FROM MUJAHIDGEEN TO MAINSTREAM: THE EVOLUTION OF HEZBOLLAH

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ABSTRACT

Given its current political, humanitarian, and military activities, would an analysis of Hezbollah's operations indicate that it has evolved as an organization and political party? Further, if this analysis does in fact reflect Hezbollah's positive progression, should the group then be removed from the U.S. Government's designated list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and declassified as a terrorist group? If so, what potential ramifications would its declassification have on the U.S. Government's Global War on Terror?

During this analysis of Hezbollah, its origins and objectives, its activities and operations, and its progression as an organization, the argument has been made in favor of Hezbollah’s removal from the State Department’s designated list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Through a review of Hezbollah’s recent actions and by examining the definitions of terrorism and
criteria for designation, it has been concluded that Hezbollah no longer meets the threshold for designation and should therefore be removed from the FTO list. While Hezbollah’s removal from the FTO list will undoubtedly damage U.S. relations with Israel, an assessment of Israel’s participation in U.S. counterterrorism efforts and its value-added in terms of supporting U.S. foreign policy has concluded that a lesser relationship with Israel would in fact be beneficial to both U.S. counterterrorism initiatives and the advancement of U.S. foreign policy. By removing Hezbollah from the FTO list and establishing a relationship with the organization, the U.S. Government would be taking steps toward its own positive evolution in showing the world that it is willing to reevaluate its policies and reward progressive action. In turn, the U.S. Government itself may be rewarded with a revitalized image among the Arab and Muslim populations, a potential conduit for future diplomatic relations with estranged nations such as Iran and Syria, and a new partner in the Global War on Terror.
DEDICATION

To my wife, Jilian, thank you for constantly motivating and inspiring me with your awesomeness. You’re my favorite.

And to my Mom and Dad, thank you for always wanting the best for me; you made me want the best for myself and gave me the confidence to get out there and go after it.
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the last three decades, particularly since September 11, 2001 (9/11), the concepts of terrorism and terrorist organizations have been the focus of media outlets, the entertainment industry, and the United States Intelligence Community (IC) alike. Stories have been written, movies have been made, and trillions of dollars have been spent fighting what has become the Global War on Terror (GWOT). During this period of time, U.S. citizens have become intimately familiar with the concept of terrorism, indications of terrorist activity, the workings of terrorist organizations, and the repercussions of a successful terrorist act. This realization has created an environment and state of awareness where citizens are willing to sacrifice a bit of personal freedom and privacy to ensure that the events of September 11th will never be relived. Can it be argued that this mentality and atmosphere has allowed the United States Government (USG) to make this country safer and more secure? Has it allowed law enforcement, the IC, and United States Military to deter and disrupt terrorist activity? Has it made the United States, and entire world, a more
precarious place for terrorists to operate? The answer is that it certainly has. But of course, as with any benefit, there must be a realized cost. And when I say cost, I am not necessarily talking about the money spent on counterterrorism programs, having to take your shoes off at the airport, or even coming to terms with the exceedingly rare possibility that someone may be monitoring your phone calls, I am talking about the cost to our psyche and perception with regard to terrorism.

While terrorism is certainly not a new concept, for those of us living in the west it was unlikely to be a common concern, or for that matter a topic we thought much at all about. Even though we had suffered a string of casualties, both military and civilian, at the hands of terrorists and terrorist groups—the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, and the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole—the population in the U.S. seemed to be oblivious to the very real threat that terrorism posed to the U.S. But following the attacks on 9/11, this mindset has changed and the concept of terrorism as been drilled into all of us on a daily basis. And furthermore,
the topic of terrorism has never before received as much coverage as it has over the last decade. This overexposure, however, may in fact be having detrimental effects on the way our population views various groups and individuals. So much so that it would appear as though every criminal act constitutes terrorism, every imam has terrorist ties, or every Muslim group is the next al-Qa’ida. And it is now this mindset, in combination with extremely broad legislature and skewed media reporting, that shapes our opinions with regard to what represents a terrorist threat. But what are our decisions based on...what do we really know about these groups or individuals? And for that matter, what does the average American really know about terrorism or how the term is even defined?

Having spent the better part of the last decade working within the United States Government's Intelligence Community (IC), it has been my privilege and honor to help combat some of the greatest threats that the U.S., and the world, has ever faced. During my tenure in the IC, the vast majority of my experience has been gained in the counterterrorism arena; mainly against Sunni terrorist
organizations such as al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, but has also included some exposure to counterintelligence and other terrorist organizations and targets. Throughout my career, I have witnessed first-hand how terrorist organizations operate; from expressing their unwavering beliefs to selecting their operational targets, I’ve watched as organizations have been created, flourished, and even destroyed. And I’ve watched as the USG has thrown trillions of dollars into counterterrorism efforts against a variety of groups and with varying success.

One afternoon, I was having a conversation with a colleague of mine and we were discussing some of the various terrorist groups being pursued by the USG. And on this particular occasion, one of the groups we had spent a considerable amount of time discussing had been the Lebanese Shi’a organization, Hezbollah (Hizb Allah Al-maqawama Al-Islamiyah fi Lubnan) or “Party of God.” As we were discussing some of Hezbollah’s activities and comparing the group to other terrorist organizations, I found myself having difficulty in justifying the group’s continued classification as a terrorist organization. Now I was obviously familiar with Hezbollah’s terrorist
activities throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but is Hezbollah today the same terrorist organization that existed during those periods in history? According to the USG, Israel, and a handful of other western nations, Hezbollah continues to operate as a terrorist organization, but throughout the Arab world and among most nations, Hezbollah is seen as a legitimate political party and resistance movement. And while the latter point of view is undoubtedly not the most popular stance among members of the USG or the IC, it remains an opinion that deserves further examination and analysis to both ensure the integrity of our counterterrorism efforts and prevent the unjustified labeling of an organization with a stigmatic term such as “terrorist.” Therefore, given its current political, humanitarian, and military activities, would an analysis of Hezbollah's operations indicate that it has evolved as an organization and political party? Furthermore, if this analysis does in fact reflect Hezbollah's positive progression, should the group then be removed from the U.S. Government's designated list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and declassified as a terrorist group? And if so, what potential
ramifications would its declassification have on the U.S. Global War on Terror?
CHAPTER I: THE PARTY OF GOD

On May 24, 2000, Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon had finally come. After more than two decades of occupation, Israeli forces retreated from southern Lebanon overnight. This event resulted in an extraordinary time of celebration throughout Lebanon, particularly in the south, and Hezbollah with its relentless perseverance and unwavering resistance was seen as the country’s liberator. While this was certainly a highpoint in Hezbollah’s storied history, the organization that existed in 2000 was a far cry from its beginnings in the early 1980s.

Founding

Israel’s presence in Lebanon began in 1978 with its “Litani Operation,” aimed at pushing Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) guerillas north of the Litani River. While the operation was a success, pockets of Palestinian militants remained and provided enough justification for Israel to establish its “security zone” inside Lebanon, an area which Israel would maintain for the next twenty-two years. While some, including
Hezbollah’s Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem\textsuperscript{1}, cite this initial violation of Lebanese sovereignty as the precursor for Hezbollah’s founding, many believe Israel’s full-scale invasion four years later was the real catalyst. However, before we are able to discuss the emergence of Hezbollah, some time must be taken to discuss its predecessor and eventual rival, the Amal movement.

Founded in 1975 by Sayyid Musa al-Sadr as the militia wing of al-Sadr’s Harakat al-Muhrumin (Movement of the Deprived), Amal (Afwaj al-Muqawamat al-Lubnaniyya), an acronym for Lebanese Resistance Detachments, was formed in an attempt to arm as the Lebanese Civil War was approaching. As was the case with most Lebanese militias, Amal required the support of an outside Arab state – in this case Libya – to acquire the resources necessary to take action.\textsuperscript{2} However, support for Amal began to fade following the outbreak of the civil war until the disappearance of Musa al-Sadr in 1978. In August 1978, al-Sadr flew to Libya to attend the ceremonies

\textsuperscript{1} Naim Qassem, \textit{Hizbullah: The Story from Within} (London: Saqi Books, 2005), 67.

commemorating the 1969 rise to power of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. While several theories have been proposed as to the circumstances behind his disappearance, al-Sadr was never seen again and most theories suggest that Gaddafi was responsible for al-Sadr’s death. With that said, the combination of the outcry over al-Sadr’s disappearance, the Israeli invasion in 1978, and the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 provided Amal with a resurgence in popularity.

Over the next few years, Amal would challenge the brutal domination of the Palestinian guerillas whose actions brought the Lebanese into the Israeli-Palestinian cross-fire. Clashed between Amal militiamen and Palestinian guerillas began to occur more frequently as Shi’a began to view the Palestinians themselves as an occupying force prone to brutality. Therefore, while Amal actively opposed the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, Amal silently welcomed the 1982 invasion as it broke the power of the Palestinian fighters in southern Lebanon. Following the invasion, Amal’s new leader (and current

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Lebanese Speaker) Nabih Berri was among those participating in the National Salvation Committee, an entity created by Lebanese President Elisa Sarkis to foster communication among Lebanon’s most powerful militias. Despite its intended goals, radicals within Amal viewed the Committee as an avenue for the U.S. to control Lebanon. Because of this and other differences in ideology, Hussein Musawi, a leading figure in Amal, broke away from the organization and formed Islamic Amal. Musawi’s new organization was based in the northern Bekaa and announced its objectives as fighting injustice as well as the Israelis in southern Lebanon. Musawi’s actions were a magnet that attracted a group of fundamentalist clerics who had studied under the Shiite religious scholar Baqir al-Sadr at a religious seminary in al-Najaf, Iraq, the same seminary where Ayatollah Khomeini and Lebanese mullah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah had also been educated. Musawi and other leaders kept the goal of purifying Lebanon’s corrupt system, but their primary mission was first and foremost the fight against Israel. And with this common goal in mind, other fundamentalist splinter
groups were attracted to this movement out of which Hezbollah eventually emerged.

Following an eleven month cease fire with the PLO, Israel claimed that the agreement had been broken by the assassination attempt against its ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov. In turn, on June 6, 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon in its Peace for Galilee operation. Israel viewed this invasion as an opportunity to eliminate the PLO as a political force in the region and install a pro-Israeli government.\footnote{Norton, \textit{Hezbollah: A Short History}, 32-33.} However, as history would point out, this decision would accomplish little more than highlight Israel’s lack of understanding with regard to the Shi’a of Lebanon. Although, it is worth mentioning that given the success of their counterparts in Iran, even if Israel had not invaded southern Lebanon, the revolutionary Shi’a in Lebanon would have likely made an attempt at achieving similar successes. With that said, the invasion certainly pushed the Shi’a in this direction and created an environment in which and organization like Hezbollah could flourish. As former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak clearly laid out in July 2006, “When
we entered Lebanon...there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shia in the south. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah."

Within months of Israel’s 1982 invasion, various groups began to organize attacks against Israeli occupation forces once it became apparent that Israel had no intention of departing Lebanon anytime soon. These groups included factions of the Ba’th and Communist parties, Nasserist organizations, other secular groups, and of course, Hezbollah. At this point however, Hezbollah was just a fledgling organization comprised of young, committed, revolutionaries, often barely in their twenties. As an example, Hezbollah’s current Secretary General Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah was only twenty-two at the time. In his teens, Nasrallah had been a rising star within the Amal contingent located in al-Bazuriya, his village in southern Lebanon. His then mentor, Sayyid ‘Abbas al-Musawi, had taken Nasrallah under his wing in al-Najaf, Iraq, but he himself was only thirty years old at the time. Raghib al-Harb, also thirty at the time of

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5 Kevin Peraino, “Barak's View” (interview with Ehud Barak on Lebanon crisis), (Newsweek, July 18, 2006).
the invasion, was an early leader of the resistance in the south and was later assassinated by Israel in 1984. And Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli, who would become Hezbollah’s first secretary-general in 1989, was only thirty-four in 1982. With that said, while its members may have been young, Hezbollah’s actions were certainly effective.

