CHANGES IN HEZBOLLAH’S IMAGE AND ROLE:
DRIVING FACTORS AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This thesis examines two questions regarding Hezbollah. Has Hezbollah’s role in Lebanon changed since it emerged as a secret Shiite-terrorist organization nearly three decades ago? And is Hezbollah still committed to its core beliefs and original political goals? An analysis of five important actions or decisions taken by Hezbollah since 1985 indicate its role in Lebanon has changed. Hezbollah is now a viable political party and provider of critical social services that also maintains an effective resistance wing. Concerning the second question, my research indicates Hezbollah remains committed to resisting occupation, non-recognition of the State of Israel, and the liberation of Jerusalem. However, Hezbollah’s leadership is not committed to forcibly making Lebanon an Islamic state and appears to be less directed from and dependent on direction from Iran than during the 1980s. To improve security in the region, Hezbollah needs to be disarmed and the Lebanese central government made stronger and more credible. The United States can improve security in the region by pulling Syria away from its alliance with Iran, which would reduce outside support to Hezbollah, and by encouraging Hezbollah to disarm.
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Chapter I. Introduction

Focus

This thesis examines several actions and decisions taken by Hezbollah over the past 25 years that suggest that its roles in Lebanon and in the region have changed.\(^1\) A major objective of this paper is to determine the extent to which these decisions and actions have reduced Hezbollah’s potential and intention to inflict violence and cause political instability in the region. Alternatively, were these actions and decisions undertaken by Hezbollah solely to further its core beliefs and original political goals?

Hezbollah emerged nearly three decades ago as a secret Shiite-terrorist organization in Lebanon, with substantial support and backing from Iran.\(^2\) Today, it is a political party in Lebanon that provides critical social and humanitarian services to a wide cross-section of the poor and politically marginalized.\(^3\) Despite these changes, Hezbollah remains an armed resistance movement that actively opposes any foreign occupation of Lebanon and supports Islamic groups such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.\(^4\)

Main question and hypotheses

The primary question this thesis seeks to answer is: Do actions and decisions by Hezbollah over the past quarter-century represent a major change in its role and an abandonment of its

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\(^4\) Harik, pp. 3-5.
core ideology and original political goals? If so, Hezbollah is likely far less of a security threat to Israel and to the region. If not, then Hezbollah likely remains as dangerous today to Israel and to the region as it was in the 1980s and early 1990s when it was heavily involved in terrorist acts, airline hijackings, and hostage taking. More simply, has participation in Lebanon’s political process and openness to other religious groups lessened Hezbollah’s security threat to Israel and to the region?

This thesis tests two hypotheses.

1. Actions and decisions by Hezbollah indicate that its role in Lebanon has changed since the early 1990s.

2. Hezbollah has not changed its core beliefs and original political goals.

Methodology and research plan

This thesis utilizes within-case analysis to answer the questions posed by these two hypotheses.

Five actions or decisions examined in testing the first hypothesis

To test the first hypothesis, I analyzed five key decisions or actions taken by Hezbollah since 1985, and determined the degree to which they indicate any change in Hezbollah’s role. The five key decisions examined, in order of importance, are:

1. Active participation in Lebanon’s 1992 parliamentary elections,

2. Openness to and political alignment with non-Islamic groups in Lebanon,

3. The 1985 decision to publically declare its existence in an *Open Letter* and state its core beliefs,
4. The decision to provide social services to the poor and disadvantaged, and

These decisions were chosen because they had major effects on the people of Lebanon and on regional security. Other decisions, such as the 1993 and 1996 agreements with Israel to avoid civilian targets or Hezbollah’s 2006 decision to abduct two Israeli soldiers that led to the *July War* did not indicate a change in Hezbollah’s role. The 1993 and 1996 agreements to avoid civilian targets were violated by both Israel and Hezbollah. Hezbollah made these two agreements primarily to increase its support among the Lebanese by indicating it was concerned with their safety. The decision to abduct two Israeli soldiers near the border had substantial security and humanitarian ramifications, but did not indicate a change in Hezbollah’s role.

**Evaluation criteria for testing the first hypothesis**

For each of the selected decisions or actions, I measured the degree of consistency with Hezbollah’s original role. I rated each of the examined decisions and actions by Hezbollah as:

- *Highly consistent*—Actions that nearly always fully supported its original role, creating virtually no hindrance to Hezbollah in achieving its original political goals.
- *Generally consistent*—Actions that occasionally contradicted Hezbollah’s original role, but were a minor hindrance at most to Hezbollah in achieving its original political goals.

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6 Azani, p. 115.
• Generally inconsistent—Actions that often violated Hezbollah’s original role and partially hindered Hezbollah in the achieving its original political goals.

• Highly inconsistent—Actions that virtually always contradicted Hezbollah’s original role and significantly hindered Hezbollah in achieving its original political goals.

Five core beliefs or goals examined in testing the second hypothesis

To test the second hypothesis, I examined five critical beliefs or original political goals of Hezbollah, and determined the degree to which they remain valid. The five core beliefs or original political goals examined are to:

1. Militarily resist occupation of Lebanon by a foreign entity,
2. Refuse to recognize or to negotiate with Israel,
3. Accept political leadership and direction from the Iranian clergy,
4. Make Lebanon an Islamic state in the model of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and
5. Fight for the liberation of occupied Palestine.

These five core beliefs and goals were chosen due to the frequency and intensity they have been stated and acted on by Hezbollah’s leadership. In addition, each of the five beliefs or goals examined has substantial implications for regional security.

Evaluation criteria for testing the second hypothesis

To measure the current level of validity of these core beliefs and original political goals, I analyzed specific actions—especially military actions—and statements by Hezbollah’s leadership. Statements by Israeli security officials and regional observers regarding

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8 Norton, pp. 36-41.
Hezbollah’s military actions and capabilities provided additional evidence as well. Hezbollah’s support to other resistance groups and its non-military political actions in Lebanon were also examined.

Similar to my testing of hypothesis one, I rated each core belief and political goal’s current degree of validity as:

- **Highly valid**—Rigorously pursued by Hezbollah’s leadership with no compromise in degree of fulfillment or time frame for accomplishment.
- **Generally valid**—Still pursued by Hezbollah’s leadership, but with some compromise allowed for the degree of fulfillment or the timing of accomplishment.
- **Generally invalid**—Pursued with only a low-to-moderate level of dedication, with substantial compromise allowed for the degree of fulfillment and the timing of the completion.
- **Highly invalid**—No current active pursuit by Hezbollah’s leadership.

These five core beliefs and political goals were chosen based on the importance given to them in early statements by Hezbollah’s leadership and the effect their fulfillment would have on regional security and political stability. Active military resistance to occupation by Hezbollah has provoked at least one regional war and caused numerous Israeli military incursions into Lebanon, resulting in thousands of deaths.\(^9\) The refusal of Hezbollah to recognize Israel makes a peaceful settlement to the region’s top conflicts very difficult.\(^10\) Acceptance of leadership from Iran largely makes Hezbollah a political tool of Iran, which makes Hezbollah’s policy of

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Lebanonization incomplete. The desire to make Lebanon an Islamic state would end the multi-ethnic character of Lebanon and likely require an armed overthrow of the government to be achieved. Finally, fighting for the complete liberation of Palestine likely means a never-ending war with Israel.

Other core beliefs or original goals, such as Hezbollah being an international front for the oppressed or active opposition by Hezbollah to Arab governments that recognize Israel, were considered for inclusion. However, they were not chosen because Hezbollah’s leadership has not pursued them as vigorously as the five chosen beliefs and goals.

Importance

There are several reasons why it is important to determine if Hezbollah’s actions and decisions represented a transformation away from its core beliefs and original political goals. First, if Hezbollah’s core beliefs and ideology have not changed, then it likely continues to represent a security threat to both Israel and to the region. These beliefs and goals provide little room for compromise, and are unlikely to be attainable through peaceful negotiations with the West.

Second, the Middle East is extremely volatile. Causes of this volatility include:

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11 “Hezbollah as a strategic arm of Iran,” Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Center for Special Studies, Tel Aviv, September 8, 2006, p. 6, [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/iran_hezbollah_e1b.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/iran_hezbollah_e1b.htm).
12 Sankari, pp. 238-241.
13 Sankari, p. 254.
15 Azani, pp. 242-243.
16 Azani, p. 63.
1. Israel and Syria have never signed a peace agreement.
2. Discussions between the Israelis and Palestinians over a two-State solution have not been fully successful.
3. Tensions between Iran and Israel and between the United States and Iran have escalated.
4. Concerns over nuclear proliferation in the region,
5. Importance to the global economy of the free flow of oil, and
6. Ethnic tensions across the Greater Middle East.

Understanding factors that contribute to this instability is important to policy makers.17

Third, Hezbollah is a major political party in Lebanon and a powerful military force in the country.18 Hezbollah also supports other resistance groups in the region, especially Hamas and several other Palestinian groups.19 Understanding Hezbollah’s commitment to its core beliefs and political goals would assist organizations dealing with Hezbollah—especially the governments’ of Lebanon, Israel, and the United States.

