff, 2016). However, what intrigued the international community was the affirmation by General Salim Idriss that!!

"Hezbollah had "nearly 10,000" fighters altogether throughout Syria. By the end of that month, Idriss was saying that 7,000 of those fighters were in Qusayr. Another rebel commander maintained that out of 7,000 total fighters in Syria, Hezbollah had 4,000 in Qusayr,

2,000 in Damascus countryside, and 1,000 in the Latakia countryside. Meanwhile, a Lebanese security source was quoted as saying that Hezbollah had committed 1,700 fighters to Qusayr” (Badran, 2013). Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, “has had to explain time and again that the fighting in Syria is essential in order to save the Muslim world from Al-Qaida, Islamic State and their ilk.... In Syria, Hezbollah has engaged in a wide range of operations including joint actions with airplanes, helicopters, drones, artillery, tanks and advanced intelligence capabilities.... In many cases, [Hezbollah] fighters who led Assad’s attacks on rebel organizations, and paid a highest price, [this conflict has proved very bloody for Hezbollah. According to IDF estimated that at least] 1,300 Hezbollah fighters had been killed in the war in Syria and about 5,000 wounded. At any given moment Hezbollah has about 5,000 of its fighters in Syria, nearly a quarter of its standing force” (Harel, 2016).

Nevertheless, In the Syrian war and, later, in the counterattack against the Islamic State (ISIS), Hezbollah proved a force to be reckoned with; instead, the Assad government would not have survived the uprising without its presence on the battlefield. Assad’s Army, without Hezbollah’s help, could not have been in a position to recapture those city that were lost to the rebel groups such as Aleppo, Homs province, Palmyra etc. “In the Qalamoun Ridge on the Syria-Lebanon border, Hezbollah [took] control of the [contested] area in which Islamic State [was] smuggling suicide bomber and explosives into Lebanon. A[s] Hezbollah [was successful in gaining] control of that area, there was a decrease in suicide attacks on Hezbollah targets in Lebanon” (Issacharoff, 2016). In April, 2017, “members of a Qatari royal hunting party kidnapped by militants in Iraq were released as part of a deal involving Hezbollah in Syria” (Hubbard, 2017).

Nonetheless, “once a militia formed against Israel and the West, Hezbollah [had grown an important] actor in the Syrian conflict. It became a regional power and began defend[ing] the survival of its sponsors at the expense of itself” (Valansi, 2017).

On the other hand, since the 2003 US-led invasion, Hezbollah has operated in Iraq. Hezbollah fighters fought against American and allied forces in Iraq, as well as Hezbollah fighters in Iraq, to support organised local militias with roadside bombs and other insurgency strategies to battle American-led forces. Ali Musa Daqdouq, a veteran Hezbollah’s commander, was “the party’s senior representative in Iraq and worked closely with Asaib Ahl al-Haq. He was accused of involvement in an attack on a US base in 2007 in which five American soldiers were abducted and subsequently executed. Mr. Daqdouq was arrested by British forces in Basra in March 2007, but an Iraqi court released him in 2012, to the dismay of the Obama administration. He has since returned to Beirut” (Blanford, 2014).

Following the rapid spread of Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the summer of 2014, across northern Iraq, “Shiite Marja Ali al-Sistani issued a fatwa calling all able-bodied men to defend Baghdad and push back against ISIS. Men of all sects and ethnicities, overwhelmingly Shiite, took it upon themselves to fight this "great evil" that had overtaken their country” (Kalian, 2016). Hezbollah has deployed a team of about 250 military advisers to help the Shiite Iraqis fight back against the Islamic State (IS) and other Sunni groups. Hezbollah-connected sources said that the unit in Iraq was engaging in reconnaissance and intelligence work on the IS, seeking to build up an image of its military strength, its deployment zones, and the longevity of its alliances with other Iraqi Sunni groups opposed to the Shia-dominated government. In June 2016, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah’s leader, was quoted by Lebanese newspapers as saying that he would not allow the holy Shiite shrines in Iraq to be desecrated by IS and that he was willing to “sacrifice in Iraq five times as many martyrs as we sacrificed in Syria for the sake of the holy sites because they are much more important” (Blanford, 2014).