Shortly following the Israeli invasion, a U.S.-led agreement was reached between Israel and the PLO which called for the departure of all Palestinian fighters from Beirut, including Yasser Arafat and various other Palestinian leaders. In an attempt to execute this agreement, multinational forces (MNF) led by U.S., French, British, and Italian troops arrived in Lebanon in late August 1982. Unfortunately, these newly deployed troops were not met with the warmest of welcomes; just three weeks after his election to the presidency, Lebanese President Bashir al-Gemayyel was assassinated on September 14, 1982. This act and the subsequent retaliatory killings forced the U.S. and other MNF participants to mobilize additional forces which arrived in late September, only this time they were charged with assisting the new Lebanese government and army maintain stability...
feat which Hezbollah and other groups would make most difficult to achieve. In its first post-invasion operation, and one of its deadliest, on November 11, 1982, Hezbollah member Sheikh Ahmad Qasir drove a bomb-laden car into and Israeli Intelligence headquarters located in the southern city of Tyre. More than seventy-five Israeli officials and soldiers were killed and caught Israel so off guard that for some time after the event they were still uncertain of how it had occurred. For the next several months, the MNF appeared to be succeeding in its mission until the U.S. Embassy was bombed in April 1983. The blast, which killed sixty-three people, was certainly a direct statement in opposition to the MNF.

On May 17, 1983, a U.S.-brokered agreement was signed by Israel and Lebanon which stated that Israel would withdraw its forces back into its “security zone” while Lebanese forces took over responsibility for general security of the country. While some Lebanese were skeptical of the agreement, others viewed it as a sign of progress and were therefore hesitant to join or support the resistance. This uncertainty would soon disappear

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6 Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 80.
following the events of October 16, 1983 in al-Nabatiya. On that particular day in al-Nabatiya, the celebration of ‘Ashura, the most important Shi’a holiday mourning the death of Imam Hussein, was taking place amidst a large crowd of worshipers. As a part of ‘Ashura, the Shi’a often act out the final battle and martyrdom of Imam Hussein. And on this particular day, just as the performance was taking place and celebrants were gathered around the arena, an armed Israeli patrol of several vehicles appeared and attempted to drive through the crowds. As the crowd threw stones at the Israeli soldiers, the Israelis responded with rifle fire and grenades, killing several Shi’a. This incident was a turning point for the resistance as it moved many previous fence-sitters to join the resistance. Furthermore, within the Lebanese Shi’a community, the 1983 incident epitomizes the commonly shared opinion which emphasizes Israel’s disrespect for Islam and the injustices that were brought upon the Lebanese people during the occupation.\footnote{Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 66 and 81.}

Just a week after the events in al-Nabatiya, Hezbollah (likely with Iranian assistance) carried out an
operation which not only altered the course of the resistance, but which in all likelihood still factors into U.S. and western policy toward the organization and Lebanon as a whole. On October 23, 1983, two trucks piloted by suicide operatives were driven into the U.S. Marine Corps and French Paratrooper barracks in Beirut. The blast at the marine barracks killed 241 American servicemen and the attack against the French killed fifty-eight paratroopers; for both the U.S. and France, the attacks that day remain some of the deadliest in their history. While both the U.S. and the French vowed to stay and not let the attacks deter their efforts in Lebanon, the October 23 attacks and continued violence fueled domestic calls for withdrawal among the MNF members. So despite their stated intentions, both the U.S. and Italians withdrew by February 1984, the French by March, and the last of the MNF departed Lebanon by April 1984. Without the support of the MNF, the Lebanese government and armed forces were unable to uphold their piece of the May 17 agreement and were forced to abandon the agreement and closed the Israeli mission in Lebanon established to administer the treaty. Additionally, the lack of MNF
support also lead to a rise in attacks and a security climate in which an Israeli soldier was dying every third day.\textsuperscript{8}

By January 1985, Israel had hunkered down into an enlarged "security zone" which now comprised of nearly ten percent of all Lebanese territory. Israel asserted that it would abide by UN Resolution 425 (1978), which called for the complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Lebanon, once the security situation had improved. However, Israel essentially used its "security zone" as an excuse to continue its occupation. If the security situation in southern Lebanon improved, as it did from time to time, Israel lauded the "security zone" as a success that must be continued to preserve peace. And when the security situation become more hostile and violent, the "security zone" became a necessity.

An Open Letter

Although 1982 is referred to as the year Hezbollah was founded, it could be argued that the group did not become a cohesive organization until the mid-80s. The group of committed revolutionaries that made up this first

\textsuperscript{8} Norton, \textit{Hezbollah: A Short History}, 81.
cadre was extremely young, many of whom were barely in their twenties. Originally organized and funded by a contingent of Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces (IRGC), the organization began as a militia of Shi’a followers ideologically inspired by the Iranian Revolution and Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. In 1985, however, the group’s open letter set forth its founding principles and organizational structure. First and foremost among its objectives was to free Lebanon through the eradication of Western colonialism in Lebanon to ensure “the final departure of America, France, and their allies from Lebanon and the termination of the influence of any imperialist power in the country.” Further, the letter condemned any plans for mediation between Lebanon and Israel as mediation would serve to legitimize Israel’s occupation of Palestine. Thus, the ultimate objective was to destroy Israel and to liberate Palestine; “Israel’ final departure from Lebanon is a prelude to its final

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obliteration from existence and the liberation of venerable Jerusalem from the talons of occupation.”\textsuperscript{11}

The letter had been issued during a time of true jubilation in Lebanon; an atmosphere resulting from a string of political and military successes that had humiliated both Israel and the United States. Hezbollah had played a major role in the departure of U.S. marines from Lebanon and spoiling the U.S.-brokered May 17, 1983, agreement between Lebanon and Israel. Equally impressive was that Hezbollah had forced an Israeli withdrawal from most of Lebanon’s territory. In January 1985, just a month before the letter was issued, Israel announced that it would “redeploy” its forces and then retreated to the border region where its “security zone” became a virtual bull’s-eye for Hezbollah attacks continuing throughout the 1990s.\textsuperscript{12}

Holding true to the obstinate and militant tone of the open letter, throughout the mid to late 1980s, Hezbollah aggressively targeted Westerners in Lebanon and

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\item \textsuperscript{11} Norton, \textit{Amal and the Shi’a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon}, 173 and 179.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Augustus Richard Norton, “(In)security Zones in South Lebanon” (\textit{Journal of Palestine Studies} 23 (1):61-79, 1993).
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symbols of Western influence. Hezbollah and its affiliated groups kidnapped dozens of foreigners, holding them hostage for various lengths of time (seven years in the case of American journalist Terry Anderson). While the groups that abducted the foreigners often had their own agenda, the organizations were also sensitive to the interests and objectives of Iran. As such, freeing the hostages often involved extensive negotiations involving the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel, as well as the release of Iranian assets frozen by the U.S. Possibly the highlight of this period was the June 14, 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847, masterminded by Imad Mughniyah, an individual associated with Hezbollah’s External Security Organization until his assassination in 2008. Hezbollah was strongly implicated in the hijacking which was intended to draw attention to the fate of hundreds of Lebanese prisoners being held in Israel. While some of the captives may have participated in resistance operations, others were simply suspects held hostage by Israel in extremely harsh conditions and not afforded the protections of international law.

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13 Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 41.
Ultimately, the crisis ended only when Israel agreed to free Lebanese prisoners from the Atlit prison and when Syrian government representatives, and in particular Iranian Speaker (and future president) Hashemi Rafsanjani, pressured the perpetrators to end the crisis.  

Another side-effect of the hijacking was that it exposed the deep tensions between Hezbollah and Amal. When Amal leader Nabih Berri came forward to mediate the crisis, Hezbollah intensely objected that Berri had no authority to speak on its behalf. The tension between Hezbollah and Amal continued to fester as the two militias fought to win over the Shi’a population in southern Lebanon, as well as the southern suburbs of Beirut where more than half of the Shi’a population resides. The hostilities finally exploded in February 1988 following the kidnapping of U.S. Marin Corps Colonel William R. Higgins. While Higgins was serving with the UN forces in he south, he was taken captive by a group known as the “Believers’ Resistance,” a group with ties to Hezbollah. Higgins’ kidnapping threatened to derail Amal’s relationship with the United Nations Interim Force in

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14 Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 42-43.
Lebanon (UNIFIL), so Amal attempted to locate Higgins and rescue him. Unfortunately, the kidnappers were able to evade the Amal searches and Higgins was later killed. The incident, however, had already triggered clashes between Amal and Hezbollah which had allowed Amal to temporarily strengthen its grip on southern Lebanon. Although, shortly thereafter, in the fall of 1988, fighting erupted in the southern Beirut suburbs and Amal was badly defeated, essentially losing its entire military foothold in Beirut.

While Hezbollah certainly served Iranian interests throughout the 1980s, by the end of the decade, Iran’s politics began to change and its support for Hezbollah wavered. With the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, the new leadership in Iran focused on restoring a post-revolutionary and post-Gulf War Iran. And with regard to Lebanon, the new leadership altered their policy toward the entire Shi’a community and distanced themselves from the militias...for the time being. Because the vicious fighting between Amal and Hezbollah often claimed the lives of civilians, now President Rafsanjani adamantly condemned both sides for their behavior. It should be
noted, however, that Iran’s reaction was not caused solely by the bloodshed in Lebanon. 1990 marked the end of the Lebanese Civil War, the final days of the Cold War, and the organization of an international coalition against Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Therefore Iran’s motives and true plan for Lebanon may not have necessarily changed, but Iran was adjusting and positioning itself in a world where the U.S. stood as the only remaining superpower.

From its beginnings, Hezbollah always defined itself in contrast to Amal. Unlike its politically minded counterparts, the Hezbollah leaders of the 1980s refused to participate in what they believed to be a corrupt Lebanese political system, but by the 1990s they gave way to a more realistic vantage point. In contrast to their 1985 open letter, the group now confronted both regional and Lebanese politics in a more practical manner. The result has been a somewhat two-faced organization maintaining a fierce commitment to combat Israel’s occupation of southern Lebanon while simultaneously participating in the Lebanese political system that they
had previously condemned.\footnote{Norton, \textit{Hezbollah: A Short History}, 45.} There is little doubt that Hezbollah has shown to be responsive to needs and ideals of its constituency, a constituency which includes a large portion of the expanding Lebanese middle class which came to admire Hezbollah’s integrity and opposition to corruption. Further, this ever increasing constituency brings with it new requirements as the new Shi’ a middle class does not strive to live in an Islamic Republic, and certainly not the “Islamic Republic of Lebanon.”\footnote{Norton, \textit{Hezbollah: A Short History}, 46.} With this in mind, Hezbollah regularly states its intended goal as being an open political system with a seat at the table of government. Moreover, there have been indications from senior Hezbollah officials, Nasrallah and Naim Qassem, that the 1985 open letter is obsolete and no longer an authoritative guide to the group’s positions. This very issue was the topic of a September 1998 documentary on al-Jazeera TV where several party officials, supporters, and journalists were interviewed for the program.\footnote{Joseph Elie Alagha, \textit{The Shifts in Hizbullah’s Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program} (Leiden: ISIM; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 328.}
conclusion reached was that the open letter had belonged to a certain historical period, but that this time had passed and did not represent Hezbollah’s present positions.

Ground Rules for Moving Forward

During the 1990s, a practical set of ground rules began to surface between Hezbollah, and other resistance forces, and Israel and their proxy, the South Lebanon Army (SLA). Under these “rules of the game,” Israel would not attack civilian targets in Lebanon and the resistance would focus its attention on the “security zone.” In 1993, this contract was clearly articulated in an oral agreement following Israel’s Operation Accountability. The 1993 agreement led to a reduction in violence and retaliation, but this lull was relatively short lived and came to an abrupt end in 1996. As a retaliatory strike for the killing of Lebanese civilians, in early 1996, Hezbollah fired several Katyusha rockets into Israel. In April, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) began another major campaign into Lebanon as Operation Grapes of Wrath aimed

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18 Daniel Sobelman, *New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizballah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2004).
at undermining popular support for Hezbollah among the Lebanese people. Israel’s strategy proved to be a tremendous failure, largely due to the massacre in Qana. At the UN base in Qana, civilians sought protection from IDF air and ground attacks, but rather than finding safety, 106 civilians were killed by Israeli artillery. Reports by both the UN and Amnesty International disputed Israel’s claims that the shelling was unintentional and further reporting from the UN findings showed that the UN Secretary-General’s military advisor demonstrated that the Israeli shelling of the UNIFIL site was not accidental and that the rounds that fell upon the compound had found their intended target.\textsuperscript{19} In recent memory, no incident has inspired more hatred for Israel than the Qana attack.