And finally, radical and fundamentalist groups confronting governments in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and elsewhere have listened to the messages sent by Hezbollah from its TV and radio stations and over the internet.20 These messages denounce the West and call for armed resistance. These groups have also seen that continued violence and militancy

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17 Smith, Patricia, “Israel vs. Hezbollah: What was their month-long war all about—and what does it mean for the Middle East and for America’s role in the region?” New York Times Upfront, September 18, 2006, pp. 1-2, http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Israel+vs.+Hezbollah%3a+what+was+their+month-long+war+all+about--and...-a0153239527.
18 Hamzeh, p. 141.
19 Hamzeh, p. 147.
have paid off for Hezbollah, and they are aware that Hezbollah militarily fought Israel in a 34-day conflict in the summer of 2006 and remained viable. This reason, as well as Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, make Hezbollah a model for Islamic resistance worldwide and as such warrants study.21

Contributions

My research makes several contributions. First, I determine the extent to which changes in Hezbollah’s actions and decisions were associated with any significant changes in its role in Lebanon and in the region. Previous research efforts—such as works by Judith Harik (2007) and Augustus Norton (2007)—analyzed Hezbollah’s role in Lebanon and described its actions, but did not attempt to correlate changes in Hezbollah’s role with specific actions.

Another primary contribution of my research is to associate changes in Hezbollah’s actions and decisions in Lebanon with specific threats and opportunities Hezbollah faced. This research shows that political and military actions taken by Hezbollah that may have indicated its role had changed in Lebanon, do not imply an abandonment of its core beliefs and original political goals. Instead, Hezbollah’s leadership responded in a rational manner to these factors so as to continue to support its original beliefs and goals. My research demonstrates how these actions and decisions supported Hezbollah’s goals. Recent books by Judith Harik (2007) and Joseph Alagha (2006) indicate Hezbollah has moderated its political goals and core beliefs.22 My research indicates this is not true.

21 Harik, p. 200.
22 Harik, p. 196, and Alagha, p. 217.
In addition, few studies have examined Hezbollah’s role after its 2008 clash in West Beirut or after the 2008-09 Gaza War. My research includes statements by its leaders and examples of its actions since these events.

**Roadmap**

Chapter II of this thesis provides a brief overview of Hezbollah’s original role in Lebanon, with particular emphasis on both its emergence during Lebanon’s civil war and Israel’s 1982 invasion, as well as the importance of Iranian support during its early years. Chapter III tests the first hypothesis that Hezbollah’s role in Lebanon has changed since the 1980s by analyzing five critical decisions or actions taken by Hezbollah since 1985. Chapter IV tests the second hypothesis that Hezbollah’s core beliefs and original political goals remain valid by analyzing the current degree of validity of five critical beliefs and goals. In Chapter V, policy implications derived from the results of both hypothesis tests are provided. Chapter VI provides policy recommendations for both Israeli and U.S. security officials. A conclusion of this research project is provided in Chapter VII.
Chapter II. Hezbollah’s original role in Lebanon

Hezbollah emerges out of Lebanon’s civil war and the 1982 Israel invasion

Hezbollah—The Party of God—emerged in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon in the early 1980s as a secret Shiite-terrorist organization. Its members and leadership were largely from the radical margins of the Amal movement.

Hezbollah was initially an umbrella organization for several Shiite-terrorist groups in Lebanon. Its creation was largely due to the chaotic situation created by the ongoing Lebanese Civil War (1975-90) and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Because the Shiites in Lebanon had historically been poor and politically weak, they were especially vulnerable to adverse effects from both the civil war and the Israeli invasion. In addition, Iran—which had just undergone an Islamic revolution in 1979—provided substantial logistical and training support and was instrumental in Hezbollah’s creation.

Iranian and Syrian support were critical to Hezbollah’s early success

During the summer of 1982, Syrian President Hafez Assad realized he could use the chaos in Lebanon to attack Israeli soldiers with Shiite militia without risking direct confrontation between Israeli and Syrian forces which would result in a disastrous war for Syria. The purpose of these attacks was to pressure Israel to return the Golan Heights which had been

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24 The Amal movement is a political organization representing the Shiite of Lebanon. It is considered more secular than Hezbollah and predates Hezbollah by about seven years. For more information on Amal, see Azani, p. 131 and Alagha, p. 31.
27 Azani, p. 46-74.
taken from Syria in the 1967 War. Irregular troops would be trained in the Bekaa Valley which Israel had agreed not to occupy to avoid direct confrontations with Syrian troops. At the same time, Iran saw this as an opportunity to expand its revolution to other countries, despite being bogged down in a war with Iraq. An arrangement with Syria to conduct jihad against Israel with Lebanese Shiite fundamentalists provided a viable tool for Iran’s strategy.

In the arrangement worked out between Syria and Iran, Syria would manage the timing and targeting of the attacks against Israeli and South Lebanon Army troops in southern Lebanon by Hezbollah forces. Iran would provide the fighters with training and monthly salaries and take care of their families if they were killed. Weapons sent from Iran to Hezbollah fighters would be shipped over land in Syrian trucks to the Bekaa Valley. Shortly after Israel’s invasion in 1982, Iran sent 1,500 Iranian Revolutionary Guards to the city of Baalbeck in the Bekaa Valley to begin training Shiite fighters.

Hezbollah committed numerous terrorist acts and used suicide bombings

Hezbollah orchestrated several major terrorist attacks against western interests in the 1980s and early 1990s. In April 1983, Hezbollah supported a suicide bomber who detonated a car bomb next to the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing at least 57 people, including 17 Americans. In October 1983, a Hezbollah-backed suicide bomber destroyed the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut, killing 241 service members. This was the deadliest terrorist attack by a foreign

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29 Harik, p. 39.
30 Harik, p. 39.
31 Harik, p. 39.
32 Harik, p. 39.
33 Jaber, p. 20.
organization on U.S. interests until the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and the
Pentagon.\textsuperscript{35}

Although the Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO) took credit for both attacks, U.S. intelligence
sources believe Hezbollah actually directed the attacks through the IJO.\textsuperscript{36} Many leaders of
Hezbollah have openly admitted both involvement in the IJO and that the IJO did not really
exist, but was used by individuals committing terrorist acts to disguise their true identity.\textsuperscript{37}
These two actions—which cost the lives of two suicide bombers—were largely responsible for
the withdrawal of the Multi-National Peacekeeping force from Lebanon in early 1984.\textsuperscript{38}

Hezbollah’s reach extended well beyond the Middle East during this period. In March 1992,
a suicide bomber drove a pick-up truck loaded with explosives into the Israeli Embassy in
Buenos Aires, killing 28 people. The attack was likely a reprisal for the Israeli Defense Force’s
crime of Hezbollah’s Secretary General al-Musawi in February 1992.\textsuperscript{39} Hezbollah denied
involvement in this incident, but in April 1997, in a taped interview with Musawi’s brother, it was
revealed that Hezbollah was behind the bombing in revenge for Musawi’s killing.\textsuperscript{40}

Two years later, in July 1994, a van loaded with explosives destroyed the Israeli-
Argentinean Cultural Center in Buenos Aires, killing 85.\textsuperscript{41} Although Hezbollah’s leaders have
denied any direct involvement in this incident, the Argentine government has accused Iran of

\textsuperscript{35} RAND Corporation, Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents.
\textsuperscript{36} Hamzeh, 2004, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{38} Harik, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{39} RAND Corp., Data Base of World wide Terrorism Incidents.
\textsuperscript{40} RAND Corp., Data Base of World wide Terrorism Incidents.
\textsuperscript{41} Norton, p.79.
using Hezbollah to carry out the attack. In 2005, the Argentine intelligence service and U.S. FBI identified a Lebanese man with connections to Hezbollah as the suicide bomber in this incident.

An important contribution of Hezbollah to political instability in the Middle East was its introduction of suicide operations into the region. Hezbollah's first suicide operation was conducted against the Israeli military headquarters in Tyre, Lebanon on November 11, 1982, killing 76 Israeli service members as well as some civilians. During the 1980s, Hezbollah conducted at least 18 suicide operations, killing more than 300 people, making it the most deadly terrorist group in the region.

**Hostage taking was a major tool of Hezbollah in its early years**

Hezbollah was also responsible for the kidnapping of dozens of Western hostages during the 1980s. While it released many of its hostages, Hezbollah executed U.S. Marine Lt. Colonel William Higgins and U.S. CIA Station Chief William Buckley.

During the 1980s, because of the large number of terrorist groups and militias operating in Lebanon during the civil war, western intelligence services had difficulty determining which group was responsible for taking each hostage. On balance, it appears that Hezbollah acted as an umbrella organization for these groups, and with the help of Iran, was largely responsible

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44 Alagha, p. 35.
45 Ranstorp, 1997, p. 60.
46 Norton, p. 41
47 Jaber, pp. 32-344, and p. 118.
for many actions and deaths. However, Hezbollah’s Secretary General Sayyid Nasrallah has denied these accusations and has claimed that Hezbollah never intentionally targeted civilians or took hostages.