Some reports are indicated, Hezbollah’s presence in Yemen civil war from the last two years. Hezbollah has been supporting the Houthi forces in their conflict against Saudi-led coalition. “Although the Houthis follow a different sect of Islam, Iran and Hezbollah have adopted the Houthi cause in speeches by their leaders, raising the group’s profile. They have also provided some military and logistical support. Ali Al-ahmadi, a former Yemeni national security chief, said that Houthi fighters began receiving military training in Lebanon as early as 2010 and that two Hezbollah operatives were arrested in Yemen in 2012 and returned to Lebanon through Oman” (Hubbard, 2017). Yemen’s government and its Gulf allied have long accused Hezbollah of training the Houthi rebels and fighting along them, “and seeking to transform the group into a replica of the Lebanese militia to use as a proxy against its main regional rival, Saudi Arabia. Its latest assertion is based on “*many documents and physical evidence*” which Hezbollah would not be able to deny, it said, but that it did not immediately produce” (Reyters staff, 2016). According to a news statement issued in February 2016, it indicated that Hezbollah members were training Houthi forces and taking part in border clashes. According to the press release, Tehran is trying to convert the Houthis into a “*Yemenite Hezbollah*”. On November 6, 2017, Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister, Adel Jubair, in an interview with CNN said, “that “*Lebanon has declared war*” on his country. This accusation was made following the launch of a ballistic missile from Yemen towards Riyadh International Airport (it was shot down harmlessly by Saudi Arabia’s Patriot defense system). “*This was an Iranian missile..launched by Hezbollah*”. As far as we know, the November missile attack on Riyadh was not the first but rather the fourth such attack this year. Moreover, ballistic missiles are being fired from Yemeni territory not only at Riyadh but also at border towns and major cities across the Saudi Kingdom” (Rubin, 2017). Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayed Hassan Nasrallah lashed out at Saudi Arabia in an Oct. 12, 2016, sermon, He labeled the country’s battles in Yemen an expression of “*hatred*”, adding, “The Saud family will be defeated in Yemen” (Alami, 2016).

On February 4, 2018, U.S Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Argentinian Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie held a press conference, “where the two announced that their respective countries would begin doing more to cut off Hezbollah’s funding networks in South America...The Argentinian government froze the assets of a suspected Hezbollah fundraising network in July 2018, following an investigation into the Hezbollah-linked criminal organization the Barakat Group. According to the Financial Information Unit of Argentina, Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese citizens in Argentina were laundering money through casinos in Iguazu to finance the group’s terrorist activities” (Jewish virtual Library, 2018).

Hezbollah’s Military Power

In 2016, it was estimated the group military strength of the organization is that of mid-size army. The military Budget of Hezbollah is about one billion Dollars per year. Hasan Nasrallah stated, in a television speech broadcast by Al-Manar on 24 June 2016, that “the budget of Hezbollah, its salaries, expenses, weapons and missiles all came from the Islamic Republic of Iran” (Nichols, 2017). Hezbollah has had almost 45,000 fighters, in which 20,000 are dedicated full time warriors and around 25,000 serve as reserved. An estimated number of Hezbollah’s rockets and missile range from

120,000- 150,000, that are both medium and long distance missile rang. “While Hezbollah is known to have a large quantity of shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles, the IDF now assumes that the Lebanese Islamist group has received the SA-8, a truck-mounted Russian tactical surface- to-air missile system reported to have a range of 30 kilometers. In addition to the possible transfer of air-defense systems, Hezbollah is also believed to have received several dozen more M 600 long-range missiles, as well as additional 302 mm. Khaibar-1 rockets, which have a range of about 100 kilometers” (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017). Hezbollah also have received “Iranian-made rocket such as the Fajr-3 and fajr-5, with respective range of 27 and 45 miles; and a huge quantity of simpler 107 mm and 122 mm rocket with range up to 12 miles. These rockets are capable of striking many cities in northern Israel, such as Haifa, Tiberias, Afula, Nahariya and Safed” (Cohen, 2014). In October 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a speech at the United Nations General Assembly, inferred that “Hezbollah has succeeded in smuggling advanced weapons systems from Syria into Lebanon, including accurate surface-to-surface missiles, SA-22 anti-aircraft missiles and Yakhont anti-ship cruise missiles. The continuous supply of high-quality weaponry and the battlefield experience it is accumulating in Syria have also given Hezbollah independent capability in essential areas like commando fighting and operating drones, including attack drones” (Harel, 2016). In December 2014, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mikhail Bogdanov visited Lebanon. He did not come to talk politicians “but to Hezbollah about Hezbollah’s role”. “He is dealing with Hezbollah as a regional actor” (Samaha, 2016).