Shortly following the attack, then U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher persuaded all sides to again agree to the rules that had been in place since 1993. On this occasion, however, the agreement was more than an oral exchange and was agreed to in writing. A point to

keep in mind regarding these negotiations was that Israel never challenged the right of Hezbollah to attack its soldiers in Lebanon, essentially conceding that the IDF was an occupying force in the country. Additionally, the agreement authorized a monitoring group comprised of the U.S., France, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel to oversee the execution of the agreement and address complaints regarding violations. From 1996 to 2000, the monitoring group effectively policed and reinforced the rules of the agreement and the rate of violence remained relatively low throughout the remainder of the decade.

One measure of the importance of the accepted rules was that Israel and Hezbollah both apologized for actions that fell outside of the accepted rules of engagement. For example, in November of 1998, Hezbollah apologized for the firing or rockets which it had not authorized and ultimately condemned. In turn, Israel occasionally used remarkable restraint after suffering major casualties at the hands of Hezbollah, operation under the argument the given attack was acceptable under the agreement. Another point that bears mentioning is that Hezbollah operations were mainly targeted against Israeli soldiers, SLA, or
Israeli-allied militia and not against civilians. This is certainly something to keep in mind as other groups, such as Hamas in Palestine, have intentionally targeted Israeli civilians, specifically during suicide operations. Furthermore, while it may come as a shock to many Westerners, of the twelve suicide attacks launched by Hezbollah, all were targeted against the IDF force and its allies.  

This, of course, is not meant to suggest that both Hezbollah and Israel always played by the agreed upon ground rules. Both sides periodically disregarded the rules of proportionality and noncombatant immunity. Far more commonplace, however, were indiscriminate Israeli reprisals which led to civilian deaths following a resistance operation. Therefore, civilians were regularly killed “by accident” and in greater overall numbers than either resistance, IDF, or SLA forces. All totaled, over 500 Lebanese and Palestinian civilians were killed between the 1982 invasion and Israel’s withdrawal in 2000, more

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than thirty times the number of Israeli civilian fatalities during this same period.\textsuperscript{21}

**Israeli Withdrawal**

In 1999, retired chief of staff General Ehud Barak was elected prime minister of Israel under the campaign promise that Israel would withdrawal from Lebanon within twelve months of his assuming office. It was said that the withdrawal would be orchestrated either in conjunction with bilateral negotiations with Syria or unilaterally, the former being the ideal preference. Following several months of negotiations between Israel and Syria, the negotiations collapsed under a disagreement concerning Israeli-held Syrian land neighboring Lake Tiberias. Barak refused to release the pocket of land and Syrian President Hafez al-Asad insisted that all Syrian land be returned; once the two sides reached this stalemate, negotiations failed and Israel began focusing on unilateral withdrawal.

As the lead-up to Israel’s unilateral withdrawal began, confusion and warnings of chaos in Lebanon spread through Beirut and Damascus. Hezbollah’s statements, \textsuperscript{21} Joost Hilterman, *Civilian Pawns* (Washington D.C.: Middle East Watch, 1996).
especially those of Hasan Nasrallah, stood out with its calm assurances and careful preparations for the aftermath following Israel’s withdrawal. This poise and preparedness was in contrast to the relative confusion put forth by other officials. And although it was widely believed in Lebanon that a full withdrawal would end the violence aimed at Israel, Hezbollah remained purposely ambiguous about its intentions following the withdrawal.

Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon finally came on May 24, 2000 and was a day of celebration throughout Lebanon. This sense of joy was the strongest in the South where displaced residents raced to repossess their vacated homes and villages. At the site of the al-Khiam prison, a brutal detention center run by the SLA, prison doors were torn open to free the prisoners. And what seemed to come as a surprise to many, throughout the country there remained a tremendous restraint and calm, and certainly none of the revenge killings that were anticipated. While many of the SLA fled to Israel with their families, those that stayed were tried for collaboration and given fairly reasonable sentences given the circumstances. As a whole, the time is remembered as one of extraordinary order,
particularly when we compare it to the preceding decades in Lebanon.

Immediately following the Israeli withdrawal, a crucial debate arose within Hezbollah as to whether the organization would concentrate solely on Lebanese politics and governance or maintain and support the resistance within Lebanon and throughout the Middle East. After internal discussions and consultations with Iranian leader Ayatollah 'Ali Khamenei, Hezbollah chose to continue the resistance against Israel. And as justification for their continued efforts, Hezbollah cited the Israeli military presence in the Golan Heights area of Shebaa Farms as an example of Israel’s incomplete withdrawal from Lebanese territory. As a result of this claim, the next six years were filled with harassing fire, aggressive patrolling, and intense rhetoric, but as a whole were quite peaceful. As such, this period is quite significant as it shows that a maintained stability across the Lebanon/Israel border is indeed possible.

One other item of particular note during this post-withdrawal period was Hezbollah’s increased political activity. The group made the landmark decision to enter
the Lebanese political arena during the 1992 elections season, although several esteemed clerics, particularly Muhammad Fadlallah, had been advocating a pro-election position for years. Fadlallah argued that a revolutionary transition to Islamic rule in Lebanon was impossible given the state’s diverse society and therefore, a gradual restructuring and increased participation would be required.\textsuperscript{22} Fadlallah’s recommendations aside, Hezbollah leaders correctly assessed that political participation would bring with it political benefits such as access to government jobs, contracts, licenses, or permits. Additionally, its participation would provide Hezbollah with recognition as a political institution in Lebanon, a public forum to express its views, and the ability to influence government budgets and spending to better serve its constituents. With that said, while Hezbollah had enjoyed some success during its initial campaigns, in the jubilant aftermath of Israel’s withdrawal, Hezbollah capitalized on its newfound celebrity status and made a strong showing at the polls. In 2000, the Amal-Hezbollah

alliance, the Resistance and Development Bloc, won all twenty-three available seats in southern Lebanon and more than a quarter of all parliamentary seats. And as a testament to the staying power and continued popularity of Hezbollah, these positive results were only increased during the 2005 elections where they won 11% of the country’s 128 parliamentary seats, while the Resistance and Development Bloc again won all twenty-three seats in Southern Lebanon and 27% of the parliamentary seats nationwide. Further, the group’s performance in the Lebanese municipal elections is often an even better representation of its influence—as unlike the parliamentary elections, the municipal elections are largely immune to the meddling of outside parties such as Syria. And in the 2004 municipal elections, Hezbollah won 21% of Lebanon’s municipalities.

Aside from Hezbollah’s political participation and success, 2005 in general was a time full of political jockeying in general. Following the February 14, 2005 assassination of long-time Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq

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al-Hariri, the country was divided over the involvement of Syria in Lebanon’s governance. Believed to have been behind the Hariri’s assassination, had long played an influential role in various aspects of Lebanese daily life, particularly in the political sphere. Following Hariri’s death, many—including the U.S. and western allies—believed that Syria had sealed its own fate and that the waves of demonstrations were a sign of a pending overthrow of Syrian influence. Within a few weeks, however, the situation become more complex as Hezbollah organized massive demonstrations on March 8, 2005 as an expression of gratitude to Syria. As was made apparent by the reportedly 400,000 demonstrators, a large portion of Lebanese are not opposed to Syria’s control and Syria’s influence has remained persistent via its allies. Not to be outdone, however, the pro-American Cedar Revolutionaries organized a massive rally of their own—with numbers estimated at around one million participants—on March 14, 2005, the one month anniversary of Hariri’s assassination. The two events were so defining that candidates since that time have been broken into two categories, the March 8 Bloc—Hezbollah, Amal, and pro-

As the years following Israel’s withdrawal were characterized by relative peace and prosperity within Lebanon, there became an increasing demand amongst Lebanese officials and citizens for Hezbollah to disarm. More important than the fact that many saw Hezbollah’s arsenal as unnecessary given the current state of affairs, many Lebanese were concerned that Hezbollah’s continuously growing arsenal and skirmishes with IDF forces might eventually incite a larger-scale reaction from Israeli forces. Hezbollah, however, adamantly refused to disarm and argued that its military wing was the only credible force capable of defending Lebanon against an Israeli invasion. And ultimately, at this point in time, Hezbollah leadership and the majority of its support base were convinced that Hezbollah’s military stature and ever increasing arsenal, courtesy of Iran and Syria, would in fact prevent Israel from ever again invading or bombarding Lebanon as it had done in the past. However, in July
2006, Hezbollah would realize that its perceived deterrent was not as intimidating as it had imagined.
CHAPTER II: 2006 WAR WITH ISRAEL

Following Israel’s withdrawal in 2000, Lebanon put forth a tremendous effort to rebuild and maintain a relatively peaceful existence with its neighbor to the south. By 2006, the country had rebuilt much of its infrastructure and renewed its image as a tourist hotspot in the Arab world. And although Hezbollah, seized opportunities to periodically provoke Israel both verbally and militarily, it had abided by the agreed upon rules of the game and never pushed matters to the point of serious confrontation. However, following the abduction of two Israeli soldiers, Hezbollah and Israel were again engulfed in war. Both sides made serious miscalculations from the beginning—Hezbollah never expected Israel to declare war over the abduction of two soldiers and Israel severely underestimated the capabilities of Hezbollah. In turn, the war would prove to be a turning point for both Israel and Hezbollah. Whether it ill-equipped and untrained soldiers, irrational and misinformed leadership, or poor intelligence and a misguided assessment of its enemy, the 2006 war revealed some gaping holes in what was perceived as the most formidable and skilled military in the region.
Further, Hezbollah’s ability to stand toe-to-toe with the Israeli military bolstered its popularity and support throughout the Arab world.

The Path to War

In the months preceding the summer of 2006, Beirut was preparing for a record summer tourist season. Following 9/11 and al-Qa’ida’s attacks in New York and Washington D.C., the U.S. and other western countries heightened border security and made acquiring a travel visa extremely difficult—particularly for travelers originating from Middle Eastern countries. Therefore, Beirut, with its pleasant climate, repaired infrastructure, and familiar culture, became an extremely popular destination among wealthy Arab travelers. As Lebanese officials and business owners enjoyed the region’s renewed popularity, they became increasingly vocal about ensuring this regained prosperity. Furthermore, as concerns grew—especially after Syria’s troop withdrawal in April 2005—many of these same individuals called for Hezbollah to disarm in an attempt to avoid any mishaps that ay jeopardize Lebanon’s current success. To this end, while Hezbollah publicly insisted
that it would do nothing to endanger the coming tourist season, the group adamantly refused to disarm. Hezbollah maintained that its military wing was needed more than ever as it was the only credible force capable of defending Lebanon against an Israeli invasion; a position that retains strong support in the South.

Despite its stated intentions to avoid conflict, Hezbollah’s conduct was certainly not representative of an organization striving to uphold a peaceful environment. In late May 2006, Hezbollah fired on an Israeli border post, wounding an Israeli soldier. According to their agreed upon ground rules (discussed in Chapter I), an appropriate response from Israel would have been the shelling of a few Hezbollah positions or command centers, but in this instance Israel shelled and destroyed nearly twenty Hezbollah positions along the border. In turn, Hezbollah responded by launching eight Katyusha rockets at Safad, the location of the IDF’s northern headquarters. While Hezbollah’s rocket attack was a definite reminder of their arsenal, which reportedly included somewhere between 14,000 to 20,000 rockets, Israel’s hard-handed response to
the initial incursion gave an indication that Hezbollah wasn’t the only side looking for a fight.

From the Israeli perspective, the desire had been growing among the political and military leadership to settle things with Hezbollah and eliminate the organization once and for all. Although the two countries had enjoyed a relatively peaceful period since the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, the constant wave of public taunting and rhetoric coming from Hezbollah had been eating away at Israel’s tolerance. Of particular concern to Israel was a videotape recovered in late June 2005 which indicated that Hezbollah was planning future abductions of Israeli soldiers. The tape was recovered by the IDF following a day long pursuit of three, later identified, Hezbollah Special Forces members in the Shebaa Farms region. Aside from the skill the three men exhibited in evading capture, the most interesting piece of intelligence was found on the recording which the three had apparently made several hours before the attack. Their calm and relaxed nature, combined with the large amount of intelligence equipment the three had been carrying, suggested that these individuals had spent a great deal of time in Israeli
territory without having been caught. In addition to the videotape, and possibly a sort of last straw for the Israelis were a series of monitored communications between Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas during the Spring and early Summer of 2006. Throughout these communications, Hezbollah leadership urged Hamas to hold their ground against Israel regarding the return of Gilad Shalit—an Israeli soldier captured by Palestinians in June 2006.