Airline hijacking was also a tool of Hezbollah in its early years. In June 1985, Hezbollah hijacked TWA Flight 847 bound from Athens to Rome, held the crew and passengers for 3 days, and murdered U.S. Navy Petty Officer Robert Dean Stethem. The objective of the hijacking was to secure the release of 766 Lebanese prisoners held in Israel.

By the end of the 1980s, Hezbollah had achieved three successes. First, it had forced the Israeli military to withdraw to a small Security Zone in southern Lebanon. Second, it had prevented any normalization of the Israeli-Muslim-Arab relationship. And third, Hezbollah served as a role model for the first Palestinian Intifada that began in December 1987. The 1980s and early 1990s were Hezbollah’s most violent period.

Hezbollah was declared a “resistance movement” when Lebanon’s civil war ended

When Lebanon’s civil war ended in 1990, Hezbollah was the only militia that was allowed to keep its weapons. This was because Hezbollah defined itself as a “resistance movement”

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49 Ranstorp, pp. 160-161.
50 Ranstorp, pp. 60-65.
51 Harik, p. 38.
52 Hamzeh, pp. 85-86.
53 Azani, p. 93.
54 Azani, p. 93.
55 Azani, p. 93.
focusing on Israel’s occupation of its Security Zone in southern Lebanon. This proved to be a major reason for Hezbollah’s longevity and success.\textsuperscript{56}

During the 1990s, the Lebanese government was too weak to use its army to push Israel out of its Security Zone in southern Lebanon.\textsuperscript{57} In addition, if either Damascus or Beirut had attempted to use force against the Israeli Defense Force or its ally the South Lebanese Army, it could have ignited a full scale war.\textsuperscript{58} As such, Hezbollah served the needs of the Lebanese government of trying to push Israel out, without directly involving the central government. Syria, which gained much control over Lebanon following the end of the civil war, also benefited from Hezbollah’s actions against Israeli occupation.\textsuperscript{59}

Although the Lebanese paid a heavy price in casualties for Israeli responses to Hezbollah attacks—especially as a result of \textit{Operation Accountability} in 1993 and \textit{Operation Grapes of Wrath} in 1996—the population never turned on Hezbollah. The movement was largely responsible for Israel’s May 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon, gaining much praise from the Lebanese population.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} Alagha, pp. 40-41.
\textsuperscript{57} Harik, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{58} Harik, pp. 112-113.
\textsuperscript{59} Harik, pp. 111-119.
\textsuperscript{60} Harik, pp. 119-124.
Chapter III. Test of hypothesis one: Key decisions by Hezbollah indicate its role has changed

This chapter analyzes five significant actions or decisions made by Hezbollah since the mid-1980s, and determines the degree to which they indicate any change in Hezbollah’s role in Lebanon. On balance, the research strongly indicates that Hezbollah has moved from being a secret Shiite-terrorist organization, to becoming a nationalistic Lebanese political party with an effective and potent resistance wing. This implies its role has changed.

Of the five actions and decisions examined, two were rated as highly inconsistent with Hezbollah’s original role—(1) participation in the 1992 parliamentary elections and (2) openness to and alignment with non-Islamic political parties. The decision to join the Lebanese National Cabinet in 2005 and the decision to provide a full spectrum of humanitarian and social services to the poor were rated generally inconsistent with Hezbollah’s original role. Only the publication of its 1985 Open Letter which declared its existence, purpose, friends, and enemies was judged as generally consistent with Hezbollah’s original role.

Active participation in Lebanon’s 1992 parliamentary elections

When Hezbollah emerged around 1982, it refused to participate in Lebanon’s multi-ethnic confessional government, demanding the guardianship of the jurisprudent, or leadership from the supreme Shiite religious leader, who at that time was Ayatollah Khomeini. Lebanon’s confessional system of government proportionally allocates political power among the country’s religious communities according to their percentage of the population. In contrast to

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61 Alagha, p. 224.
62 At the time of Lebanon's independence from France in 1943, an agreement known as the National Pact consecrated this confessional system. Sixteen (now 18) religious communities were allocated specific
Lebanon’s secular government, Hezbollah desired an Islamic state governed under Sharia Law. 

However, in July 1991, Hezbollah’s Secretary General Musawi stated that if the 1992 parliamentary elections were held in accordance with the will of the people, then the movement would participate. This was the first sign by Hezbollah of allowing participation in Lebanon’s government. This change largely stemmed from modifications in the confessional system resulting from the 1989 Taif Accord that set the stage for the end of Lebanon’s civil war and from a desire to expand the movement’s influence in both the Shiite community and in Lebanon as a whole. The October 1989 Taif Accord shifted political representation more favorably towards Muslims, requiring the parliament to be evenly split between Christian and Muslim. The previous ratio of 6:5 unfairly favored the Christian minority.

Hezbollah’s leadership was sharply divided on whether to participate in the 1992 elections, which resulted in a major internal debate. Because of jurisconsult, Ayatollah Khamenei—the Supreme Leader of Iran—had to intercede and grant legitimacy for Hezbollah’s participation. This caused considerable schism in Hezbollah, with former Hezbollah Secretary General Tufayli political posts. It was agreed that the President of the Republic was to be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament a Shia Muslim. Representation in parliament was set according to a ratio of 6:5 in favor of the Christians. See “Lebanon’s Confessionalism: Problems and Prospects”, United States Institute for Peace, http://www.usip.org/publications/lebanons-confessionalism-problems-and-prospects.

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63 Alagha, p. 224.
64 Azani, p. 89.
65 Azani, pp. 89-90.
66 Alagha, p. 40.
contesting the decision and pursuing a confrontational stance with both the party and the Lebanese state, eventually leading to his expulsion from Hezbollah.  

In January 1992, Sayyid Fadlallah—the spiritual leader of the Lebanese Shiite—declared a change in the Hezbollah’s stance allowing candidates to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections. He stated that the change was based on political factors, but that the ideological views that defined the movement had not changed.  

The issue was settled on July 3, 1992 when Hezbollah publicly announced its decision to participate in the elections. Hezbollah immediately launched its political platform, which was based on the following planks:

1. Liberation of Lebanon from Zionist occupation.
2. Abolishment of political sectarianism.
3. Amending the confessional system to be more representative of the population.
4. Political and media freedom.
5. Return of all displaced persons.

Hezbollah won 12 seats on its election list; eight were party members, two were Sunni, and two were Christian. In Lebanon, candidates for parliament run on tickets with candidates from other religious groups in the district. Voters pick the ticket of their choice. The August 1992 elections were the first parliamentary elections held in Lebanon in 20 years.

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67 Alagha, pp. 42-43.
68 Azani, pp. 90-91.
69 Alagha, p. 43.
70 Alagha, p. 43.
Participating in the political process provided Hezbollah with an additional outlet for competing with the Amal movement for support from the Shiite community and for the Lebanese public opinion. This participation also helped transform Hezbollah into a legitimate movement and helped it improve its image and gain new supporters in the Shiite community. The movement based its legitimacy on its military activity, the price it paid for the liberation of Lebanese land, and its presence as the people’s representative in the Lebanese parliament. After its 1992 success, the movement strove to continue promoting the resistance, expand cooperation with additional groups, and influence the distribution of state funds to help the poor.\textsuperscript{71}

The decision of the movement to participate in the 1992 parliamentary elections was a dividing line between the revolutionary pan-Islamic early period of the movement, and the period where it presented itself as a pragmatic Lebanese national movement.\textsuperscript{72} While Hezbollah participated in the 1992 parliamentary elections, its leadership never supported the confessional system which guaranteed important posts to specific religious groups and guaranteed Christians half of all seats in parliament, a share greater than their share of the population. Instead, Hezbollah’s leaders preferred and promoted simple-majority democracy, which as the largest religious group, they would have likely benefited from.\textsuperscript{73}

Hezbollah’s decision to field candidates in the elections indicates, first and foremost, that it accepted the multi-religious nature of the Lebanese state and recognized the legitimacy of the

\textsuperscript{71} Azani, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{72} Azani, p. 126.
Lebanese government.\textsuperscript{74} For a movement that had spent the previous decade waging a violent battle to bring down the Lebanese government from outside the system, such a decision was \textit{highly inconsistent} with Hezbollah’s original political goals and ideology.