Hezbollahs threat was not limited to Israel, as duing one of his speech, Nasarallah stated that, “Hezbollah *“has an old, new, and renewed score to settle”* with Israel. It may not be seeking a wide confrontation with the IDF at present, but that dose not mean it will not try to initiate limited attacks—the kind that can hurt Isreal badly without leading to war” (Issacharoff, Hezbollah digs in for more conflict with Israel, 2014). The group had been fighting against ISIS extremists in Iraq. In the meanwhile, In Iraq, a US-led coalition was fighting ISIS and working alongside Shia militias such as Hezbollah. “This indirect relationship of convenience is an irony of the war against the Islamic State. The Trump administration has talked tough about containing Iran, but given little explanation of how it would play a role in curbing Iran and its ally here in Lebanon Hezbollah, while continuing to fight the common enemy of ISIS” (PBS News Hour, 2017).

On July 17, 2016, accoding to a statement from the IDF, From Syria to the Golan Heights, an unmanned aircraft crossed the border, setting off Israeli air raid sirens. The aircraft was identified before entering the territories of the nation and was thoroughly tracked. It’s not known whether the rockets were launched sequentially or at the same time. It is not the first incursion across the Syrian border, and previous intruding drones, as well as those from Gaza, were shot down by Israel. Patriot missiles are good at its duty. This time, however, the missiles failed to put the target down. Each of the rockets exploded in mid-air. Accoring to Jerusalem Post, “Israel then made another interception attempt, this one most likely by an F-16 firing an air-to-air missile at the drone. The details are not available, but we know this missile also missed. The drone later crossed back over the border to Syria. A news report quoted Hezbollah, the Islamist militant group based in Lebanon, as saying that the drone was theirs and had been *“part of an operation against Israel”*. However, the IDF have not officially identified the origin of the drone and have reportedly contacted Russian staff in Syria to help establish where it came from. It is possible that the drone did belong to Hezbollah.... Although Hezbollah claim to have built their own drones, the aircraft appear to be based heavily on Iranian designs which make sense, with Iran being a major supporter of the group. Hezbollah’s Mirsad-1 looks to be a direct copy, if not an export version, of the Iranian Mohajer-4” (Hambling, 2016).

In July 2017, reports began to surface that “Hezbollah is building a military industry in Lebanon with the help of Iran. One factory being constructed in northern Lebanon is designed to manufacture Fateh 110 medium-rang missiles, which can reach most of Israel and carries a 500 kilogram warhead. A second factory is being built on Lebanon’s southern coast. One reason for the new construction is that Israel has successfully interdicted a number of shipments of weapons from Syria” (Jewish Virtual Library, 2017). On the other hand, “Israel [has drawn] several conclusions from the new situation [Such as], there are calls to no longer distinguish between Hezbollah and the regular Lebanese army. ‘The Lebanese army is a Hezbollah wing’” (Knipp, 2017). The five years of open international war has proved the might of Hezbollah’s regional position, “consolidating its transnational military and political organization. [Hezbollah] entered in the Syrian war as a dominant force inside Lebanon; it appears set to emerge from it as a decisive regional player, likely to be as powerful in the coming period as most of the Middle East’s full-flaged states” (The Century Foundation, 2017). On the eve of the 11th anniversary of the end of Hezbollah-Israel conflict, the leader of Hezbollah Hassan Nasarallah hinted in August 2017, that “Israel should relocate its Dimona nuclear reactor because it too is a target for his organization, and one whose destruction could have more [horrible] consequences than an attack on the huge ammonia tank in Haifa that he previously threatened to destroy” (Staff, 2017). Hezbollah’s leader Hasan Nasarallah said that “any future conflict with Israel would be fought in Israel and not just Lebanon. The comments imply that Hezbollah will employ all tactics, including tunnels, to extend their ability to attack Israeli territory” (Vohra, 2018). On the 12th anniversary of victory in the 36 day war, Hezbollah has unveiled his own drone. Even though Hezbollah has used drone on many occasions before, but this was the first time that he was unveiling his drone.

Hezbollah’s focus was largely drawn away from Israel during the Syrian Civil War. In 2018, Assad armies regained control of the Syrian-administered territory of the Golan Heights, which borders Israeli-occupied territory. Hezbollah started establishing cells and militias in the area after Assad’s victory. Hezbollah located substantial arms and missiles in Golan Heights areas near Israeli-controlled territory. Hundreds of local Syrian people were also mobilized to join new militias. According to Ely Karmon, a defence and security analyst at the International Center for Counter-Terrorism in Herzliya, Israel, told FRANCE 24, “Hezbollah is the biggest strategic threat Israel now faces” (Wheeldon, 2018). In an interview with FRANCE 24, Yossi Mekelberg, a Middle East expert at the Chatham House think-tank and Regent’s University London, stated that “Hezbollah is now far better equipped, so it has the ability to create destruction on a completely different scale from what we saw in 2006” (Wheeldon, 2018). In 2018, The Israeli Defense ministry reports that the armed group has more than doubled its number of fighters over the past dozen years, from 20,000 to around 45,000 fighters, but its stockpile of missiles and rockets has also risen more than tenfold, from about 13,000 in 2006 to more than 120,000 in 2018.