Shortly after 9:00 a.m. on July 12, 2006, Hezbollah launched a perfectly executed attack against an Israeli patrol moving alongside the border security fence in the Zar’it section of Israel. In conjunction with the main assault, Hezbollah carried out a decoy operation of heavy shelling along the border and sharpshooters simultaneously decommissioned the observation cameras along the border area. Together, all of these elements provided enough time and disorder to allow for a successful abduction. Of the eight IDF soldiers in the patrol vehicles, three were killed, two wounded, and two others, Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, were taken by Hezbollah. As a testament to the precision in which Hezbollah carried out the operation
and the disruption they had caused the IDF, the first responders to the scene of the attack arrived forty-five minutes after the assault. In addition to the primary assault and abduction, Hezbollah soldiers were also able to thwart an initial rescue attempt launched by the IDF. In the course of the rescue attempt, five more IDF soldiers were killed as a state-of-the-art Merkava tank was destroyed by a Hezbollah booby-trap, killing its four member crew, and another member of the rescue team was killed by Hezbollah mortar fire.

This attack on Israeli soil was certainly an escalation in hostilities with particular disregard for the ground rules which had helped keep the peace following Israel’s withdrawal. And while Hezbollah leadership had undoubtedly anticipated Israeli retaliation, it appears as though they had expected a relatively manageable Israeli response. However, as Lebanese critics would soon point out, and as Nasrallah himself would later admit, Hezbollah had made a major miscalculation and sorely underestimated the Israeli reaction. And given Hezbollah’s involvement and interaction with Hamas during its hostage negotiations with Israel, one would have expected Hezbollah to view
Israel’s reaction in that instance as a possible glimpse into what it could expect. Following the June 25 abduction of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, Israeli launched an extensive military operation in the Gaza Strip called “Summer Rain.” In addition to intensified air attacks, the IDF followed with infantry attacks into the Bet Hanoun region in the north of Gaza. During a month of activity, approximately 450 Palestinians were killed, including nearly 100 civilians, while only one Israeli soldier was killed by friendly fire. All the while, Shalit remained in captivity and the IDF operations did nothing to persuade his captors to release him. And furthermore, while confrontation with Hamas and Hezbollah would certainly present two very different scenarios for Israel, then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s repeated declarations that Israel would no longer be blackmailed into negotiations should have been looked upon as an indication that the rules of the game had been changed.

By July 13, Israel’s retaliatory offensive had begun and it was clearly well beyond what Hezbollah leadership

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had anticipated. Within a day, Israel had blockaded Lebanon from the sea and bombed Beirut airport into closure, and shortly thereafter, on July 14, Nasrallah’s offices were bombed. However, shortly after the bombing of Nasrallah’s offices, Hezbollah launched an attack against an Israeli naval vessel, the INS Hanit, with an Iranian-produced C-802 Noor guided missile. The ship was disabled and four Israeli soldiers were killed in what proved to be an early indication that Hezbollah was more prepared than Israel had anticipated.

At the outbreak of the war, Israel enjoyed widespread international support while, on the other hand, Hezbollah was widely condemned for violating Israeli territory and abducting the two soldiers. Although their past historical track record for respecting state sovereignty certainly wasn’t perfect, Israel’s 2000 withdrawal afforded it a bit of the moral high ground in this particular conflict. And while U.S. support was, as expected, quite strong, what came as a surprise to many was the backing Israel received from key Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It should, however, be mentioned that the
motives of these Arab states were not as altruistic as they appeared. The Sunni Arab governments were already apprehensive about a rising Shi’ite power in Iran, a soon-to-be Shi’a dominated government in Iraq, and the growing influence of Hezbollah in Lebanon, all of which were trends that could cause not only regional instability, but also domestic instability among Shi’a and sympathetic Sunnis in their own countries. And with somewhat of a similar goal in mind, it was apparent that the U.S. and Israel were eager to deliver a long-withheld knockout blow to Hezbollah and simultaneously convey a strong message to Tehran and hostile groups in Iraq who looked to Hezbollah for inspiration.

Unethical Warfare

Israel’s initial air strikes into Lebanon were extremely precise and dealt a devastating blow to Hezbollah’s long range attack capabilities. In well under an hour, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) precision strikes on July 13 destroyed fifty-nine stationary rocket launchers concealed in the homes of Hezbollah activists and sympathetic Shiite families throughout southern Lebanon. The attack on its Fajr rocket layout came as a double-
headed surprise to Hezbollah which never imagined Israel would carry out such a massive air strike and had been under the impression that the whereabouts of their Iranian-made rockets remained a closely guarded secret. An extraordinary number of the intermediate-range rockets were knocked out before they could be fired—estimates range from one-half to two-thirds of Hezbollah’s Fajr stores—and Hezbollah’s ability to strike deep into Israel was significantly hindered. Further, as testament to that precision capability of the IAF and the outstanding intelligence gathered by Shin Bet, Mossad, and IDF Military Intelligence, the amount of collateral damage—about 20 Lebanese citizens were killed—was far below the IAF’s original estimates.² Unfortunately, following these early precision strikes, Israel’s air assaults and artillery barrages become more inaccurate and attempts to compensate for their intelligence gaps caused far greater damage.

Israel’s war plan relied heavily on its air power and artillery capability to achieve its objectives. Israel’s

² Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, 34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon, 91.
initial goals were to isolate Hezbollah by cutting off supply routes, eliminate Hezbollah’s long-range rocket capability, and attack its leadership and command centers to ultimately create an atmosphere in which Hezbollah could be destroyed by extensive bombing and shelling campaigns. As this was a relatively foreseeable strategy, prior to their retaliatory strike the U.S. had specifically requested that Israel not target civilian infrastructure. The U.S. believed that the destruction of civilian infrastructure would not only eliminate international support for the campaign in Lebanon, but would also strengthen public support for Hezbollah and its platform as the defender of the Lebanese people. Although Israel agreed to the American stipulations, it clearly paid little regard to this guidance as civilian infrastructure was regularly targeted throughout the war. Israeli strikes targeted and destroyed most of the bridges and roads in southern Lebanon as well as seaports and airports throughout the country. The IDF knocked out cellular phone towers, attacked the Hezbollah television station, al-Manar, several times (without ever interrupting broadcasts), and repeatedly struck Lebanese
oil reserves. Further, it became clear that Israel was attempting to clear out all civilians and ensure that civilians could not hunker down and ride out the Israeli assault. To this end, Israel targeted food stores, gasoline stations, and the densely populated Beirut suburb of al-Dahiya where Israel believed Hezbollah’s command centers were located.

Within days, Israel struck hundreds of targets across southern Lebanon, the outskirts of Beirut, the Beqaa Valley, and even portions of northern Lebanon. Despite their targeting of infrastructure and civilian areas, Israel seemed to maintain international support until it carried out several misguided operations against non-Hezbollah related targets, some of which were mentioned earlier. One major blunder came just a few days into the war when on July 15, Israeli bombs targeted and destroyed the home of Ayatollah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah. The bombing of Fadlallah’s home came as a shock to many as his relationship with Hezbollah, specifically Nasrallah, was not one of overwhelming support. Fadlallah, despite his opposition to U.S. policy, is the most revered cleric in Lebanon and is relatively progressive. And while
historically he has had ties to Hezbollah, Fadlallah is a proponent of political integration and regularly criticized Hezbollah’s political obstinacy. Perhaps its most troubling mishap was Israel’s bombing of an apartment building in Qana where more than sixty civilians had sought shelter from the Israeli air raids.\(^3\) The bombing killed twenty-eight civilians, sixteen of them children, and was a turning point for the international support of Israel’s campaign. Whether it was an association with Israel’s 1996 bombing of the UN base in Qana or simply the last straw on a pile of civilian casualties, international support, particularly in the Arab world, disappeared over night.

Although Israel’s unethical tactics dwarfed those of Hezbollah, this behavior does not exonerate Hezbollah of its own immoral conduct. Throughout the war, Hezbollah regularly targeted IDF squads, tanks, and positions via a guerilla-style of warfare which was certainly acceptable given their capabilities. However, in addition to the attacks on Israeli military units and locations,

Hezbollah’s daily barrage of rocket fire was aimed at innocent civilians in northern Israel. At an average rate or 150 rockets per day, and 250 on the last day of the war, Hezbollah was utilizing its arsenal as more than the deterrent the group so often referred to. This fact was more than apparent on July 16 when Hezbollah struck the city of Haifa, Israel’s third-largest city and home to approximately 275,000 people. Hezbollah fired several rockets in the area of Haifa’s main railway depot and killed eight railway workers. While Hezbollah claimed that the depot was used by the IDF, the steel ball bearings contained in each rocket are a clear indication that Hezbollah aimed to injure as many people as possible; ball bearings would have little impact on military vehicles or buildings, but cause severe damage to human beings.\footnote{Human Rights Watch, Lebanon: Hezbollah Rocket Attacks on Haifa Designed to Kill Civilians, July 17, 2006, http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2006/07/17/lebanon-hezbollah-rocket-attacks-haifa-designed-kill-civilians, (accessed February 15, 2010).} Furthermore, this use of ball bearings was not an isolated incident either. Rescue and inspection teams regularly pulled ball bearings from the walls of apartment buildings struck by Hezbollah rockets. And with regard to
the type of rockets being used by Hezbollah, while some such as the Fajr or Zalzel have more advanced guidance systems, the vast majority of Hezbollah’s rocket attacks were carried out using the historically inaccurate Katyusha.

By the end of the war, approximately 500,000 civilians were displaced from northern Israel and nearly one million people had fled or been evacuated from southern Lebanon. Further, 43 Israeli and 1,109 Lebanese civilians had been killed. When compared to military casualties, 118 Israeli soldiers, 28 Lebanese soldiers, and roughly 200 Hezbollah militants, it is clear that civilians paid the greatest price for the 2006 war.⁵

Post-War Results

On August 11, 2006, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1701 calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon. Ironically, and as an indication of which side enjoyed momentum and popular support, the resolution had been shaped by the “Seven Point Plan” previously proposed by Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. The following day, August 12, the Lebanese

⁵ Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 142.
cabinet, which includes two Hezbollah ministers, unanimously approved the ceasefire. Following the vote, in a speech before parliament, Fouad Siniora praised Hezbollah and highlighted “the perseverance of Hezbollah fighters” and their importance to Lebanon.\(^6\) On that same evening, Hassan Nasrallah announced that Hezbollah, as a member of the Lebanese government, would fulfill its part of the agreement. On August 13, the Israeli cabinet unanimously approved the ceasefire as well, with the agreement taking effect the following day, August 14 2006.

For Israel and the IDF, the 2006 war was a disappointment to the public and the army itself. The IDF was caught unprepared for war in the North and senior commanders and officials were ill-equipped to make reasonable decisions. The inexperience of its soldiers had been compounded by budget cuts targeting resources and training, and the six years following its 2000 withdrawal had given those with experience time to forget. The six years of peace in the North also allowed Hezbollah time to train and fortify its positions while Israel focused on

\(^6\) Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon*, 235.
Hamas and the Palestinians in the occupied territories. This constant conflict against the Palestinian threat also helped fostered Israel’s misguided notion that capabilities they faced in Gaza and the West Bank mirrored the capabilities of Hezbollah. Moreover, the war highlighted Israel’s general misunderstanding of Lebanon’s cultural and political environment.

After more than a month of Israeli airstrikes and artillery bombardment, Hezbollah emerged with its support not only intact, but likely strengthened among the Lebanese populace. In addition to the human casualties mentioned earlier, material losses on both sides were considerable. Damages in Israel totaled approximately $500 million and damages in Lebanon approached $4 billion. The destruction in Lebanon essentially erased fifteen years of post-civil war reconstruction with around 900 factories and 15,000 homes severely damaged or destroyed.\(^7\) However, this destruction provided Hezbollah with an opportunity to respond to the needs of those whose lives had been destroyed by the war. Not only did Hezbollah repay locals for supplied taken during the war, but for

\(^7\) Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 142.
more than 15,000 families, Hezbollah provided $10,000 to $12,000 in assistance to anyone who lost their home. Additionally, Hezbollah-affiliated architects and engineers helped construct new homes, doctors dispensed free medicine, and around 25,000 free meals were provided on a daily basis following the ceasefire. Its actions following the war certainly served to build upon its already sizeable base of support.