An alternative interpretation of Hezbollah’s decision to participate in the 1992 parliamentary elections is that it represented merely semantics, and that it participated in the elections solely to promote the movement’s objectives and increase the exposure of the Islamic message.\textsuperscript{75} Even as Hezbollah prepared to run candidates in 1992, it continued developing its military abilities and conducting a war of attrition against Israel, indicating support for the alternative explanation.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{Openness and political alignment with non-Islamic groups in Lebanon}

When Hezbollah emerged in the early 1980s, it was strictly a Shiite-terrorist group, fighting Israeli occupation and Israel’s Christian supporters in Lebanon, mainly the Phalangist militias who had strong support from the Maronites.\textsuperscript{77} Hezbollah was especially incensed at the Phalangist militias for their brutal killings in September 1982 of more than 1,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatil refugee camps in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{78}

However, in the early 1990s, while it was debating participation in Lebanon’s parliamentary elections, Hezbollah changed its policy. On May 22, 1991, Hezbollah held its second

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74} Wiegand, Krista E. “Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party,” \textit{Studies in Conflict & Terrorism}, Vol. 32, pp. 669-680, August 2009, p. 673, \url{http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a913317123~frm=titlelink}.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Azani, pp. 243-244.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Azani, pp. 244-245.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Harik, pp. 1-3.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Harik, pp. 64-65.
\end{itemize}
conclave—a secret meeting of its religious leaders—where it stated that it would enter into dialogue with Christians. This began Hezbollah’s *infitah*, or policy of openness. In line with its *infitah* policy, Hezbollah changed its discourse and remade itself open to all Lebanese.\(^7^9\)

Under this policy, Hezbollah engaged Christians—through the establishment of organizational linkages with social, economic, and political organizations and through humanitarian activities in geographic areas under its control. Of critical importance was Hezbollah’s decision to help all residents regardless of their religion.\(^8^0\) On June 3, 1991, Hezbollah launched its TV station *Al-Manor*, promoting its views widely.\(^8^1\)

Furthermore, immediately after Hezbollah decided to enter the 1992 parliamentary elections, Hezbollah’s leaders began active efforts to encourage Christian support for its resistance movement. Hezbollah attempted to follow the stated views of Lebanon’s Shiite spiritual leader Sayyid Fadlallah, who wanted to convince non-Muslims of Islam’s acceptance of coexistence.\(^8^2\)

There were several reasons Hezbollah’s leadership decided to politically align with Christians. Hezbollah gained a broader support base and greater assistance for its resistance activities. In addition, because Lebanon’s confessional system requires candidates of different faiths to run on the same ticket, reaching out to other groups helped Hezbollah win more seats. In many ethnically mixed districts, Hezbollah’s candidates ran with Christians on the same

\(^7^9\) Alagha, pp. 41-42.
\(^8^0\) Harik, p. 73.
\(^8^1\) Alagha, pp. 41-42.
\(^8^2\) Sankari, p. 246.
ticket. So Hezbollah’s candidates must attract Christian and Shiite votes to win. This new political openness helped diminish Hezbollah’s image as a terrorist organization.\(^{83}\)

Although Hezbollah announced it would work alongside virtually any group, even the Christian Phalangist that killed more than 1,000 Muslims at the Sabra and Shatila camps in 1982, Hezbollah stated it would not work with Israel’s Christian military ally in southern Lebanon—the South Lebanon Army.\(^{84}\)

In addition, Hezbollah’s Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah considered the movement’s policy of openness to the Lebanese system vital to advancing its status within the wider Lebanese community. Therefore, despite his continued criticism of the confessional system, which clashed with some of the movement’s principles, he was careful to emphasize his commitment to the openness process as part of his efforts to dispel the idea that Hezbollah intended to turn Lebanon into an Islamic state through revolution. On balance, the decision to align with non-Islamic candidates and reach out to other groups was highly inconsistent with Hezbollah’s original role.\(^{85}\)

**Publishing an Open Letter declaring Hezbollah’s existence, beliefs, and goals**

Prior to 1985, Hezbollah was a secret organization, with no published ideology or identity. There were several reasons for this. First, in the early and mid-1980s, Hezbollah did not want to participate in political activities since this might divert the movement from promoting the

\(^{83}\) Harik, p. 75  
\(^{84}\) Harik, p. 64, p.77.  
\(^{85}\) Azani, pp. 93-94.
resistance activities. Second, Deputy Secretary Naim Qassem stated that Hezbollah avoided political activity at the time because of the need to organize its ranks, to consolidate the movement, and to protect itself from infiltration by Israeli intelligence.

But by early 1985, Hezbollah’s leaders realized that an image of aggressive religious fanaticism would harm them in the Lebanese political arena. So, its leaders decided that an open declaration of the Party of God’s identity would lift the veil of secrecy that had covered it since its inception. In addition, its leaders believed publically stating its goals and strategies would relieve tension, especially among Lebanon’s Christians, by stating exactly who Hezbollah’s enemies were and were not. Hezbollah officially created its Military Wing, the Islamic Resistance at this time.

Hezbollah therefore sent an open letter in Arabic to Al-Safir (The Ambassador), a Beirut daily newspaper, in February 1985 defining itself and its goals. A close reading of an English translation of the letter published in the Jerusalem Quarterly indicates that Hezbollah expressed both moderate and fundamentalist views. The Open Letter exemplifies early use of the tactic of ideological ambiguity—a technique that later would be applied by Hezbollah whenever the public or its political representatives were the intended recipients of the message. When addressing the faithful, Islam remained the backbone and essence of discourse. In contrast, a more conciliatory approach was used by Hezbollah in the public domain.

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86 Azani, p. 141.
87 Azani, p. 141.
88 Harik, p. 66.
89 Jaber, p. 19.
91 Harik, p. 66.
The decision to come into the open and announce is views and goals is generally consistent with Hezbollah’s original role. The February 1985 Open Letter was vague enough to be interpreted differently by various readers, and it did not undermine its beliefs or goals or hinder its political goals.

Providing social services to the poor and disadvantaged in Lebanon

An important action that began sometime after the release of the 1985 Open Letter was Hezbollah’s decision to provide a wide array of social services, primarily to the Lebanese Shiites.92 Today, Hezbollah has a highly organized system of health and social-service organizations. The Service Wing is composed of the Social Unit, the Education Unit, and the Islamic Health Unit. The Social Unit includes the Jihad Construction Foundation that provides reconstruction and compensation to Lebanese whose property is damaged by Israeli attacks. The Islamic Health Unit operates three hospitals and 12 health centers, as well as provides free health insurance and prescription-drug coverage. Finally, in a country with a very poor public school system and expensive private schools, Hezbollah’s Education Unit operates a number of primary and secondary schools at low fees that are an indispensable service to the Shiite poor.93

Although these services are provided primarily to the Shiites, Hezbollah does provide these services to non-Shiites in areas under its control. And Hezbollah is especially inclusive in

92 The exact date that Hezbollah began offering social services is unknown, likely beginning with individual efforts. However, by 1992 Hezbollah was clearly providing services to Shiites in the Bekaa Valley. See Flanigan, Shawn Teresa and Mounah Abdel-Samad, "Hezbollah's social Jihad: nonprofits as resistance organizations," Middle East Policy, 2009, p. 3, http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Hezbollah%27s+social+Jihad%3a+nonprofits+as+resistance+organizations.-a0203482071.
93 Flanigan, 3-4.
providing services after an Israeli attack. Reconstruction efforts by Hezbollah were evident after both *Operation Accountability* (1993) and *Operation Grapes of Wrath* (1996), when the Israeli incursions caused substantial damage to civilian infrastructure.\(^94\) Following the 2006 War, Hezbollah immediately halted its military operations and diverted its full energy to humanitarian services and reconstruction. Critical to its public image was Hezbollah’s decision to provide $12,000 for rent and furniture to anyone whose home was destroyed by Israel during the 2006 War.\(^95\) Providing these services sharply raised community support for Hezbollah, especially because of the near-absence of services from the government. Today, Hezbollah is one of the country’s largest and most dependable providers of social services.\(^96\)

A major benefit to providing social services was that it promoted Hezbollah’s role to the public. It also provided Hezbollah an additional reason to exist once Israel fully withdrew from Lebanon. Hezbollah’s leaders estimated that its social activities were one of the factors responsible for its success in the 1992 parliamentary elections, so they decided to continue them.\(^97\) In August 1993, Nasrallah revealed some of the reasons for the movement’s decision to mobilize for reconstruction, saying “we decided to help the people to rebuild their homes, and this will help in strengthening the connection between the people and Hezbollah.”\(^98\)

In the 1990s, Hezbollah worked to change its image from an extreme Islamic movement, as it was originally portrayed to the Shiite and other communities, into a legitimate and institutionalized movement with a wide base of supporters. Secretary General Nasrallah

\(^{94}\) Azani, p. 116.  
\(^{95}\) Flanigan, pp. 5-6.  
\(^{96}\) Flanigan, p. 8.  
\(^{97}\) Azani, p. 116.  
\(^{98}\) Azani, p. 116.
presented Hezbollah as a trustworthy, responsible, and moderate political party. Providing an array of public services supported this goal and image. For these reasons, this change was generally inconsistent with its original role as a Shiite terrorist organization.

However, there is an alternative explanation that claims Hezbollah primarily uses its Social Wing as a tool for the recruitment of fighters and as a means to increase political support. Mona Fawaz (2000) found that Hezbollah’s charity organizations were openly political and saw themselves as part of the resistance movement. Fawaz describes how Hezbollah’s leadership of its Social Wing viewed their mission as building the “resistance society.” Other scholars of Hezbollah believe Hezbollah uses its health and social-service activities primarily as a front to raise money for military actions. These scholars also argue that Hezbollah effectively uses its Social Wing to recruit fighters. Flanigan (2009) interviewed Hezbollah social workers who value the role they play in the struggle against Israel and believe their efforts are a vital part of the resistance.