In August 2018, after the US withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement, the US imposed fresh sanctions on Iran. It is predicted that Iran will funded to Hezbollah near around \$200 million a year, as well as financial strain from the sanctions on Iran is expected to boost Hezbollah’s foreign funding activities. The mounting political and financial strain from renewed sanctions on Iran’s already troubled economy would inevitably have an impact on the activities of Hezbollah. And the new message from Nasrallah reveals that Hezbollah is gearing up for a war. Hezbollah’s announcement of “its impending *“victory”* in Syria may be a reaction against US sanctions against Iran, but the threat it poses is no less real. Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan

Nasrallah, announced that it would “*very soon*” celebrate victory in Syria, where the Iran-backed group’s militia are fighting alongside pro-Assad forces” (Siddique, 2018).

Since 2019, Hezbollah has been faced with serious financial constraints. The United States sanctions against Iran, which is Hezbollah’s main financial backer, have had a significant impact on Iran’s ability to fund the group. Due to this, Hezbollah “has shut many offices around the country and cut the pay of its employees and militants. The continuation of American sanctions may create more serious obstacles for Hezbollah in the future” (Stanford, Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISCA), 2019). In January 2019 and June 2019, the Israelis killed Hezbollah fighters as part of their campaign to counter Hezbollah’s initiatives. On August 26, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said that, “the two Israeli drones that fell in Dahyeh were on a “*suicide mission*” and added Hezbollah will do what it takes to prevent Israel from sending more drones to Beirut. “*Hezbollah will not allow such an aggression,*” he said. “*The time when Israeli aircraft come and bombard parts of Lebanon is over*”. In a rare acknowledgement of deaths of its members in Syria in Israeli air raids, Nasrallah confirmed that two members of Hezbollah were killed in the attack in Syria’s Aqrabah area” (Al-Jazeera, 2019). On September 2, Hezbollah launched rockets against an Israeli tank on Israeli territory. This action of Hezbollah was retaliating in response to, “an earlier drone attack by Israel. The missiles hit several targets in Israel’s border town of Avivim, the Israeli army said, adding it responded by shelling 100 targets inside Lebanon.... In a statement accompanied by satellite images, the Israeli military said Hezbollah, with Iranian assistance, had brought specialised equipment to a weapons factory near the village of al-Nabi Shaith with the intention to set up a production line for precision-guided missiles. On September 9 Hezbollah said it shot down an Israeli unmanned aircraft outside the southern town of Ramyah. The drone is now in the hands of Hezbollah’s fighters, the Iran-backed group said in a statement” (Al-Jazeera, 2019).

According to Avia.Pro, the Russian aviation publication, “Hezbollah used the Soviet-era 9K33 OSA (Wasp) anti-aircraft missile to strike the Israeli military drone that was flying over the Nabatieh Governorate of southern Lebanon. It is not known exactly how the OSA air defense system was delivered to Lebanon; however, according to some reports, at least three of these complexes were delivered to this country via Syria. This fact allows us to argue that now Israeli military flights over Lebanon are more unsafe, as this air defense system is capable of hitting air targets at distances of up to 10 kilometers, with a maximum target speed of 1,500 km/hr. Lebanon does not have any air defense systems, so Hezbollah most likely received these missiles from both Syria and Iran. It is worth mentioning that Hezbollah hasn’t used anti-aircraft missiles in the past; however, given this latest response, it is very likely that they will use them again in [near] future” (AMN News, 2019).