A key point discussed in Resolution 1701 is the strengthening of the UNIFIL peacekeeping forces and the disarming of Hezbollah. In practice, however, UNIFIL is prohibited from taking any action against Hezbollah without the consent of Lebanese government. Given Hezbollah’s strong base of support, and the fact that now more than ever Lebanese citizens view Hezbollah as the only deterrent keeping Israel at bay, it is highly unlikely to expect a new international force to diminish the appeal of Hezbollah or force it to disarm. Further, while a separate portion of Resolution 1701 called for the deployment of Lebanese armed forces to southern Lebanon, but military leaders have been instructed to work in

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8 Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 140.
cooperation with Hezbollah rather than in opposition to the organization. This stance is not all that surprising as about half of the Lebanese army consists of Shi’a, among which Hezbollah is quite popular.

Looking back on the 2006 Lebanon War, both Israel and Lebanon paid quite a price. And despite claims by both Israel and Hezbollah, the war was one that ended without a clear winner. Both sides failed to accomplish their stated objectives for going to war and each certainly made miscalculations in their assessment of the enemy. But in examining the repercussions of the war, from an Israeli standpoint it appears as though by not emerging with a swift and clear victory, Israel comes off looking like the defeated party. Israel’s inability to quickly dispose of by all means an inferior opponent brings into question the true capabilities and strength of the IDF and of Israel’s current ability to defend itself. Meanwhile, from Hezbollah’s point of view, despite the damage and losses it incurred, the mere fact that it was able to weather the Israeli siege gives weight to its claim of victory. And while Hezbollah did not defeat the IDF, despite its repeated claims, its ability to remain in the fight and
inflict damages upon the Israeli forces were more than enough to raise its public status and credibility. Moreover, this survival offers a sense of victory to not only Hezbollah, but to Lebanese citizens, resistance groups, and terrorist organizations worldwide.
CHAPTER III: HEZBOLLAH TODAY

By the fall of 2006, the thirty-four day Lebanon War had come to an end, Israeli forces had once again withdrawn from Lebanon, and once more, Hezbollah remained intact and perhaps stronger than ever. On the international stage, the Arab nations which had previously condemned Hezbollah’s actions and provided Israel with moral backing and justification now rallied in support of Lebanon and the Shi’a resistance movement. From Cairo to Riyadh, Arab governments and their citizens, Sunni and Shi’a alike, united in support of Lebanon and Hezbollah, and harshly criticized Israel for its “disproportionate” attacks on Lebanon. In contrast to the adulation being showered upon Hezbollah by the larger Arab world, the feelings of success and “victory” were not universal among the Lebanese populace.

Immediately following the war’s end, Hezbollah had enjoyed an almost celebrity status, but in the weeks and months following the ceasefire, the anti-Israel bond and feelings of unity were overshadowed by the toll the war had taken on the people, economy, and infrastructure of Lebanon. Furthermore, the cheers for Hezbollah’s heroics
began to turn into questions regarding the group’s role in
provoking the devastating conflict. In addition to the
human casualties and displaced families, the war had an
absolutely devastating impact on the Lebanese economy.
With an estimated $4 billion in damages and $2 billion in
tourism lost due to the fighting, it would take Lebanon
more than two years to rebuild its infrastructure and
convince tourists of its stability. However, Hezbollah’s
actions following the war, and continuing through present
day, have allowed it to not only maintain its presence and
influence in Lebanon, but actually improve upon its
previous position. With its constant and ever evolving
participation in humanitarian efforts and the Lebanese
political process, Hezbollah has worked tirelessly to
compliment its proven military capabilities in order to
solidify its place within the Lebanese government and
acquire the domestic and international legitimacy it
currently enjoys.

Social Welfare Programs

Over the years, one of Hezbollah’s main functions,
and attractions, has been its role as a charitable and
social services organization. Hezbollah’s social services
programs include running hospitals, news organizations, and educational institutions.\textsuperscript{1} As an organization, it is able to offer low-cost health care, provide educational assistance and training, and offer living expenses to the families of those who have died in battle. Hezbollah’s ability to essentially operate as a government entity and offer services that the government of Lebanon is sometimes unwilling or unable to offer has greatly increased its popularity. Additionally, the provision of these services helps to wash away the “terrorist organization” stigma and moves to legitimize the organization as a whole.

To be blunt, the Lebanese government offers paltry social welfare services for its citizens. And furthermore, the services that are offered are concentrated within Beirut while the southern, predominantly Shi’a, suburbs of the city (al-dahiya) are extremely impoverished. But in continuing the work of Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, Hezbollah and many other organizations have established an expansive social welfare system. Hezbollah offers an array of social services

\textsuperscript{1} “Lebanon: The Many Hands and Faces of Hezbollah,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, March 29, 2006.
including construction companies, schools, medical facilities, and banking institutions. And while these institutions are primarily based in Shi’a areas, many will offer assistance to anyone requesting help. Further, Hezbollah hospitals and staff will attend to walk-in patients, regardless of their political affiliation, for only a nominal fee. In addition to the services Hezbollah provides, the organizations it has founded continue to play a crucial role within Lebanon. Groups like the Hezbollah Women’s Committee and the Islamic Health Committee, and of course the Jihad al-Bina’ Development Organization which has rebuilt and repaired a sizeable portion of the damage caused by various wars.²

Following the 2006 war, the social service organizations and programs in southern Lebanon were put to the test given the billions of dollars in damages and the thousands of displaced families with nothing to come home to. As discussed in chapter 2, nearly 15,000 homes were badly damaged or destroyed, but Hezbollah stood ready to assist. Architects and engineers affiliated with the group planned and constructed new homes while doctors

provided free medicine to those in need of care. Further, Hezbollah paid $10,000 to $12,000 to anyone who lost their home and provided 25,000 free meals each day following the war’s end. Despite the overwhelming situation caused by the war, Hezbollah’s professionalism and competence won—and continue to win—the group extensive support among Lebanese Shi’a and other portions of the population.

Political Participation

As a political force in Lebanon, Hezbollah has been extremely successful in winning the hearts and minds of a large portion of the Lebanese population. Their political platforms are often centered around combating economic exploitation and underdevelopment, personal freedom, inequality in the political process, corruption, and above all, national security. Although not surprising given their broad spectrum of support, Hezbollah’s electoral campaigns refrain from dwelling on religious themes and focus on the pertinent issues, an ironic contrast when considering the Christian fundamentalist groups within our own political system. From the standpoint of political participation, Hezbollah’s first significant political victories began in 2004 and 2005, where in 2004 Hezbollah
won 21% of the municipalities during the municipal elections. The following year, during the 2005 national elections, Hezbollah came away with 11% of the country’s 128 parliamentary seats, while the Resistance and Development Bloc—of which Hezbollah is a member—won all 23 seats in Southern Lebanon and 27% of the parliamentary seats nationwide.\(^3\)

Following the end of the 2006 war, in the Fall of 2006, Hezbollah demanded the establishment of a “National Unity Government” based on a strict consensus where they—and other political allies including representatives from the party of Hezbollah’s main Christian ally, Michel Aoun—would be given over one-third of the cabinet positions and veto power within the Lebanese government. Once negotiations with then Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and the ruling coalition had failed, Hezbollah and its allies began the “Lebanese Revolt” which consisted of large scale protests and sit-ins that continued through May 2008. In April 2007, Hezbollah leader Nasrallah declared the situation deadlocked, but expressed an unwillingness to

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escalate the protests into civil war. However, in May 2008, Hezbollah forces launched heavy street battles and blockaded Beirut Airport in reaction to the Lebanese Government’s attempted shutdown of Hezbollah’s communications network. Nasrallah described the act as a “declaration of war” given the importance of the communication systems in Hezbollah’s defense of Lebanon. Prior to an intervention by the Lebanese Army, Hezbollah-led opposition fighters had seized control of large sections of west Beirut and various other sections of the country; control of these areas would later be turned over to the Lebanese Army in return for the resumed operation of Hezbollah’s telecom network (this topic is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter).

In an attempt to bring about a peaceful resolution, the Emir of Qatar offered to mediate between the parties involved during an arranged meeting in Doha, Qatar. To the relief of both Lebanese and the international community, an agreement was reached on May 21, 2008. While the Doha Agreement addressed the demands of both sides, it can easily be viewed as a victory for Hezbollah and the opposition parties. With regard to the goals of
the Lebanese government, the opposition tents and protesters which had materialized more than a year and a half earlier disappeared over night, and after nineteen failed attempts to elect a president (beginning in September 2007), General Michel Suleiman was elected president and inaugurated on May 25th. However, as for Hezbollah’s portion of the accord, the Agreement created a consensus government in which the opposition would hold an effective veto power having been granted eleven of the thirty cabinet seats. This realignment of the cabinet was a significant victory for Hezbollah and the opposition bloc as they now played a much more influential role within the Lebanese political arena.

Most recently, during Lebanon’s 2009 parliamentary elections, Hezbollah and the opposition March 8 bloc viewed the vote as a chance to acquire majority status within the consensus government, but to the surprise of Lebanese and the international community alike, the pro-western March 14 coalition was able to maintain power. While the results were not a defeat per se for Hezbollah and the opposition—the results from 2009 virtually
mirrored the 2005 election results—the fact that it was unable to seize the opportunity and gain additional representation was certainly a disappointment. With that said, Hezbollah and the March 8 opposition still maintain nearly 45% of the parliamentary seats and Hezbollah remains one of the most dominant political forces in Lebanon.

Military Strength and Capabilities

Following the end of the 2006 war with Israel, questions swirled about regarding Hezbollah’s role in provoking the conflict, an act considered by some of the March 14 party members to be a coup against the ruling Lebanese government. With that said, the fact that Hezbollah had just stood toe-to-toe with Israel and emerged intact was not lost on the Lebanese people or government officials. The war acted as support for Hezbollah’s long maintained refusal to disarm, an act mandated by the 1989 Taif Agreement which ended the Lebanese Civil War, and proclaimed status as Lebanon’s sole defense against an Israeli invasion. Furthermore,

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regardless of the opinions of it its detractors, the fact remained that Hezbollah was the group that would decide whether to disarm or maintain its capabilities. Despite the calls on Hezbollah to disarm and the proposed increase in UNIFIL support, the group’s overwhelming level of support and proven track record in defending Lebanon made it impossible for any Lebanese entity or international force to succeed in disarming Hezbollah.

Less than a year after the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, the failures of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) highlighted the country’s need for the type of seasoned, capable defense Hezbollah could be counted on to provide. In May 2007, Fatah al-Islam (FAI), a Sunni extremist group based in the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp near Tripoli, attacked an LAF unit killing several soldiers. In response to the incident, the LAF launched an assault against FAI elements within Nahr al-Barid, but were met with heavy resistance. After more than three months of fighting, FAI fighters finally gave way in September 2007, but they had not done so quietly. During the hostilities, 168 LAF soldiers were killed, the camp and the homes of innocent Palestinians had been
devastated, and more than 250 people had been killed—many of them civilians.

While the LAF certainly enjoyed widespread public support during the fighting, its shortcomings were on display for all to see. The army was forced to drop bombs from Vietnam-era helicopters as the Lebanese air force did not have a single combat-worthy aircraft. And early on in the fighting, the army ran out of ammunition and was only able to continue the battle when the U.S. airlifted various munitions into Lebanon. For many Shi’a, this incident gave credence to the argument that Hezbollah is more capable of defending Lebanon than even the Lebanese military.5

The time between the Summer of 2007 and the Spring of 2008 was quite a turbulent period for Lebanon and was characterized by assassinations, reprisals, and a country teetering on collapse. In June 2007, Walid Eido, a Sunni member of the Lebanese parliament and a government supporter, was killed by a car bomb in a popular Beirut neighborhood along with nine other victims. Antoine Ghanem, a Maronite member of parliament and another

5 Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 164-65.
government supporter, was blown up along with eight innocent bystanders in the Sin al-Fil district of East Beirut in September of 2007. Just three months later, the army’s renowned chief of operations, Brigadier General Francois al-Hajj, was assassinated en route to army headquarters near Beirut. Al-Hajj, a Maronite, had lead the assault against FAI in Nahr al-Barid and was widely expected to soon be named commander of the army following General Michel Suleiman’s projected election to the presidency.