Joining the Lebanese National cabinet

Originally, Hezbollah’s leadership preferred that the movement stay out of the national cabinet because it would have to defend decisions that might be unfavorable or contradictory to the party’s interest. Such decisions include ending the resistance to Israel, disarming the party and its Resistance Wing, conducting peace negotiations and establishing normalization with

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99 Azani, p. 118.
101 Flanigan, p. 19.
102 Flanigan, p. 19.
Israel, and promoting economic policies that could hurt its constituents.\textsuperscript{103} The party leadership decided that Hezbollah’s beliefs and political goals were too important to sacrifice for a cabinet post in a country where power is fragmented and corruption is widespread. As a result, Hezbollah stayed out of all cabinets until 2005, instead playing the role of opposition. Together with its Shiite allies, Hezbollah formed a strong minority bloc in parliament opposing corruption and seeking to help the poor.\textsuperscript{104}

However, in June 2005, Secretary General Nasrallah announced Hezbollah’s intention to fully integrate into the Lebanese public sphere through complete participation in all Lebanese government institutions, including the national cabinet.\textsuperscript{105} The party deemed it necessary to take a seat at the cabinet table to be able to speak strongly and directly against steps it opposed.\textsuperscript{106} The main issue Hezbollah opposed that the Lebanese government supported was the disarmament of all militias. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559, adopted September 2004, called for the withdrawal of all foreign armies from Lebanon and for the government of Lebanon to establish sovereignty over all of its land. It also called for all militias to disband, including Hezbollah. Prior to Syria’s withdrawal from Lebanon in April 2005, there was little chance of the Lebanese government disarming Hezbollah. With Syrian forces gone, Hezbollah decided it was advantageous to participate in the national government if it wanted to remain armed.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{103} Hamzeh, p. 120.
\textsuperscript{104} Hamzeh, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{105} Alagha, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{106} Alagha, pp. 64-65.
\textsuperscript{107} Azani, pp. 229-230.
On July 19, 2005, the first National Unity government after Syria’s withdrawal was created, with a 24-seat cabinet. For the first time, a Hezbollah member and long-time leader of the Military Wing, Muhammed Fnaysh was given a cabinet post. He was Energy Minister. In addition, Trad Hamade, a Hezbollah sympathizer, but non-member, retained his recently appointed post as Labor Minister. Thus, Hezbollah basically held two seats in the 2005 National Unity cabinet of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora. Three Amal members were also appointed to the Cabinet, thus giving the Shiites a small bloc of five.  

In addition to opposing the disarmament of all active resistance movements in Lebanon, both Hezbollah and Amal opposed the Government of Lebanon’s request for a U.N. investigation of the February 2005 murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. In December 2005, all five Hezbollah and Amal cabinet member walked of the government, creating a political crisis that hindered the government’s ability to conduct an investigation or complete other activities.

This change was generally inconsistent with Hezbollah’s original role. This action would have rated highly inconsistent, except for Hezbollah’s intent and ability to use its participation in the National Cabinet to further its political goals.

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108 Alagha, pp. 64-65.
109 Azani, p. 230.
Chapter IV. Test of hypothesis two: Hezbollah’s core beliefs and original political goals remain valid

This chapter analyzes the degree of current validity of five core beliefs or political goals of Hezbollah. On balance, the research indicates that Hezbollah remains overall generally committed to its original goals and beliefs. Militarily resist occupation of Lebanon, refuse to recognize or negotiate with Israel, and fight for the liberation of occupied Palestine all remain highly valid today. However, making Lebanon an Islamic republic was rated as generally invalid, as Hezbollah’s leadership appears willing to wait if peaceful means will achieve this objective. Acceptance of political leadership from Iran was also rated as generally invalid today, possibly due to Hezbollah’s own strengthens and resources and its desire to be seen as a Lebanese political party.

Militarily resist occupation of Lebanon by a foreign entity

Hezbollah’s 1985 Open Letter specifically states the main objective of Hezbollah is “…to expel the Americans, the French, and their allies definitely from Lebanon, putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land.”110 More recent statements by Hezbollah leaders give strong indications that Hezbollah has never abandoned its original goal of liberation. In its 2000 parliamentary election program, Nasrallah stated “Resistance…is the only road to deter [Israeli] aggression and face “Zionist” greed, uphold the security and dignity of our people, [achieve] the liberation of our land and a true national unity based upon a national consensus in rejecting

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occupation.” He further stated that Hezbollah would continue to keep the Resistance on guard to defend our country against any aggression or threat from Israel.112

Deputy Secretary Naim Qassem, in his 2007 book *Hizbullah*, stated “Resistance against Israeli occupation, which is a danger to both the present and future, receives ultimate confrontation priority given the anticipated effects of such occupation on Lebanon and the region. This necessitates the creation of a jihad (holy war) structure that should further this obligation, and in favor of which all capabilities are to be employed.”113

The removal of Israeli forces from all of Lebanon, including the disputed Shebaa Farms, is a never ending goal of Hezbollah. The military confrontation with Israel reinforced Hezbollah’s importance to the Lebanese and granted it political legitimacy. Fighting Israel was always the movement’s main objective. As long as this went on, there was justification for its existence. Thus, the escalation of violence leading to Israel’s April 1996 *Grapes of Wrath Operation* played into the hands of Hezbollah. The Israeli military actions actually strengthened popular support for Hezbollah and did not turn public opinion against it as anticipated by Israel.114

The 2006 War is a good indication of the continued importance of resistance to Hezbollah. Dr. Daniel Byman with Georgetown University stated a major reason for Hezbollah provoking the war by capturing two Israeli soldiers was to further its fight against Israel. In addition, Hezbollah wanted to show its support to the Palestinian cause. Because of Israeli attacks on Palestinians in Gaza at the time, Hezbollah wanted to demonstrate that it was a regional

111 Alagha, p. 262.
112 Alagha, p. 263.
113 Qassem, p. 19
114 Azani, p. 195.
revolutionary organization that was strongly capable of fighting the Israelis.  

In Hezbollah’s Seventh General Conference held in November 2009, its first since the 2006 War, Secretary General Nasrallah stated that the continued existence of the Hezbollah’s armed militia is a fundamental issue that is not open to discussion. Thus, Nasrallah made clear that Hezbollah would not disarm.  At the Conference, Nasrallah further stated that Hezbollah’s main effort would be focused on creating a defense strategy that would be based on the Resistance Wing that will defend the homeland, strengthen its security and stability, liberate areas still under Israeli occupation, (the Shebaa Farms, Kfar Shouba hills, and the village of Ghajar), as well as free Lebanese prisoners held by Israel.

Hezbollah’s military actions since the 2006 War also indicate resistance remains its top goal. Nearly four years after Hezbollah fought invading Israeli troops to a standstill in South Lebanon, Hezbollah has stated it is prepared for a fresh conflict and is confident of victory. “We are ready for another war and we eagerly await it,” says veteran Hezbollah fighter Abu Hadi on a drive through the Bekaa Valley with Christian Science Monitor reporter Nicholas Blanford. Hezbollah leaders also stated that lessons learned from that conflict have been implemented, including new battlefield tactics as well as the arrival of improved weapons systems, surface-to-surface rockets, and advanced antiaircraft missiles.

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117 Shapira, p. 4.
119 Blanford, p. 1.
Furthermore, Israel has accused Hezbollah of having Scuds and U.S. officials have expressed concern over the increasingly sophisticated weaponry allegedly crossing the border from Syria into Lebanon. In late April 2010, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates stated that Hezbollah had far more rockets and missiles than most governments in the world, and that this destabilizes the whole region.\footnote{Blanford, pp. 2-3.} Syria’s Scud-D rockets have a range of 435 miles, which would bring all of Israel within range of Hezbollah’s strongholds in the northern Bekaa Valley. Lebanese, Syrian, and Egyptian officials have all dismissed these reports for lack of evidence.\footnote{Blanford, pp. 2-3.}

I believe the above evidence strongly implies that the original political goal of resistance to occupation remains \textit{highly valid}. An alternative explanation for Hezbollah’s continued arming after the May 2000 Israeli withdrawal is that Hezbollah’s activities are designed to deter a possible Israeli invasion of Lebanon, as well as force Israel to withdraw from the Shebaa Farms and return hundreds of Lebanese prisoners.\footnote{Azani, p. 235.} In support of the alternative explanation, it is noted that Israel initially invaded Lebanon in 1978, and remained for 22 years.