In the beginning of 2020, the challenges faced by Hezbollah at this juncture are the product of several local and regional events and processes. At the starting of the year 2020, the assassination by the US of Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, was a blow to Hezbollah and Nasrallah personally. The recent death of Qasem Soleimani, “Nasrallah’s patron and friend, was both an operational and personal blow. The two had cultivated a relationship for years, ever since Soleimani was appointed as commander of the Quds force in 1998. He was the leading figure in the Iran-Hezbollah axis and contributed to the strengthening of the organization” (Mofaz, 2020). At the same time, despite the establishment of a new government, the organization is facing internal problems in the context of a political and social crisis in Lebanon. Moreover, due to the reduction of Iran’s financial assistance (leading to the international sanctions imposed on Iran) and new sanctions on the group itself, Hezbollah is facing a persistent shrinking of its financial capability. After the assassination of Sulaimani, Hezbollah could give a nonlethal warning to Israel, thumb its nose at the Israeli offensive, and prove that its operatives, if they so desire, could cross the border. Israeli officials believe that “Hezbollah has an arsenal of more than 100,000 missiles and rockets that can reach all corners of the Jewish state. Israel’s Iron Dome missile defense system would be unable to shoot down a large volley of rockets fired simultaneously, officials say, and Israel’s defense relies in part on the fact that the rockets are not very accurate. But Israel contends that Hezbollah is trying to build guided missiles, which could target key installations such as military bases, government buildings, power plants, and would be nearly impossible to stop. Israel has carried out numerous airstrikes in Syria on what it says were convoys of weapons bound for Hezbollah to drive home the point that it will not accept a fleet of smart missiles on its border” (Bergman, 2020).

On February 1, 2021, Hezbollah’s Al Manar TV said that an Israeli drone “was shot down after it entered Lebanon’s air space and crashed in the village of Blida, near the border with Israel.... The Israeli military said the drone was on operational activity along the border before it crashed.... Israeli warplanes and drones violate Lebanon’s airspace almost daily, sometimes to carry out airstrikes in neighbouring Syria. The frequency of low-flying warplanes over Beirut and other parts of Lebanon has intensified in the past weeks, making residents jittery as tensions run high in the region” (TRT World, 2021). Israel and Hezbollah are still technically at war, and the United Nations forces UNIFIL patrols at the border.

Conclusion:

Hezbollah is a Shiite Muslim political and militant group in Lebanon, where its powerful security system, political organization, and social welfare network helped it gain the reputation of “a state within a state”. Hezbollah founded in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley in 1982 to fight, or “resist” the Israeli first invasion of that year. Hezbollah is little more than an IRGC battalion on the eastern Mediterranean simply part of a US-Israeli disinformation campaign meant to smear a national resistance movement fighting for the liberation of Lebanese lands. Hezbollah refers to itself with multiple titles including the “Organization of the Oppressed on Earth” and the “Revolutionary Justice Organization”. Its main goal is the establishment of an Islamic government across the Arab world that will “Liberate” Jerusalem and the entire area of the present-day state of Israel. Hezbollah’s main tactics is the use of suicide bombers. Hezbollah uses these human weapons to create mental and physical suffering for the Israelis and to force the Israelis to retreat out of “Islamic land”. Hezbollah extended its operations across the globe throughout the 1980s, kidnapping individuals in an attempt to gain political leverage. Hezbollah terrorism has been a serious headache for the IDF since Israeli withdrew from Lebanon in 2000. Indeed, Hezbollah’s capabilities have expanded across the board. Its arsenal has grown dramatically since 2006, in both quantity and quality. Before the 2006, Lebanese –Israeli war, Israeli air force always had the upper hand in the previous conflict. But after that conflict the situation has been changed.

Hezbollah has been a part of Lebanese political system since 1992, the party has held cabinet positions in the government since 2005, when eight members were elected to Parliament. In 2009, Hezbollah announced its entry into mainstream politics with a new manifesto and was less Islamist than its precursor and called for “true democracy”. Hezbollah captured thirteen seats in Lebanon’s 128-member Parliament in the most recent national

elections, held in 2018. As well as, Hezbollah oversees a large network of social institutions, including infrastructure, health-care centers, schools, and youth activities, all of which have helped Hezbollah attract patronage from both Shia and non-Shia Lebanese.

In the Syrian conflict, thousands of Hezbollah militants went to fight for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, proving decisive in helping pro-government forces recover ground lost to rebels, particularly along the Lebanese border. Hezbollah's involvement in Syria, however, has sharpened sectarian tension in Lebanon, where the group has been targeted in a series of bombings by Sunni militants.

This is true that, Hezbollah eventually moderate on its own. This seems unlikely; especially since it continues to operate with impunity while its military capabilities only expand. The group appears to be becoming more radical, more violent, and more dangerous. Hezbollah feels strong and will not compromise from a position of strength. In present time, Hezbollah is considered to be the most powerful terrorist organization and the greatest non-state actor in the world and he played an active role in the regional conflict. Hezbollah is a threat for Israel and anti-Iranian countries such as US and Sunni Arab countries. The success of the Syrian army and Hezbollah in the Syrian civil war has made Hezbollah compared to 2006, when there was a direct 33-day war between the Hezbollah and Israel, made it more powerful and experienced, and its fighters are present on the borders that come from illegal occupied territory.

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