Despite the string of assassinations up to this point, perhaps the most significant killing took place in Damascus, Syria on February 12, 2008 when a man using the name al-Hajj Radwan was killed by car bomb. Radwan, however, was later identified as an alias for Imad Mughniyah, the mastermind behind the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 and a key player in the 1983 bombing of the marine barracks in Beirut. Tens of thousands of mourners attended the funeral procession, including an Iranian delegation which included the foreign minister, and Mughniyah’s eulogy was given by Hasan Nasrallah himself. Delivering a surprising statement, Nasrallah identified
Mughniyah as “the commander of the two victories,” a reference to Israel’s withdrawal in 2000 and in 2006; prior to this revelation, most Lebanese were unaware of Mughniyah’s having played such a crucial role in Hezbollah’s success on the battlefield. While the outing of Mughniyah was celebrated within Hezbollah circles, the group’s enemies highlighted Hezbollah’s glorification of an infamous terrorist as an indication of the group’s ulterior motives and true identity. However, to the contrary, Mughniyah’s relatively recent role as a Hezbollah battlefield commander could be argued as a perfect example of the group’s evolution towards legitimacy. As a younger man, Mughniyah’s actions were most definitely that of a terrorist, but as both he and Hezbollah have developed over the last three decades, analysts and policy makers cannot allow the sins of the past to continuously dictate the labeling of Hezbollah and its members as terrorists.

Despite Hezbollah’s continued growth and both military and political successes, perhaps its most polarizing action in recent memory took place in May 2008.

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6 Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History, 167-68.
Hezbollah had long identified itself as the defender of Lebanon and continuously refused calls for it to disarm. Hezbollah’s detractors routinely identified Hezbollah’s armament as a violation of the Taif Agreement and argued that the group’s continued military prowess could lead to another civil war. Hezbollah has continued to refute these claims and lived by the pledge that as the defender of the Lebanese people, it would never turn its weapons against the Lebanese. Unfortunately, despite its continued promises, in early May 2008, Hezbollah’s weapons were used against other Lebanese with deadly results. Following the May 6th removal of Beirut Airport’s pro-Hezbollah security chief and the government’s move to shutdown Hezbollah’s fiber optic telecommunications network, which Hezbollah claimed was a crucial part of its security infrastructure, Hezbollah quickly responded by blocking all roads to the airport and seizing control of west Beirut. In just a few short days, Hezbollah succeeded in coercing the government to repeal the disputed decisions, but the most significant casualty was Hezbollah’s regularly repeated pledge to never turn its weapons on the Lebanese people. However, the outcome of
this crisis was certainly an indication of where the balance of power lies in Lebanon. Furthermore, even though the LAF was able to step-in and mediate the dispute, the continued existence of the LAF itself became a bargaining chip for Hezbollah during its negotiations for repeal of the government’s recent actions and in its push for a consensus government in Lebanon (discussed earlier in this chapter). As was mentioned previously, a large portion of the Lebanese military is made up of pro-Hezbollah Shi’a—a fact which had fractured the army in the past and, without a negotiated end to the stalemate, threatened to do so again. In this case, the pressure from Hezbollah and the threat of a splintered army were enough to bring the Lebanese government to the mediating table in Doha, Qatar.

Despite Hezbollah’s actions in May 2008, the Lebanese government and citizens seem to have moved forward from this incident with relative indifference. In fact, prior to and since the incidents in 2008, the Lebanese government and people have continued to legitimize Hezbollah as a national resistance movement. Moreover, in a November 2009 “Policy Declaration,” the Lebanese
government went so far as to publicly support Hezbollah’s continued efforts against Israeli occupying forces. Despite the UN’s findings that Shebaa Farms and other contested areas are not occupied Lebanese territories, the Lebanese government publicly declared:

It is the right of the Lebanese people, Army and the Resistance to liberate the Shebaa Farms, the Kfar Shuba Hills and the northern part of the village of Ghajar as well as to defend Lebanon and its territorial waters in the face of any enemy by all available and legal means.7

Therefore, with such a definitively supportive statement from the Lebanese government and Hezbollah’s continued presence as the only force capable of defending Lebanon, the possibility of Hezbollah disarming is highly unlikely.

Despite the tragedies of the 2006 war, the string of assassinations between 2007 and 2008, and the internal conflict in May 2008, the Lebanese economy has remained strong and is on the rise. Given its tightly regulated financial system, Lebanon was relatively unscathed by the recent global financial crisis and in fact, was one of

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only seven countries with stock market gains in 2008.\textsuperscript{8} Further, the Lebanese Tourism Ministry has reported that 2009 was Lebanon’s best tourism year to date with nearly two million visitors.\textsuperscript{9} And as is often the case, time tends to lessen frustrations and prosperity allows memories to fade and be replaced by the current climate rather than the tremendous despair that was recently experienced. This has indeed been the case for the Lebanese people. Furthermore, in spite of the tremendous suffering they experienced as a result of Hezbollah’s actions, the fact that Hezbollah was able to defend its country, its people, against a full Israeli offensive was not lost on the Lebanese. Moreover, its political and humanitarian efforts continue to solidify its place within the Lebanese government and among the hearts of the Lebanese people, and have served in legitimizing the organization around the globe.

\textsuperscript{8} Kathryn Cooper, “Where on earth can you make a decent return?” (London: The Sunday Times, October 5, 2008), http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/money/investment/article4881201.ece, (accessed March 15, 2010).

CHAPTER IV: DEFINING TERRORISM AND FTO DESIGNATION

Terrorist organizations are hardly a new phenomenon. From the Sicarii¹ opposition to Roman rule in the first century to the Hashashin's² quest to destroy the Abbasid Caliphate in 1090, terrorist organizations have, for centuries, attempted to utilize fear and power as a means to achieve their objectives. Within the United States, however, the concept and realities of terrorism are a relatively new concept. During the 1980s and 1990s, American civilians and U.S. military personnel were the target of several successful terrorist operations carried out by a variety of individuals and organizations. From the Oklahoma City bombing to al-Qa'ida's attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the U.S. experienced terrorism both domestically and internationally. And although terrorism was a known quantity here in the U.S., it wasn't a topic regularly discussed by the average citizen and more importantly, it wasn't a subject

¹ Sicarii: Sicarii comes from the Latin word for dagger sica, and means assassins or murderers. The Sicarii, or "dagger men" carried out murders and assassinations with short daggers during the 1st century.

² Hashashin: the origin of the word assassin, the Hashashin were a sect of dedicated Shi'a Muslims used to eliminate individual targets.
seriously addressed by the USG. But of course, on September 11, 2001, everything changed.

In the aftermath of the World Trade Center bombings, terrorism was suddenly the topic of discussion around dinner tables across the country and new counterterrorism legislature and efforts were the matter at hand among U.S. lawmakers, law enforcement agencies, and the Intelligence Community (IC). This of course is not to imply that counterterrorism legislation and initiatives were by any means neglected prior to 9/11, but to merely highlight the surge of counterterrorism operations and newfound reality faced by the average American. Post-9/11, counterterrorism became the number one issue and mission of the premier law enforcement and intelligence agencies within the U.S.—and in many countries around the globe—and the American public was inundated with antiterrorism, often anti-Islamic, propaganda by the American media. And as we stand, nearly nine years later, counterterrorism remains the top priority for the nation’s top law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and our efforts and capabilities to target terrorists and terrorist organizations is stronger and more advanced than ever
before. But unfortunately, when it comes to identifying counterterrorism targets and crafting U.S. foreign policy, we appear to be clinging to dated evidence and dwelling upon old grievances.

In an attempt to determine whether Hezbollah’s recent activities and current status warrant its removal from the State Department’s Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) list, we must first identify an agreed upon definition of terrorism. Once “terrorism” is defined, that definition can be used to analyze Hezbollah’s operations in order to conclude whether it remains actively engaged in terrorist activities. Further, a review of the legal criteria required for FTO designation will provide a thorough understanding of the nomination process and the repercussions of FTO designation. And finally, an examination of the most recent evidence cited in Hezbollah’s continued designation as an FTO will resolve whether the data provided by the State Department indicates that Hezbollah should remain a designated FTO, or if it will show that Hezbollah has evolved as an organization and should no longer be listed as an FTO.
Defining Terrorism

On the international stage, establishing an agreed upon definition of terrorism has proved to be nearly impossible. The topic of terrorism has become so politically and emotionally charged to the point where governments are often unable, or unwilling, to commit to a definition. One of the most difficult aspects of defining terrorism is attempting to create a definition which will be all encompassing and yet unambiguous. In particular, the use of violence as a means to achieving a political goal has been a tremendously polarizing issue. Furthermore, without a clear set of criteria, the decision to label an individual or an organization as a terrorist becomes completely subjective depending upon whether one sympathizes with the individual, group, or cause being addressed.\(^3\) In fact, this concept plays a significant role in the never-ending discussion surrounding Hezbollah’s identity as a terrorist organization or resistance movement. For our purposes, however, an international definition of terrorism is not required as we are focusing

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on the USG’s definition of terrorism and its criteria for
designating a group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

Although one might think that locating the United
States’ definition of terrorism might be a relatively
simple task, the USG itself is not exempt from the same
frustrations experienced by the international community.
Within the USG, government agencies have a variety of
missions and authorities and therefore incorporate
different language into their particular agency’s
definition of terrorism. As just a small taste of the
level of inconsistency experienced within the USG, a 2003
U.S. Army report cited a 1988 study which identified 109
separate definitions of terrorism⁴...so one can only imagine
what that number has climbed to since 9/11. In addition
to multiple definitions of terrorism, the USG also
maintains several “terrorist lists” which tends to
complicate the issue even further. Among the more notable
terrorist lists is the well known “state sponsors of
terrorism” list, the “Specially Designated Terrorists”
list, the “Specially Designated Global Terrorists” list,

⁴ Jeffrey Record, Bounding the Global War on Terrorism (U.S. Army
War College: Strategic Studies Institute, December 01, 2003), 6.
the “Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons” list—a master list that contains the other lists—and the “Terrorist Exclusion List.” Although these lists will not be discussed in this report, they have been provided as a reference and to highlight the difficulty the USG itself has in settling on one definition of terrorism and one list of identified terrorists/terrorist groups. With that said, the State Department’s FTO list is the USG's premier resource for designated foreign terrorist organizations. Furthermore, the FTO list is unique in that designation authorizes specific measures to be carried out in order to thwart the activities and capabilities of designated groups while it also plays a public, symbolic role as a tool of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, foreign policy, and diplomatic negotiations.

As this report centers on Hezbollah’s FTO designation, for our purposes we will focus on the legal definitions of terrorism used during FTO designation under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as amended. With regard to defining terrorism, the definition for “terrorist activity” is provided by section 212(a)(3)(B) of the INA and “terrorism” is defined by
section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989. The definition provided by section 212(a)(3)(B) of the INA is included in its entirety later in this chapter, but its definition of "terrorist activity" is incredibly broad and could easily be applied to traditional criminal activity as it makes no mention of motivation—aside from excluding personal monetary gain—and does not discuss the intended victims' role in defining the act as terrorism. For this reason, we will focus on "terrorism" defined by section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989, as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents." As this is the definition used to evaluate evidence during the FTO designation process, this will be the definition used to determine whether Hezbollah’s recent activities can be legally classified as terrorism.

The FTO List and Criteria for Designation

Seq.), was signed into law in order to "deter terrorism, provide justice for victims, provide for an effective death penalty, and for other purposes." As such, AEDPA states that the Secretary of State is authorized to designate an organization as a "foreign terrorist organization" (FTO) if the following legal criteria are met:

1. The organization must be foreign.

2. The organization must engage in terrorist activity, as defined by section 212(a)(3)(B) of the INA, or terrorism, as defined in section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989, or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism.

3. The organization’s terrorist activity or terrorism must threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security (national defense, foreign relations, or economic interests) of the United States.

While "terrorism," as defined by section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, was discussed previously, for reference purposes, section 212(a)(3)(B) of the INA defines "terrorist activity" to mean:

Any activity which is unlawful under the laws of the place where it is committed (or which, if committed in the United States, would be unlawful under the laws of the United States or any State) and which involves any of the following:
(I) The highjacking or sabotage of any conveyance (including aircraft, vessel, or vehicle).

(II) The seizing or detaining, and threatening to kill, injure, or continue to detain, another individual in order to compel a third person (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the individual seized or detained.

(III) A violent act upon an internationally protected person (as defined in section 1116(b)(4) of title 18, U.S.C.) or upon the liberty of such a person.

(IV) An assassination.

(V) The use of any:
   (a) biological agent, chemical agent, or nuclear weapon or device, or
   (b) explosive, firearm, or other weapon or dangerous device (other than for mere personal monetary gain), with intent to endanger, directly or indirectly, the safety of one or more individuals or to cause substantial damage to property.