\textbf{Refuse to recognize or to negotiate with Israel}

From its inception, Hezbollah has refused to recognize or negotiate with Israel. In its 1985 \textit{Open Letter}, Hezbollah stated “[Israel] …is the hated enemy that must be fought until the hated ones get what they deserve…We recognize no treaty with it, no cease fire, and no peace

\footnote{Blanford, pp. 2-3.}
agreements.\textsuperscript{123} The \textit{Open Letter} further stated that Hezbollah vigorously condemns all plans for negotiations with Israel, and regards all negotiators as enemies of Hezbollah because negotiation means the recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist occupation of Palestine.\textsuperscript{124}

In May 1991, Hezbollah elected al-Musawi as the Second General Secretary, replacing Al-Tufeili. Within days of taking office, Musawi stated, “We are walking in the path of Imam Khomeini and we see the problem of Israel and the conflict with the Israeli enemy as a topic on which all of our leaders and youth have an unequivocal opinion. That is to say, between us and the Israeli enemy there is only the rifle. Therefore, we reject any type of ceasefire, conciliation, or cooperation with the Israeli enemy. This has been the stance of the Hezbollah leadership from the beginning until this moment.”\textsuperscript{125}

Many thought that Hezbollah’s entry into the political process in 1992 would restrain its activities. But the regional peace talks of the period (Oslo I and II) angered Hezbollah. Nasrallah stated at the time that Islam cannot live in coexistence with the Jews and that the peace conference was a great danger to the global Islamic nation. He further added that only a rifle can liberate the lands and eradicate the enemy.\textsuperscript{126}

In its Seventh General Conference held in November 2009, Secretary General Nasrallah stated that Hezbollah continues to reject any agreement with Israel that is based on the recognition of its existence or provides any concessions on Palestinian lands. Nasrallah stated,

\textsuperscript{123} “An \textit{Open Letter}: The Hizbollah Program,” p. 5.
\textsuperscript{124} “An \textit{Open Letter}: The Hizbollah Program,” p. 5.
\textsuperscript{125} Azani, pp. 88-89.
\textsuperscript{126} Azani, pp. 159-161.
“We categorically reject any compromise with Israel or recognize its legitimacy. This position is definitive, even if everyone recognizes Israel.”\textsuperscript{127}

Overall, I believe this original goal is \emph{highly valid} today. An alternative explanation that would rate this goal as only \emph{generally valid} would cite the 1993 and 1996 agreements between Hezbollah and Israel to avoid targeting civilians and to establish geographic boundaries for military actions. These agreements did indicate some level of negotiation, and both sides also exchanged some prisoners.\textsuperscript{128} Furthermore, a former senior Israeli defense official stated that Hezbollah only fired rockets into Israel in response to Israeli retaliations to Hezbollah attacks on military targets in the Security Zone.\textsuperscript{129} This implies that these actions by Hezbollah were designed to send a message to the Israeli military to play by the rules (or agreements), and were not primarily designed to terrorize the Israeli population. This view is not supported by official Israeli statements.\textsuperscript{130}

However, these agreements were not fully implemented by either side. The agreements actually helped Hezbollah attract support from southern Lebanese who bore the brunt of Israeli reprisals, since it appeared Hezbollah was attempting to reduce civilian casualties.\textsuperscript{131} I believe these agreements were motivated by self-interest and did not represent any change in goals.

\textsuperscript{127} “Full text of Hezbollah’s new political document,” Syrian News Station, November 11, 2009, \textit{Chapter Three—Palestine and Compromise Negotiations}, p.18, \url{http://sns.sy/sns/?path=news/read/7187}.
\textsuperscript{128} Azani, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{129} Harik, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{130} Harik, pp. 167-168.
\textsuperscript{131} Azani, p. 115.
Accept political leadership and direction from Iran

Hezbollah was initially created with substantial help and guidance from Iran, which had just undergone an Islamic revolution in 1979. For centuries, there had been a strong connection between the Shiite clerics in Lebanon and the clerics in Iran, with most of the leaders in both countries studying in Najaf or Karbala (both in Iraq). In June 1982, shortly after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Iran dispatched about 300 Iranian Revolutionary Guards cadres to the Bekaa Valley to train Lebanese Shiites to fight the Israelis and their allies and to promote a Shiite revolution. Thus, at its inception, Hezbollah was seen by the West as part of an Islamic Revolution aimed at igniting the Shiites in the region.\footnote{Ranstorp, 1997, pp. 25-29.}

Iran provided Hezbollah critical military hardware it lacked in the early 1980s necessary for resistance. Iran gave Hezbollah a substantial amount of money, plus top cadres of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps who were experts at the science of warfare. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards took charge of Hezbollah’s security and resistance operations. Iran’s support, combined with the creation of a corps of young men graduating from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard’s military training program got Hezbollah off to a powerful start.\footnote{Jaber, pp. 50-51.}

However, by the early 1990s this relationship began to weaken. In September 1992, Nasrallah rejected the claim that the movement was an instrument in the hands of Iran for fulfilling its policies in Lebanon. Furthermore, in November 1992 and in June 1993, Nasrallah stated that Hezbollah was an independent movement and that its activities in Lebanon were divorced from the influence of political events in Iran. Nasrallah stated “We are subjected to the spiritual leader, which used to be Khomeini and is now Ali Khamenei. We adhere to the
principle of obeying the religious scholar.” He further stated that decisions by the government of Iran do not obligate Hezbollah in any way. In June 1996, Hezbollah’s Deputy Secretary Qassem stated that there is no connection between Hezbollah’s political actions and Iranian leadership. He added that Hezbollah makes its decisions independently.

As Hezbollah became more politically active in the 1990s, it moved away from Iranian control to a more independent role. Even beyond Hezbollah’s own desire to achieve a certain level of independence from Iran, a perception of independence is crucial for its own internal pursuit for legitimacy. In addition, many Lebanese politicians opposed to Hezbollah have used its association with Iran as a reason for criticism.

Hezbollah’s 2009 Seventh General Conference’s 32-page published manifesto contained no reference to Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei as being Hezbollah’s source of authority, and did not mention Hezbollah’s loyalty to the Iranian leadership. When Nasrallah was asked at the 2009 Conference about the 1985 Open Letter that referenced a single leadership for Iran and Hezbollah, he responded: “We have provided [in the new manifesto] a political document, but have not dealt with aspects of belief, ideology, or intellectual culture. Our position on the question of the source of authority (wali al-fakih) is an intellectual, ideological, and religious one, and not a political subject to review.”

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134 Azani, p. 189.
135 Azani, pp. 189-190.
137 Shapira, p. 5.
Based on these statements by Hezbollah’s leadership, my analysis indicates that Hezbollah’s original subordination to Iran is *generally invalid* today. I believe Hezbollah is a Lebanese organization that shares many political views with Iran and is religiously connected to the Islamic Republic, but generally makes its own decisions based on its own welfare.

An alternative explanation of the Hezbollah-Iranian relationship is that Hezbollah remains a tool of Iran. Shortly after the 2006 War, Mohtashami-Pur, a former Iranian ambassador to Syria and to Lebanon and one of the founders of Hezbollah in the early 1980s, stated in an interview for the Iranian daily newspaper *Al-Sharq* that Hezbollah is part of the Iranian regime. He further stated that Hezbollah is a primary factor in Iran’s security and military establishment, and serves as Iran’s front line defense against Israel. Under this alternative explanation, Hezbollah provides another pipeline for the promotion of Iran’s interest in the Middle East, especially regarding its policy against Israel.

**Make Lebanon an Islamic state in the model of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

The revolutionary spirit of Hezbollah’s early leaders was inspired by the creation of the Islamic Republic in Iran that was governed by Sharia law and led by clerics. Hezbollah’s leaders pledged their theological allegiance to Khomeini and nurtured the dream of instigating a similar revolt in Lebanon with the aim of transforming the multi-confessional secular state into an Iranian-style Islamic country.

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138 Azani, p. 237.
139 Azani, p. 237.
140 Jaber, p. 48.
Pan-Islamism and revolution, the central pillars of Khomeini’s teachings, were assimilated by Hezbollah’s leadership from the first day of its founding by members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard who stood behind Hezbollah’s organization and operations in the first years. The assimilation of this ideology was made possible by the common background of their clerical leaders who were all graduates of the Shiite seminaries in Iraq and Iran. These clerics viewed themselves as part of a worldwide Islamic revolution and worked to violently overthrow the secular government of Lebanon which included representatives from all religious groups.\textsuperscript{141}

However, the official position of the movement presented in its 1985 \textit{Open Letter}—a result of pressure from Fadlallah—stated the movement would strive to create an Islamic state in Lebanon by way of persuasion, not by force.\textsuperscript{142} But many doubted the sincerity of this moderate view based on Hezbollah’s violent acts in this early period and how it administered areas under its control (specifically the city of Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut). Hezbollah ran these areas much like the clerics govern the Islamic Republic of Iran.\textsuperscript{143}

Several other factors created further doubts about Hezbollah’s willingness to peaceably work for change, including: Hezbollah’s Islamic rhetoric promoting Jihad and sacrifice; the managing of an independent resistance movement often in opposition to the interests of the Lebanese state; and the lack of any significant changes in the leadership of the movement since the early 1990s. There is also a problem with the group’s early acceptance of leadership from Iran.\textsuperscript{144}

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\textsuperscript{141} Azani, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{142} Azani, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{143} Azani, pp. 143-144.
\textsuperscript{144} Azani, p. 127.
\end{flushright}
In the early 1990s, Hezbollah broke into two factions. The one headed by Fadlallah was willing to wait and work within the system to eventually create an Islamic republic in Lebanon by choice. He called for the integration of the Hezbollah movement into the Lebanese political arena. In contrast, Hussein al-Musawi—Secretary General of Hezbollah at the time—and other radicals wanted to follow the Iranian example and use force to overthrow the government. Musawi stated in August 1986 that whoever rules Lebanon must govern using Sharia law.