(VI) A threat, attempt, or conspiracy to do any of the foregoing.

Therefore, should the Secretary of State decide that an organization meets these criteria, he or she may add it to the FTO list at any time by informing Congress and publishing a notice to that effect in the Federal
Register. Initially, designations lasted for two years, at which time the designation was required to be reviewed and redesignated or allowed to lapse. Recently, however, under the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) the redesignation requirement was replaced by explicit review and revocation procedures. IRTPA provides:

An FTO may file a petition for revocation 2 years after its designation date (or in the case of redesignated FTOs, its most recent redesignation date) or 2 years after the determination date on its most recent petition for revocation. In order to provide a basis for revocation, the petitioning FTO must provide evidence that the circumstances forming the basis of the designation are sufficiently different as to warrant revocation. If no such review has been conducted during a five year period with respect to designation, then the Secretary of State is required to review the designation to determine whether revocation would be appropriate. Additionally, a designation may be revoked at any time should the Secretary of State or an Act of Congress find that the circumstances supporting the designation have changed in a manner which warrants revocation.

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6 U.S. Department of State, Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) Fact Sheet (Office of Counterterrorism, October 11, 2005).
Even though the State Department ultimately designates an organization and retains primacy over each case, numerous agencies provide input and are involved in maintaining the FTO list. Because the designation is based upon a group’s terrorist activity, the Intelligence Community plays a key role as it provides classified information and establishes or refutes an organization’s record of terrorist activities. Furthermore, the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security also play crucial roles during the designation process.

Aside from its rigid nomination procedures and unambiguous legal clarity, part of what puts the FTO list at the forefront of U.S. policy are its legal ramifications following designation. After designation, the Treasury Department may block financial transactions involving an organization’s assets and determine whether U.S. banks are complying with the law. In turn, the Justice Department is able to prosecute offenders who violate the Treasury Department sanctions and those who provide material support or resources and training to an FTO designated organization or affiliate. And finally, the Department of Homeland Security is able to carry out
immigration sanctions and deportations as representatives and members of a designated FTO, if they are aliens, are not permitted and therefore removable from inside the U.S.

In addition to the legal ramifications associated with the FTO list, designation provides several other intangible benefits for U.S. policy makers and counterterrorism organizations. First and foremost, inclusion on the FTO list is useful in coordinating counterterrorism efforts with other governments. Providing a clear identification of a terrorist organization may result in a sense of alliance against a common enemy. Moreover, it provides transparency with regard to U.S. policy towards that organization and its affiliates which can be used as a diplomatic tool with regard to foreign policy and negotiations. The designation of an organization also stigmatizes and isolates the organization as a terrorist group. By heightening public awareness of a group’s terrorist activities, designation will ideally deter donations, contributions, and support for a named terrorist organization.
Reevaluating Hezbollah

On October 8, 1997, the first FTO list was published and consisted of thirty terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah. The State Department’s initial release of its Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1997—which included the FTO list—cited several terrorist incidents carried out by, or involving Hezbollah. Specifically, the report referred to Hezbollah’s role in the 1983 attacks on the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut, the attack on the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut in 1984, and the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina. In addition to the incidents mentioned in the report, Hezbollah’s participation in other terrorist acts such as the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847, the kidnapping and murder of U.S. Marine Corps Colonel William R. Higgins in 1988, and its suspected role in the bombing of the Asociacion Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) building in 1994 almost certainly factored into the Secretary of State’s decision. Practically speaking, given this extensive list of terrorist activity, the 1997 designation of Hezbollah was completely justified. Regardless of its role as a resistance movement or Israeli and U.S. presence in
Lebanon, the hijacking of a civilian aircraft, the kidnapping and murder of a UN peacekeeper or the bombing of an embassy are simply atrocious terrorist acts against innocent civilians. But alas, the purpose of this discussion is not to dispute Hezbollah’s prior history or terrorist behavior, but to examine how the group has evolved and analyze whether its designation as an FTO is still warranted.

In its most recent designation of FTOs, the State Department’s publication of Country Reports on Terrorism 2008—the successor to the Patterns of Global Terrorism reports—Hezbollah continues to be listed among the 44 designated FTOs (As of January 2010, the FTO list consists of 45 designated organizations). But in reviewing this most recent publication, the State Department continues to rely heavily upon Hezbollah’s terrorist activity during the 1980s and early 1990s. In fact, the report fails to mention a legitimate terrorist activity more recent than the AMIA bombing in 1994—which is now a sixteen year-old example being used to justify a present day FTO designation. In addition to its dated terrorist activity, the report also cites Hezbollah’s support and training of
Iraqi Shi’a militias. In 2007, a senior Hezbollah operative, Ali Mussa Daqduq, was captured by U.S. forces in Iraq while evaluating the performance of Shi’a militias which Hezbollah had helped train in Tehran, Iran. Upon further review, however, at no point in its justification does the State Department identify these Shi’a militias as a terrorist organization, nor does it provide any indication that the training provided was to be used in the planning or execution of a terrorist operation. Therefore, if the group being trained is not a terrorist organization and the training provided is not used to facilitate a terrorist activity, this evidence does not meet the requirements for designation.

In its continued justification for designating Hezbollah as an FTO, possibly the most credible example cited in the report is Hezbollah’s attacks against the IDF and kidnapping of Israeli soldiers—following Israel’s 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon. Upon further review, however, these examples can be refuted on multiple levels. As was mentioned previously, FTO designation requires the identification of a group’s engagement in “terrorist activity” defined by INA section 212(a)(3)(B) or
“terrorism” defined by section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989. As section 140(d)(2) specifically defines terrorism as an act against noncombatant targets, operations against Israeli military forces can hardly constitute actions against noncombatants, particularly when the activity has been isolated within the disputed Shebaa Farms region. Moreover, immediately following Hezbollah’s 2006 abduction of two Israeli soldiers, then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert declared that “The events of this morning cannot be considered a terrorist strike; they are the acts of a sovereign state that has attacked Israel without cause. The Lebanese government, which Hezbollah is a part of, is trying to upset regional stability.” If the Israeli government itself refuses to identify Hezbollah’s actions against Israeli military targets as terrorist activities, how credible is the State Department’s use of these incidents during FTO designation?

In elaborating upon Olmert’s identification of Hezbollah as a part of the Lebanese Government, the November 2009 “Policy Declaration” made by the Government of Lebanon (discussed in chapter 3) authorized Hezbollah—
in its capacity as the Lebanese Resistance—to continue its efforts against Israeli occupational forces and “defend Lebanon in the face of any enemy.” Coupled with its already substantial participation and influence in the Lebanese political arena, this type of public acknowledgement and recognition of Hezbollah leaves little room to refute Hezbollah’s official status as part of the Lebanese government and the inclusion of its resources and arsenal as an element of Lebanon’s military capabilities. Therefore, operating under the conclusion that Hezbollah and its military capabilities are sanctioned by the Lebanese Government, the criteria for designation as an FTO no longer apply.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Hezbollah’s activities certainly constituted terrorist activity and their inclusion on the initial FTO list was more than justified. Since that time, however, Hezbollah has evolved into a successful political party and member of the Lebanese Government, a social welfare and development organization providing services to tens of thousands, and a resistance organization capable of defending Lebanon and sanctioned to do so by the Lebanese Government.
“Terrorism,” as defined by the legal criteria for FTO designation, consists of “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.” In a review of Hezbollah’s recent activities and of the evidence cited in the State Department’s most recent FTO designation, it was concluded that the pertinent evidence provided does not represent terrorist activity as defined by the criteria for designation. Further, a large portion of the evidence provided includes examples of extremely dated terrorist activity, the most recent instance having occurred nearly sixteen years ago. As such, Hezbollah’s continued designation appears based on outdated evidence and past grievances rather than its current status and operations. With that said, this examination of the evidence put forth by the State Department and an evaluation of Hezbollah’s recent activity—using the legal criteria for designation—has shown that Hezbollah’s recent/current operations do not constitute terrorism or terrorist activity and the evidence provided is either dated or does not represent terrorism or terrorist activity. Therefore, Hezbollah does not meet the criteria
for designation and should be removed from the State Department’s list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.
CHAPTER V: IMPACTING THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

Assuming a successful argument has been made in support of Hezbollah’s removal from the State Department’s designated list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO), the question at hand will be to evaluate how Hezbollah’s declassification as an FTO will impact the United States Government’s (USG) Global War on Terror (GWOT). While Hezbollah’s newfound status would certainly have immediate ramifications for the group itself, additional points warranting consideration will be the impact its declassification has on other key areas of interest. Specifically, what effect will Hezbollah’s declassification have on international opinion with regard to U.S. counterterrorism initiatives and U.S. policy in the Middle East, how the move will impact U.S. relations with Israel, and most importantly whether a newly legitimized Hezbollah could improve or hinder U.S. counterterrorism efforts within the Levant and on a global scale?

Immediate Impact on Hezbollah

Having been a permanent resident on the FTO list since the list’s inception in 1997, Hezbollah, as well as
its affiliates and donors, has been a priority target for U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies. In particular, as it operates under the authorities of FTO designation and Presidential Executive Order 13224,¹ the Treasury Department has dealt significant blows to Hezbollah’s fundraising programs, its donors and supporters, as well as its state supported funding from countries such as Iran. Just a quick sample of recent events can highlight the impact Treasury has had on Hezbollah.

In March 2006, the Treasury Department named Hezbollah’s al-Manar television, al-Nour Radio, and the Lebanese Media Group—the parent company of al-Manar and al-Nour Radio—as Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) entities under E.O. 13224. The law authorized the Treasury Department to freeze the organization’s U.S.-based assets and block any transactions that might pass

¹ Presidential Executive Order 13224: Signed into law on September 23, 2001, E.O. 13224 established the requirements for designation as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist and the legal authorities to be used in “Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism.”
through U.S.-based entities. Additionally, the designation allows Treasury to apply these authorities to any individual or organization cooperating with the designated entity. More recently, in January 2009, Treasury designated the Waad Project, a Hezbollah run construction firm, as an SDGT and froze all U.S.-based assets of the Waad Project and prohibited U.S. persons from engaging in any transactions with the organization. The Waad Project was established in-part due to the difficulties experienced by Jihad al-Bina—Hezbollah’s main construction company—following its SDGT designation in 2007. Just a few months after the Waad Project designation, in May 2009, Treasury designated two Africa-based individuals, Kassim Tajideen and Abd Al Menhem Qubaysi, for their financial support to Hezbollah, fundraising, and facilitating the travel of Hezbollah.

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members. Needless to say, once Hezbollah’s designation as an FTO has been overturned, the sanctions against its supporters and subsidiaries will no longer be authorized. Therefore Hezbollah’s declassification as an FTO will provide immediate increases in international support from donors and volunteers as well as a much greater freedom of operation. Although these revitalized sources of revenue will likely be used to bolster Hezbollah’s military capabilities, they will undoubtedly be used to fund additional social welfare programs and construction projects to elevate and restore the people and infrastructure of Lebanon.

Possibly the most notable and widely acknowledged impact of declassification would be the removal of the “terrorist” stigma that accompanies FTO designation. As was previously discussed in chapter four, one of the main principles of FTO designation is the stigma placed on designated organizations. This stigmatization is specifically intended to dissuade potential donors or

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supporters with the threat of legal repercussions. Furthermore, the “terrorist” label tends to counter any efforts the group may make in an attempt to promote its facade of legitimacy. This stigmatization may periodically prove counterproductive as it often inspires a self fulfilling prophecy-like environment where, despite a group’s genuine attempts to legitimize, the stigma accompanying FTO designation prevents an organization from becoming integrated into society. While this is not the typical scenario, it does appear to be the reality for Hezbollah at the moment. Despite its efforts to become an active part of the Lebanese political establishment and having proved itself to be an invaluable entity within Lebanese society, the “terrorist” stigma certainly hinders the group’s development. Despite its widespread support in Lebanon and throughout Arab and Muslim communities, Hezbollah continues to carry the “terrorist” label throughout the Western world. Regardless of its recent actions and current activities, the majority of the West is unfamiliar with and rarely exposed to any information pertaining to Hezbollah aside from its designation as a terrorist organization. With the removal of this
prohibitive stigma, Hezbollah can continue to make progressive strides towards becoming a fully integrated part of the Lebanese government and society as well as the international community.

International Opinion

In addition to stigmatizing a designated organization, another function of the FTO list is to provide the image of a common enemy during discussions with foreign governments, particularly those that coordinate counterterrorism efforts with U.S. agencies. In addition to designating Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, the USG has continuously urged other governments, especially its allies, to identify Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. Yet, despite the continued efforts of the USG, only four other nations, Australia, Canada, Israel, and the United Kingdom, recognize Hezbollah—or a portion of the organization—as a terrorist entity. Meanwhile, other governments such as Russia, China, and the European Union (EU) have refused U.S. and Israeli pressure to label the group completely. The USG’s continued lack of recognition for Hezbollah’s political participation in a democratically elected government and
legitimate status throughout the majority of the world makes the USG appear hypocritical. Further, constantly highlighting extremely dated incidents—nearly three decades in the case of the attacks against the U.S. Marine barracks and the hijacking of TWA Flight 847—as justification for continued action against Hezbollah paints the USG as vindictive rather than the objective peacekeeper image it likes to portray. By reevaluating Hezbollah, recognizing its transformation and removing it from the FTO list, the U.S. could vastly improve its image among not only Arabs, but Muslims around the globe.

Relations with Israel

While Hezbollah’s removal from the FTO list will likely improve U.S. relationships and reputation among many Arabs and Muslims, the contrary would most certainly be the case with regard to the impact on U.S.-Israeli relations. Despite its own questionable actions, Israel and the American Jewish community, particularly the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), have continuously insisted that the USG designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization despite periodic USG inclinations to the contrary. This was indeed the case following
Hezbollah's 2001 omission from the original list of proposed terrorist organizations covered under E.O 13224. The executive order originally focused on organizations with "global reach" and many U.S. officials felt that U.S. counterterrorism efforts should be focused on al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. Furthermore, in order for the list to be effective, the U.S. would need the support of many Arab states which recognize Hezbollah as a resistance movement and would not support its designation. Despite the objections of senior Bush administration officials, including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the administration caved under pressure and amended the executive order to include Hezbollah as an enemy in the "war against terrorism."\(^5\)

With Hezbollah's assumed removal from the FTO list, U.S.-Israeli relations would undoubtedly suffer. In this scenario, however, the interesting question becomes whether a lesser relationship and affiliation with Israel would necessarily be detrimental to U.S. foreign policy? While that debate would warrant its own complete analysis, a cursory review of the evidence would suggest that the

\(^5\) Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 75-76.
U.S. would indeed benefit from a less significant partnership with Israel. U.S. relations have seemed to deteriorate within recent years despite continued U.S. support to Israel, both politically and financially—the Obama administrations proposed that a fiscal year 2010 budget of nearly $3 billion be allocated for U.S. foreign aid to Israel.\textsuperscript{6} In spite of the unwavering support provided by the U.S., Israel continues to conduct itself in an inflammatory manner and undermine U.S. efforts and policies within. In particular, Israel’s actions have been incredibly disruptive and counterproductive with regard to furthering the Middle East peace process. As a perfect example, in March 2010, Israel announced that it would begin new construction for 1,600 additional Israeli-settled apartments in East Jerusalem. Israeli settlement construction by itself is an incredibly sensitive topic which stands atop the list of Palestinian grievances, so the combination of new settlement construction with this proposed location-East Jerusalem has been identified as the Palestinian capital should they ever obtain an

independent state—has sent tidal waves through the already stalled peace negotiations. Despite the USG’s repeated requests that Israel freeze additional settlement construction to further the peace process, Israel completely disregarded all U.S. guidance and made the surprise announcement during Vice President Joe Biden’s trip to Israel. Not only did Israel’s actions publicly embarrass the Vice President and the U.S., but they also came at a time when the U.S. had just reestablished informal communications—which subsequently ceased following the announcement—with Palestinian officials interested in resuming peace negotiations. With its constant disregard for U.S. policies and requests, and its seemingly intentional provocation of the Palestinians, the argument could be made that Israel itself is in fact the greatest impediment to the Middle East peace process.

In addition to the damage Israeli actions cause to the peace process, their activities also have negative repercussions for the U.S. and U.S. interests worldwide. The majority of the Arab and Muslim world believes that Israel and the U.S. speak with one voice, so despite the U.S.’ frequent opposition to Israeli actions and
statements, Israel’s independent activities directly impact the U.S. With the settlement issue being such a fierce point of contention for Palestinians, and Muslims worldwide, Israel’s continued provocation further endangers Americans around the globe—particularly our soldiers and civilians involved in counterterrorism efforts.

Counterterrorism Initiatives

While the USG will certainly continue to target Hezbollah for counterintelligence and foreign intelligence purposes, its declassification as a terrorist organization will free-up a significant amount of counterterrorism resources for use against other targets. In continuing the previous discussion surrounding U.S.-Israeli relations, the impact on this relationship would play a significant role in the realignment of resources. With the possible exception of regional information, Israel does not provide substantial value to U.S. counterterrorism efforts proportionate to the incredibly large amount of aid supplied by the USG. With this being its current level of participation, Israel’s involvement in U.S. counterterrorism efforts following Hezbollah’s
removal from the FTO list would almost certainly decline. Given this decline in participation, U.S. aid to Israel should be reevaluated and portions of the funding reallocated to higher priority areas of interest within the counterterrorism mission.

As far as U.S. counterterrorism efforts are concerned, possibly the most significant impact resulting from Hezbollah’s declassification would be the opportunity to use Hezbollah, its resources and intelligence network, as a partner in combating terrorism in Lebanon and in the Levant in general. With its newfound legitimacy and growing role within the Lebanese government, Hezbollah would be expected to act in the best interest of the Lebanese people and the state of Lebanon in order to maintain its newly acquired status. With that said, Hezbollah’s influence and resources could be utilized in removing the terrorist elements within Lebanon, particularly those residing in the various refugee camps. Terrorist organizations and cells belonging to groups such as al-Qa’ida and Fatah al-Islam are known to reside inside the refugee camps, but as we have seen in the past, traditional LAF forces are incapable of effectively
engaging these terrorist elements. Although Hezbollah may be reluctant to remove these elements by force—in order to avoid being seen as hypocritical and alienating supporters—it would likely need only to make it known that terrorist elements are no longer welcome in Lebanon. While this might appear as though we would simply be relocating the problem rather than addressing the issue, by eliminating the safe haven provided by the refugee camps in Lebanon, these terrorist elements would be forced to relocate to neighboring countries with far greater counterterrorism interests and capabilities.

In addition to Hezbollah’s influence within Lebanon, another benefit of forming a relationship with the group would be its communication and affiliation with the government of Iran. While the removal of Hezbollah from the FTO list would potentially gather favor with Iranian Shi’a and show the Iranian government that the U.S. is willing to reevaluate its positions and policies when progress has been made, a relationship with Hezbollah could certainly, at the very least, provide a conduit for future communications with Iran. Not only could this have an impact on U.S. non-proliferation efforts pertaining to
Iran’s nuclear program, it could also further U.S. counterterrorism efforts and military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran is known to harbor elements of al-Qa’ida and affiliated organizations and also permit their travel between Iran and Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkey. While a relationship with Hezbollah may not immediately inspire Iran to take action against these terrorist elements, the opportunity to build a relationship and communicate through a trusted ally may eventually improve U.S.-Iranian relations to the point where Iran may begin taking steps to arrest or expel al-Qa’ida and its affiliates.

While removing Hezbollah from the State Department’s designated list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations may have some negative repercussions, it would appear as though the benefits far outweigh the potential pitfalls. Most notable among the consequences would be the impact to the U.S.-Israeli relationship and cooperative efforts. However, given the already declining relations between the U.S. and Israel, and the ever-growing proportionality gap between U.S.-provided aid and realized Israeli cooperation, a lesser relationship with Israel may prove
beneficial. By removing Hezbollah from the FTO list and establishing a relationship with the organization, the U.S. would not only improve its image among the Arab and Muslim populations, but also potentially strengthen its counterterrorism efforts in Lebanon. Hezbollah has access and influence in areas of Lebanon which are unapproachable by even the Lebanese government and Lebanese Armed Forces. Furthermore, an established USG relationship with Hezbollah may work towards fostering communication, and potentially diplomatic relations, with countries such as Iran and Syria, where our current relationship with Israel has managed to alienate an entire region and distort the U.S. image among a large portion of the Muslim population.
CONCLUSION

Despite previous terrorist incidents within the United States—such as the 1993 World Trade Center attack and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing—the American public appeared oblivious to the very real threat terrorism posed to the U.S. Following the events of September 11, 2001 (9/11), however, American citizens became all too familiar with the concept of terrorism and the realities of a successful terrorist attack. Since 9/11, Americans have been inundated with information pertaining to terrorism, terrorist organizations, and terrorist activities around the globe, but this overexposure has skewed our understanding of terrorism and what actually constitutes a terrorist action. In addition, another significant issue impeding our understanding of terrorism is the fact that a universal definition of terrorism does not exist within the United States Government or on the international stage. This environment of sensationalism and undefined enemies has impacted the perception of the American people and U.S. policymakers to the point where criminal activity, acts of war, and even acts of self-defense are regularly misinterpreted as acts of terrorism.
Furthermore, even in instances where a description of terrorism has been clearly defined, we seem to rely on preconceived notions and prior transgressions rather than considering recent information and examining the defined criteria for designation as a terrorist or terrorist organization. And while these cases of misinterpretation and preconceptions are today becoming commonplace, in the case of Hezbollah, the bias and ignorance of the average American and U.S. policymaker has wrongfully stigmatized a legitimate organization for nearly a decade.

Hezbollah was founded in 1982 following the second Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon and the establishment of an Israeli "security zone" within the state's sovereign territory. This particular "security zone" expanded on the already existing area created following Israel's first invasion of Lebanon in 1978—and event which marked the beginning of Israel's twenty-two year occupation of Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah began as a resistance movement bent on expelling Israel and the Western nations from Lebanon, establishing an Islamic state within the country, and the eventual destruction of Israel. During those early years and well into the 1990s, Hezbollah's
actions and motives were easily characterized as those of a terrorist organization. With attacks on the U.S. Marine barracks and U.S. Embassy in Beirut during 1983, the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847, and its role in both the 1988 kidnapping and murder of U.S. Marine Corps Colonel William R. Higgins and the 1994 bombing of the Asociacion Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires, Hezbollah’s activities were inexcusable. But as is often the case, things change, and groups evolve and adapt to their surroundings. And when, as in the case of Hezbollah, the change is a positive progression, the group’s efforts to conform and legitimize must be acknowledged.

As the State Department released the first list of designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) in 1997, Hezbollah was naturally included given its prior activities and behavior. But as was discussed previously, Hezbollah remains on the FTO list and yet the justifying evidence hasn’t changed as its designation is continuously based on extremely dated information. Literally speaking, the most recent terrorist incident mentioned in the latest designation review—the AMIA bombing—took place nearly
sixteen years ago. Therefore, the question remains whether Hezbollah today resembles the same terrorist organization that existed during the 1980s and 1990s? Having chronicled Hezbollah’s evolution as an organization, the group has transformed from a terrorist organization into one of Lebanon’s most dominant and influential political parties, a social welfare provider responsible for the provision of food supplies, the reconstruction of destroyed homes, and the rebuilding of Lebanese infrastructure, and the most capable military force inside Lebanon.

Throughout this analysis of Hezbollah, its activities and operations, and its progression as an organization, the argument has been made for Hezbollah’s removal from the State Department’s designated list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. In reviewing Hezbollah’s recent actions and examining the definitions of terrorism by which organizations are added to the FTO list, it has been identified that Hezbollah no longer meets the criteria for designation and should therefore be removed from the FTO list. While Hezbollah’s removal from the FTO list will undoubtedly damage U.S. relations with Israel, an
assessment of Israel’s participation in U.S. counterterrorism efforts and its value-added in terms of supporting U.S. foreign policy has concluded that a lesser relationship with Israel would in fact be beneficial to both U.S. counterterrorism initiatives and the advancement of U.S. foreign policy. Throughout the majority of the world, Hezbollah is viewed as a legitimate resistance organization and has been identified as such by the Lebanese government. By removing Hezbollah from the FTO list and establishing a relationship with the organization, the United States government (USG) would be taking steps toward its own positive evolution in showing the world that it is willing to reevaluate its policies and reward progressive action. In turn, the USG itself may be rewarded with a revitalized image among the Arab and Muslim populations, a potential conduit for future diplomatic relations with estranged nations such as Iran and Syria, and a new partner in the Global War on Terror.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