In September 1992, shortly after the 1992 parliamentary elections, Secretary General Nasrallah provided an interview with the pan-Arab magazine *Al-Watan Al-Arabi* in which he expressed is views on making Lebanon an Islamic Republic. Here are his key points. Regarding creating an Islamic Republic, “…I can assure you that we will never propose this option per se in Lebanon…We have never proposed the idea of imposing an Islamic Republic on Lebanon by force, and will not do that in the future, because the nature of the Islamic Republic does not lend itself to forceful action.”

Nasrallah further stated in the 1992 interview, “We do not deny the fact that it is our wish and desire to see the emergence of an Islamic system, because we are first all Muslims, and not about to give up on our religious identity.” However, Nasrallah added that Hezbollah did not wish to establish an Islamic government by force and that he did not understand groups that want to impose their views on others by force violence. Nasrallah stated that Hezbollah would never do this.

145 Sankari, pp. 244-245.
146 Azani, 2009, p. 143.
148 Noe, pp. 90-91.
There had been much debate among Hezbollah’s leadership as to whether to take the reformist, secular approach, or the revolutionary, religious approach. Nasrallah’s decision was based on the belief that joining the renewed Lebanese political system after 1990 advanced the movement’s goals, but at the price of temporarily accepting the rules of the game. This compromise was referred to as Lebanonization.\textsuperscript{149}

However, it is important to note that Hezbollah’s integration into the Lebanese political system was not necessarily an indication that it had abandoned its original goals of overthrowing the existing regime and establishing an Islamic republic. This decision supported the movement’s long-term goal of ruling Lebanon. Advocates of this pragmatic approach wanted to achieve their goals both from the top (through Lebanese institutions) and from the bottom (through social and humanitarian activities).\textsuperscript{150}

In its April 1997 \textit{Document of Principles}, Hezbollah presented a moderate image of its goals and beliefs. This image accepted Lebanon’s cultural, religious, and political diversity and called for the strengthening of the national unity and the formation of a national identity with an Arab shade. The 1997 \textit{Principles} also called for maintaining political freedom of action, public freedom, and freedom of expression and action of its social elements. The style of the 1997 \textit{Principles} was similar to the style of its 1985 \textit{Open Letter}. It suggested pragmatism and a national-Lebanese approach, as opposed to pan-Islamism and extremism with Iranian connections.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{149} Wiegand, p. 673.
\textsuperscript{150} Azani, pp. 75-76.
\textsuperscript{151} Azani, pp. 129-130.
The goal of creating an Islamic republic in Lebanon is generally invalid today. Hezbollah appears willing to wait and use persuasion as opposed to violence. Hezbollah’s leadership early on realized that Lebanon’s structural restraints, its large Christian community, and the historic animosity between Shiite and Sunnite effectively precluded the realization of this goal. Instead, Hezbollah’s leadership focused on conducting jihad against Israel. Since this war of attrition would require broad support, Hezbollah would soft peddle creating an Islamic republic. In addition, since the 1990s, there has been no evidence of an actual attempt by Hezbollah to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon. Instead, Hezbollah’s members of parliament have pushed for electoral reforms based on proportional representation. An alternative explanation is that the existing political situation opens up a new avenue that will enable Hezbollah to achieve interim objectives along the road to its final strategic goal of an Islamic state.

Fight for the liberation of occupied Palestine

Liberating Palestine remains a top goal of Hezbollah. Statements by its senior leaders support this statement as well as Hezbollah’s support to Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. When Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah opened a new front on its war against Israel by supporting the Palestinian organizations on the West Bank, in Gaza, and in Jerusalem. Hezbollah began this deliberate plan of deepening its connections with the

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152 Harik, p. 19.
153 Harik, p. 19.
154 Wiegand, p. 675.
155 Sankari, p. 243.
156 Azani, 2009, p. 236.
Palestinian terrorist organizations as a means of supporting its goal of liberating Jerusalem and thwarting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.\textsuperscript{157}

On October 5, 2000, less than a week after the Second Intifadah erupted, Secretary General Nasrallah gave an interview to the Kuwait daily newspaper *Al-Rai Al-Aam* in which he presented his views on the confrontation. Most importantly, Nasrallah stated: “The victory by Lebanon has given the Palestinians hope that their resistance will eventually succeed in expelling the Zionists from the Gaza Strip, so that it becomes completely ours, and allowing us to force Israel out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem—the minimum conditions on which all Palestinians agree.” The statement is a clear indication of the importance to Hezbollah of liberating occupied Palestine.\textsuperscript{158}

Latter that month, Deputy Secretary of Hezbollah Nain Qassem stated the importance of liberating Palestine in no uncertain terms. He stated “…there is no separation between the religious duty of liberating Palestine and the Godly promise of victory. Both represent sufficient motive for resistance and jihad and for refuting the current reality despite challenges and perils.” He further stated that accepting Israel’s occupation would lead to complete surrender and total defeat of our nation. He believed that the *Intifadah* and resistance were the solution.\textsuperscript{159}

Sayyid Fadlallah—the spiritual (but not political) leader of Hezbollah—stated in 2000 when Israel withdrew from Lebanon that Hezbollah needed to remain committed to the realization of

\textsuperscript{157} Azani, 2009, p. 236.
\textsuperscript{158} Noe, p. 246.
\textsuperscript{159} Qassem, pp. 168-170.
its grand goal of the liberation of Jerusalem. Underlying Fadlallah’s argument for continued military activity for Hezbollah after the Israeli withdraw from Lebanon was a deeply held belief that Israel, despite signing the 1993 Oslo Accords, was not sincerely interested in a just and comprehensive peace agreement with the Palestinians. Fadlallah was committed to campaigning within the state institutions of Lebanon to prevent the normalization of relations between Israel and Lebanon.

In fact, Hezbollah’s success at forcing Israel to withdraw from south Lebanon was a major factor behind the Second Intifada that began in early October 2000. Fadlallah stated that the impressive achievement of Hezbollah in Lebanon inspired the Palestinians—especially members of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad—to launch a protracted campaign of civil disturbance and armed insurrection.

My research strongly indicates that Hezbollah’s original goal of liberating occupied Palestine remains highly valid. An alternative explanation is that Syria, with substantial Iranian support, uses Hezbollah to continually attack Israel to prevent a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian concerns. The ongoing strife with Israel gives the autocratic regimes in both Syria and Iran justification and turns attention away from domestic failures and corruption.

\[160\] Sankari, pp. 268-269.
\[161\] Sankari, pp. 268-269.
\[162\] Sankari, pp. 268-269.
V. Policy Implications

There are several policy implications derived from my research.

Hezbollah remains a threat to Israel and to regional security

My analysis indicates that Hezbollah remains fully committed to its core goals of resistance, the liberation of Palestine, and the refusal to recognize or negotiate with the State of Israel. In addition, several regional observers have stated that Hezbollah is better armed now than it was in July 2006 when war with Israel erupted. Duncan Lennox—editor of Jane’s Strategic Weapon Systems in the United Kingdom—stated in early 2010 that Hezbollah is believed to already have Iranian-designed and Syrian-built M-600 rockets that are more concealable and quicker to fire than Scuds. Mr. Lennox further stated that the M-600 is more accurate than the Scuds and is easier to use since it has a solid propellant motor, is smaller, and is lighter. Thus, Hezbollah has both the motivation and means to continue causing violence and instability. And Hezbollah’s policy of non-negotiating with Israel makes a peaceful settlement unlikely.

Participation in the political process has not made Hezbollah less dangerous

Hezbollah’s movement into the open political arena in 1992 has not reduced threats from the group. It continually provoked Israeli incursions into Lebanon during the 1990s, partly to deter the peace process and to further its resistance to Israeli occupation of the Security Zone. When Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah shifted its resources to supporting the Palestinians. In 2006, Hezbollah instigated a war with Israel, partly to support the Palestinians.

164 Blanford, pp. 1-2.
165 Jaber, pp. 161-175.
While today Hezbollah is a major political party in Lebanon and a provider of critical social and humanitarian services, it remains a potent military force that many believe is now better armed than before the 2006 War.\textsuperscript{166} And its actions in July 2006 and in May 2008 indicate that Hezbollah has not hesitated to use violence—even if its own citizens are harmed—to achieve its goals.\textsuperscript{167} This implies that participation in government has made Hezbollah more powerful and an even greater threat, primarily because its legitimacy and resource base have increased by entering the political sphere.\textsuperscript{168}

In addition, Hezbollah has often been listed—along with the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and Fatah—as an example of a terrorist group that can be shifted from terrorism and militancy into open political participation.\textsuperscript{169} However, if Hezbollah remains committed to its original beliefs and goals, despite participation in Lebanese politics, and remains armed, then the experience of the PIRA and Fatah would not apply to Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{170} The fact that Hezbollah has substantial outside support, mostly from Iran, makes this shift even more difficult.

\textsuperscript{166} Blanford, pp. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{167} In May 2008, Hezbollah took over parts of West Beirut in a confrontation with the government over cell phone licenses. This was the most violent internal event since the civil war and the first time Hezbollah targeted non-SLA Lebanese. See Worth, Robert F. and Nada Bakri, "Hezbollah seizes control in west Beirut."	extit{International Herald Tribune}, May 10, 2008, \url{http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-159675580.html}.
\textsuperscript{168} Azani, 2009, pp. 156-157.
\textsuperscript{169} Staten, Cliff, “From Terrorism to Legitimacy: Political Opportunity Structures and the Case of Hezbollah,” \textit{Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution}, Volume 8, Number 1, 2008, p. 32, \url{http://www.trinstitute.org/oipcr/8_1staten.pdf}.
\textsuperscript{170} Staten, pp 32-34.
Some researchers have suggested that Hamas may follow the terrorism-to-political participation model. My analysis indicates that many issues concerning outside support and allowing the group to remain armed must be settled before these programs can be effective.\textsuperscript{171}

Hezbollah’s policy of political openness in Lebanon made it stronger

Hezbollah’s policy of openness has actually made it more dangerous since it has increased its supporters and given it more legitimacy. By forming political blocs with other groups, Hezbollah has effectively blocked government actions it does not want—such as the disarming of all resistance groups and negotiations with Israel.\textsuperscript{172}

In addition, Hezbollah sometimes provides support to non-Shiites and non-Islamic groups, especially if they are in an area Hezbollah controls. Also, Hezbollah is quick to provide compensation to Lebanese citizens whose homes and property are damaged by Israeli retaliations to Hezbollah actions. In return, Hezbollah has often expected these non-Shiites to support Hezbollah politically and provide material assistance to Hezbollah’s resistance mission.\textsuperscript{173}

Iranian support remains crucial to Hezbollah’s success

Beginning with Hezbollah’s creation in the early 1980s, Iranian support has been critical to Hezbollah’s survival and success. A major benefit of this support is that the funding allows Hezbollah’s leadership to focus on innovation in its military activities, rather than simply

maintaining a certain level military action. Halting the military support from Iran would curtail many of Hezbollah’s operations. After the 2006 War, Hezbollah quickly began providing compensation to Lebanese citizens whose homes were destroyed, increasing its popularity and giving it higher credibility than the Government of Lebanon. Much of this was due to funding from Iran.

According to U.S. intelligence records of bank transfers, Iran has provided about $100 million a year to Hezbollah since the mid-1980s, and Hezbollah has regularly sent its soldiers to Iran for refresher training courses. In addition, Hezbollah and Iranian leaders regularly meet to discuss their common interests. Despite some independence by Hezbollah from Iran since the 1990s, Iran continues to use Hezbollah as its proxy to increase its interest in the region. In contrast, Syria’s leverage over Hezbollah has declined since Syria withdrew its troops in April 2005.

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175 Flanigan, p. 12.
176 “Hezbollah as a strategic arm of Iran”, p. 16.
178 Wiegand, p. 671.
179 Wiegand, p. 671.
VI. Policy Recommendations

Lebanon’s central government needs to be strengthened

Although the Taif Agreement ended the Lebanese civil war and disarmed all militias except Hezbollah, it did not establish a strong central government. In fact, at times after the civil war, there were even two Lebanese national governments. The problem was further compounded by the fact that the Government of Lebanon was aware that any attempt to use its army, which was very weak, to control southern Lebanon could spark another civil war, which was feared by much of the population. This created power vacuums in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and parts of Beirut that were filled by Hezbollah.\(^\text{180}\)

The Lebanese government needs to get Hezbollah to disarm and use the Lebanese Army to control southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. The Lebanese government may be able to fold some of the Military Wing of Hezbollah into the Lebanese Army. However, the government would need to spread these soldiers evenly among its units so as not to undermine the credibility of the Lebanese Army or reduce its effectiveness.

In addition to establishing a strong military, the government needs to provide social services more efficiently and equitably. Currently, to receive social service—such as a hospital bed for a sick relative—from the government, a citizen has to approach their legislator to ask for the bed as a favor and to agree to provided political support from the whole family in the next election. Treating services as patronage undermines the credibility of the government and creates an opening that Hezbollah effectively fills. These types of practice, as well as other forms of

\(^{180}\) Azani, p. 245.
corruption common in the Lebanese government, need to be terminated. A strong central government is critical in successfully moving a terrorist group into the open political arena.

**Hezbollah needs to be disarmed**

Hezbollah needs to be disarmed to improve security in Lebanon and in the region. This was a major error in 1990 when the civil war ended. The failure to disarm Hezbollah has allowed it to repeatedly thwart attempts at peace agreements between Lebanon and Israel, control significant parts of Lebanon, defy the Lebanese government, hinder the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, and incur and provoke repeated Israeli attacks into southern Lebanon.\(^{181}\)

The most viable approach to getting Hezbollah to disarm is through back-channel negotiations with mid-level U.S. officials. Previous attempts by Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Sinora, UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701, and regional players such as Saudi Arabia (who brokered the 1989 Taif Accords) have failed to persuade Hezbollah to disarm. Although the U.S. would risk criticisms from home and abroad for talking with Hezbollah, an effective disarming of Hezbollah would reduce Iran’s influence in the region, a major benefit to the U.S.\(^{182}\) However, President Obama should not get involved until it is obvious that Hezbollah was serious to avoid difficulties President Clinton experienced in actively pursuing peace in Northern Ireland.\(^{183}\)

\(^{181}\) Wiegand, p. 670.
\(^{183}\) Simon, pp. 1-3.
The U.S. officials would explain to Hezbollah that there are several benefits it would gain if it disarmed, including increasing the group’s appeal to a wider audience and boosting its credibility as a political party in Lebanon. Disarming would also lower Israel’s threat perception from Hezbollah. In fact, U.S. officials could tie Hezbollah’s disarmament to an Israeli agreement to withdraw from the Shebaa Farms. Finally, U.S. officials should try to convince Hezbollah’s leaders that Hezbollah’s future is dependent on effective government and the rebuilding Lebanon’s debt-ridden economy, not building up military hardware for future conflicts.\textsuperscript{184}

**Outside support to Hezbollah should be halted**

A major factor behind Hezbollah’s emergence and continued success has been its support from Iran, with much coming through Syria. To reduce threats from Hezbollah, this support must stop. Support from Syria, which heavily controlled Lebanon from 1990 to 2005, will have to be halted as well.

One way for the United States to reduce outside support to Hezbollah is to try to pull Syria away from Iran through engagement, and thus end Syria’s role as a conduit for sending support from Iran to Hezbollah. In March 2009, U.S. officials did meet with Syrian officials in Damascus, thus ending President George W. Bush’s policy of isolating Syria.\textsuperscript{185} The U.S. should first focus its efforts on advancing Syrian-Israeli talks, in the hope that such an effort will create friction between Damascus and Tehran and lead to the gradual deterioration of Syrian-Iranian relations.\textsuperscript{186} The U.S. could then push Syria to halt arms supplies to Hezbollah.

\textsuperscript{184} Simon, pp. 1-3.
\textsuperscript{186} Saab, p. 1.
VII. Conclusions

Hezbollah has been highly effective at adapting to changing circumstances and remains a key player in Lebanon’s political scene, as well as local military power. While Hezbollah was initially used as a military tool for Iran’s interest in the region, it is now a Lebanese resistance movement and political party. These multiple dimensions have made dealing with it very difficult for the Lebanese government, Israel, and the United States. Its success at using violence and eschewing negotiations has made Hezbollah a role model for other resistance movements, with dangerous implications for conflict in other areas such as Gaza and the West Bank.

This thesis has shown that Hezbollah was able promote its status to that of a political party in Lebanon that uses non-violence to achieve desired goals, while still maintaining an armed resistance wing. This was due to two major factors: (1) Hezbollah had political and military power over the government and (2) Hezbollah’s leaders chose to moderate their objectives to gain broad political support in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{187} Assistance from Iran was also helpful.

While Hezbollah changed its role in Lebanon from a secret-Shiite terrorist organization, into an open political party with a resistance wing, it is considered more dangerous today than a quarter of a century ago.\textsuperscript{188} For this reason, the history of Hezbollah gives caution to U.S. and other Western policy makers on the desirability of moving terrorist groups into the open political arena as a means to reduce instability and improve security. Focusing on the root causes of grievances, improving government services to the poor, and disarming militias are more fruitful ways to improve security in the region.

\textsuperscript{187} Wiegand, p. 670.
\textsuperscript{188} Azani, p. 246.
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